



European Forum on the Rights of the Child in Berlin

Two hundred children's rights experts participated in the first meeting of the European Forum on the Rights of the Child in Berlin this June, by invitation of the German Ministry of Justice and the DG Justice Vice President of the European Commission, Franco Frattini. Frattini emphasized that the Forum would act as the next step after the Communication in defining the EU's strategy on children's rights, stressing "the Forum is your forum, to share information and experience more rapidly and more easily."

The European Forum focused on the abuse of children and law enforcement procedures involving juvenile justice. A working session was conducted on the objectives and functioning mechanisms of the European Forum and how to include meaningful children's participation, as well as possible themes for the next Forum.

Key messages from the Round Table discussion, moderated by Jaap Doek, included a request for more transparency and the need for children's rights in the EU Treaties. Doek concluded at the Round Table that there was a need for a well-equipped secretariat to follow-up outcomes of the Forum, a need for adequate resources and a need for child participation. Doek also urged those countries that did not sign the UNCRC Optional Protocol on sexual exploitation to do so and advocated for the implementation this Optional Protocol.

German National Coalition presented a list of key demands regarding the objectives and functioning of the Forum from Civil Society, including the need for transparency of information on the Forum, launching a Forum web site, child participation in Forum meetings, a balanced presence of civil society and expert groups, coverage of both internal and external issues, preparatory meetings for civil society possibly financed by the commission, a strong secretariat, results from the Forum's discussion fed into EU policies, and resources to make the Forum function effectively, with equal participation of NGOs across Europe. This position was supported by the majority of the civil society present.

The Commission requested practical comments on children's participation in future forums, which should be sent to Patrick Trousson by the end of June. Though children are expected to participate in the next forum, no financial commitment was made to allow for it or to implement the communication.

The next European Forum on the Rights of the Child is expected to be held in November 2007, and the panel took suggestions on the agenda for the future forum, which included children and violence, children and poverty and child participation. A preparatory meeting for the next European Forum will be organised on 12 July by the Commission, to which one representative of each stakeholder will be invited.

EURONET is involved in the NGO action group on the strategy on the rights of the child, which also includes Save the Children, Eurochild, SOS Children's Villages, EFSCW, Worldvison, Plan International, and Terres des Hommes. For more information on the EU's

work on the EU Communication toward a strategy on children's rights, please contact Kélig Puyet or Jana Hainsworth.

Kélig Puyet, EU Liaison Officer
SOS-Kinderdorf International/
International Continental Office for
Western Europe
Liaison and Advocacy Office (Brussels),
Rue Gachardstraat 88, B-1050 Brussels
Belgium
Kelig.Puyet@sos-kd.org
<http://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/>
0032 2 537 4760
Fax 0032 2 537 31 31

Jana Hainsworth
Eurochild
Avenue des Arts, 1-2
1210 Brussels, Belgium
secretarygeneral@eurochild.org
www.eurochild.org
T: 0032 (0)2 511 70 83
F: 0032 (0)2 511 72 98