Dear Readers,

Welcome to our first newsletter in 2008. This newsletter gives you an update on the European Strategy on Children’s Rights, which includes a report of the second European Forum on the Rights of the Child, the adoption of the European Parliament report on the European Strategy on the Rights of the Child and meetings of the steering group due to start again. We are very pleased to announce the appointment of a new Children’s Rights Coordinator, Anna Zitto, within the European Commission, starting on April 1st.

The European Children’s Network is actively involved in the children’s rights indicators study, commissioned by the European Fundamental Rights Agency and which is carried out by its Austrian member organisation the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights and the Centre for the Study of the Child, the Family and the Law from the University of Liverpool. I warmly recommend to you to fill in the survey on children’s rights indicators that we have sent out and that will contribute to the development of indicators, measuring the implementation, protection, respect and promotion of children’s rights in the European Union. Good indicators are important since these will contribute to a better monitoring of children’s rights and to policy development on children’s rights at EU level. http://www.priority-research.com/childrightssurvey

I am happy to announce that we have added a new Ending Violence Against Children page to our website, which will support our work to protect children from violence and our campaign to prohibit and eradicate all corporal punishment and all other forms of cruel and degrading punishment of children in Europe.

Finally, we have to say goodbye to our policy and communications officer Emilie White who is going to leave our office on 1 April. We thank her for all her work and commitment to EURONET and to children’s rights. EURONET is at the same time delighted to welcome a new policy and communications officer Sara Sighinolfi in our office.

Mieke Schuurman
Secretary-General
European Children’s Network (EURONET)

ACTION NEEDED: Child Rights Indicators

We need your help to develop indicators for children that can be applied at the EU level. It will only take five minutes of your time.

Please, fill in the survey by Friday 4th April at http://www.priority-research.com/childrightssurvey

The Centre for Study of the Child, the Family and the Law (Liverpool University), in collaboration with the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights in Vienna and with the support of the European Children’s Network (EURONET), have been commissioned by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency to develop a series of indicators to monitor the impact of EU Activity on children’s rights and welfare.

We are eager to learn from those with experience of either applying, campaigning for or monitoring children’s rights, either through directly working with children and young people, or through their work with statutory or non-governmental organisations. We would be very grateful, therefore, if you could respond to the following survey drawing on your expertise. These responses will then inform the development of some preliminary indicators across a range of key areas of activity in which the EU is currently engaged, including cross-national family breakdown, poverty and social exclusion, and child protection.

Second EU Child Rights Forum focuses on social exclusion and poverty of children

On 4 March 2008 the second EU Forum on the Rights of the Child was held at the European Commission building in Brussels. It gathered experts and representatives from the Member States, the European Institutions and civil society organisations active for children’s rights. The focus of the meeting was on poverty and social exclusion of children and in particular of Roma children, with several expert speakers on this topic. However, contributions from NGOs were not included in the programme and the tight schedule of the Forum did not allow much time for debate.

EURONET together with other children’s rights NGOs from the NGO Action Group on the EU’s Child Rights Strategy were able to communicate an oral statement. This statement welcomed the organisation of the second Forum as an active contribution to the current debate and work of the EU in the field of children’s rights. But it also considered that the way the Forum was organised, without the involvement of the Steering group and without a transparent process for selecting civil society representatives the meeting could not be considered as an appropriately constituted Forum. However, EURONET is pleased that the Commission is committed to allocate more substantial human resources to the follow-up of the Communication and that the steering group is going to
more substantial human resources to the follow-up of the Communication and that the steering group is going to meet again regularly to prepare for the next Forum. The NGO Action Group on the EU’s Child Rights Strategy called on the Commission to implement its commitment to involve children in the consultation process for the European Strategy and in the next Forum.

For the speeches and contributions to the second Forum go to the new website of the Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/children/forum/fsj_children_forum_en.htm

European Parliament supports children’s rights in new report

On 16th January the European Parliament adopted the final report written by Roberta Angelilli, MEP for the Justice and Civil Liberties Committee (LIBE) entitled “Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child” in response to the Commission’s Communication of the same name of July 2006. Ahead of the final vote in the European Parliament plenary EURONET submitted a final set of recommendations and amendments detailing areas for which the European Children’s Network could give its support. Following the adoption of the report, the European Children’s Network’s Secretary General, Mieke Schuurman was interviewed by several news organisations across Europe, including the Deutsche Welle and Euronews. The European Children’s Network has prepared a summary of the report or resolution highlighting areas of relevance to EURONET. The summary of the report is available on the EURONET website.


http://www.crin.org/docs/Final_adopted_Angelilli_report_SPGuimaraesInformalCouncil_16.01.08.doc

UPDATE: New director at Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), 5 year plan finalised

On 7th March Morten Kjaerum from Denmark was nominated by the Management Board as the new Director of the Fundamental Rights Agency and will take up the five-year position in June 2008. The nomination had the support of the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament. Currently the Director of the Danish Institute for Human Rights, Kjaerum has experience in the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The Justice and Home Affairs Council, having consulted with the European Parliament, has decided on the Multi-annual framework (MAF) which determines the thematic areas of the Agency’s work for the next five years (2007 - 2012). The thematic areas are:

- Racism, xenophobia and related intolerance
- Discrimination based on sex, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability or sexual orientation and against persons belonging to minorities and any combination of these grounds (multiple discrimination)
- Compensation of victims
- The rights of the child, including the protection of children
- Asylum, migration and integration of migrants
- Visa and border control
- Participation of the EU citizens in the Union’s democratic functioning
- Information society and, in particular, respect for private life and protection of personal data
- Access to efficient and independent justice.

In addition, a cooperation agreement between the European Community and the Council of Europe was approved between the FRA and CoE establishing regular meetings, exchange of information and coordination of activities to avoid duplication.

NSPCC publishes report on Protecting children from sexual abuse in Europe

EURONET UK member NSPCCSS has published a new report, ‘Protecting children from sexual abuse in Europe: Safer recruitment of workers in a border-free Europe’. The report was launched at the end of last year at a joint NSPCC/Save the Children conference on protecting children from sexual abuse in Europe and presents the arguments for closer cooperation between European Union countries to keep children safe from known sex offenders and makes recommendations on how to achieve it. This has been one of the NSPCC’s priorities for a number of years and we hope that the launch of this report will add renewed vigour to cross-border cooperation. Crucially, there is no systematic mechanism in place between EU countries to exchange criminal records information for use in pre-employment vetting, and even when employers can access information about a prospective employee from another EU country, there are no guarantees it is reliable and complete. The recording and retention of criminal record information varies widely across the EU, and the legal definition of one and the same crime may be different in each of the 27 countries.

The report is available on the NSPCC website (www.nspcc.org.uk/europe), summary versions in English, French, German, Polish and Spanish can also be downloaded. If you would like further information, please contact my colleague, Kathleen Spencer Chapman on kspencer@nspcc.org.uk or 020 7625 2758.

DCI launches report: Violence against Children in Conflict with the Law

On Tuesday 8th April Defence for Children International the Netherlands will launch their report: Violence against Children in Conflict with the Law: A Study on Data Collection and Indicators in Belgium, England and Wales, France and the Netherlands was produced by Defence for Children International the Netherlands, in partnership with the Howard League for Penal Reform (United Kingdom), DCI-Belgium and DCI-France, with the support of the Daphne II Programme (2004-2008) to prevent and combat violence against children, young people and women and to protect victims and groups at risk, of the European Commission.

The report concludes that children in detention are at particular risk of violence from staff or peers, and self-
harm. Children in police custody are at heightened risk of violence, for example, during arrest, interrogation, or while being held in police cells. In all four countries, the numbers of young offenders in youth detention institutions, or other types of welfare institutions, are rising. The official numbers of children in detention are especially high in the Netherlands, and England and Wales. The report emphasizes that the detention of children is in violation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child when not used as a measure of last resort.

National policies on children in conflict with the law are improved if based on reliable and publicly accessible data. However, in all four countries, for example, the annual justice statistics published by the Ministries of Justice either do not include or include very little specific data relating to violence against children deprived of their liberty. Better data collection in the area of juvenile justice is urgently needed.

The report introduces 12 Indicators on Violence against Children Deprived of Liberty, with the aim of contributing to better statistical surveying, and to harmonized and comparable data collection across Europe, including on the numbers of children deprived of their liberty. By adopting these indicators and promoting their use, the European Commission would contribute to ensuring that children in conflict with the law, particularly those deprived of their liberty, are protected against any form of violence.

Go to the events section of the website for further information. http://www.crin.org/euronet/resources/infodetail.asp?id=16786

EURONET speaks at ChildONEurope child participation seminar

EURONET was invited to speak on child participation at the EU at the ChildONEurope seminar entitled “Towards a culture of child participation” that took place on 31st January in Florence. EURONET’s presentation urges the European Commission to include safe and meaningful child participation in the development of the future EU Strategy on children’s rights and provides examples of how successful child participation projects have been carried out at the EU-level.


EURONET attends l’Europe de l’Enfance meeting

On 31st October, EURONET attended the l’Europe de l’enfance meeting in Lisbon in order to resubmit its document advising on the groups future work strategy. EURONET’s suggestions were discussed by members of the group and incorporated in the report for future discussion. EURONET advises that the group take on a more formal role in promoting the mainstreaming of children’s rights in Europe, including meetings involving national ministers, as well as taking a role in the development of the EU’s future strategy on children’s rights.


Events 2008

4 April 2008: Brussels, Workshop on the Protection of Undocumented children in their access to basic social rights. Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)

8 April 2008: Brussels, Violence against Children in Conflict with the Law. Eurochild

8 April 2008: Brussels, Improving the well-being of young children in Europe: the role of early years services. Eurochild

11-13 June 2008: Helsinki. Better Future for Children - Today - 60 years of International Cooperation for Children in Care, Federation of Educative Communities (FICE)


Courses

Deadline: April 30; Berlin, European Master in Childhood Studies and Children’s Rights. European Network of Masters in Children’s Rights at the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany and other European countries. www.fu-berlin.de/emcr

Publications

NSPCC: “Protecting Children from sexual abuse in Europe—Safer recruitment of workers in a border-free Europe”.

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