

e-News Bulletin

December 2005 - January 2006

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News from Eurochild

New Years' Greetings

The Eurochild team would like to wish all readers a good start into the New Year! We would like to thank everybody for their active support and co-operation, and everything they do for the wellbeing and rights of children and their families! We hope that 2006 will be a great year for you, your organisation and for all those for and with whom you work!

A New Year, a new Secretary General

2006 certainly marks an important new beginning for me as the new Secretary General of Eurochild. Although a relative newcomer to the field of children's rights, I have nonetheless been involved in promoting social inclusion, equality and participation

for much of my career. The objectives of Eurochild coincide well with my own personal values and my professional goals, so here goes...!

I come to Eurochild from the private sector where I worked in communications on social affairs, in particular managing a contract under the Community Action Programme to combat discrimination. Prior to that, I was coordinator of the Association of Voluntary Service Organisations – a network of organisations promoting long-term voluntary service – primarily for young people. My earliest memory of being a volunteer was shaking tins for the NSPCC in a small town in Yorkshire, UK at the age of 8. Since then I have volunteered in many organisations – and was active in several years in BTCV – a UK NGO promoting volunteering in nature conservation.

Although a British national, I have been living in Brussels now for over 8 years. Brussels sometimes gets bad press, but it really is a great place to live!

I look forward to taking forward the excellent work that Heidi and Anne have started over the last 2 years. 2006 promises to be a busy and important year, with the expected proposal of an EC Communication on Rights of the Child, and the on-going efforts to launch a new framework on social protection and inclusion across the EU. I will endeavour to ensure that the voices of children - especially those who are experiencing poverty and social exclusion - are heard in the process. It seems that, with Anja and Marie, I have a great team to help me!

Lastly, if you, as readers of our monthly bulletin, have feedback, news or questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. I look forward to working with you!

Seminar "Learning from Families"

On Tuesday 24 January 2006, Jana Hainsworth, Secretary General of Eurochild AISBL, attended a seminar in Brussels, entitled "*Learning from*

Families - Policies and Practices to Combat Social Exclusion amongst Families with Young Children in Europe". The seminar presented the findings of a 2-year European research project funded through the Community Action Programme to combat poverty and social exclusion.

Coordinated by Home Start International, the project looked at the issue of social exclusion from the perspectives of individual families in Wales, England, Ireland, Greece and Hungary. Through in-depth interviews, the project gathered real insights into how families - mostly with young children - experience exclusion and how policies can be improved to help them.

During the seminar, the participants could hear testimonies from 5 families who have themselves experienced hardship. A DVD was also shown, entitled "Are you listening?". Another output, presented at the seminar, was a practical tool to ensure that politicians directly involve their 'target group' in the policy-making process.

The full report and summary is available on: <http://www.home-start-int.org/Europeanunion.asp>

News from the European Institutions



Re-shuffle in the European Commission

In November 2005 the European Commission adopted a decision on the mobility of its senior management staff at the level of Director General and equivalent. This second mobility package applies to those officials who have reached five years seniority in 2005 or whose nationality coincides with that of the Commissioner currently holding the portfolio. The key principle is that senior management staff moves after five years in the same function.

17 Directors-General and Deputy Directors-General were transferred to new posts by 1st January 2006. The other senior posts will be filled after publication of vacancy notices. Odile Quintin, Director-General for DG Employment, with whom Eurochild was mainly dealing, has left her position. She exchanged places with Klaus van der Pas, former Director General of DG Education and Culture, from 1 January 2006.

For more information, see: <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/1399&format=HTML&aged=0&language=en&guiLanguage=en>

Communication on the "Education and Training 2010" work programme

In November 2005, the European Commission published its contribution to the Commission-Council joint mid-term report on the "Education and Training 2010" work programme, to be agreed by the Council in February 2006. The document acknowledges important progress in Member States' definition of priorities, internal co-ordination between Ministries, and encouragement of life-long learning. Public spending in education rose from 4.9% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in 2000 to 5.2% in 2002.

However, serious shortcomings and imbalances between Member States need to be tackled. Despite some improvement in life-long learning participation, 80 million Europeans are low-qualified and insufficient attention is given to continuing education of adult and older workers. Other worrying facts are that **still 20% of 15-year-olds are not fully reading literate and 23% of high upper-secondary pupils leave school early.**

As a reference tool, the Commission has published a proposal for a European Framework for Key Competences. This document identifies the basic skills and competences that Member States should ensure all European workers have: communication in the mother tongue; foreign language skills; basic competences in maths, science and technology; IT

skills; learning to learn; social, cultural and civic competences; entrepreneurship; and cultural expression.

For the full Communication, see:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/doc/progressreport06_en.pdf

New Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

In January 2005 the European Commission decided to set up an Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. It will be responsible for managing certain EU Programmes in the education, culture and audiovisual fields. The Agency has been set up for a 4-year period: 2005-2008. An interim evaluation of the operation of the Agency, including a cost/benefit analysis, will be carried out in 2006.

The Agency will manage certain parts of the following Programmes: Socrates (Education), Leonardo da Vinci (Vocational training), Youth, MEDIA-Plus and MEDIA-Training, Culture 2000, Erasmus Mundus, eLearning, Community Action Programmes to promote bodies active at European level in the fields of Youth, Culture, Education & Training. It will also be in charge of projects in the field of higher education financed by resources for economic co-operation with developing countries in Asia (the Erasmus Mundus Asian Windows).

The Agency is fully operational as of the 3rd January 2006.

For more information, see:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/ea cea/index_en.htm

Green Paper on tackling obesity

On 8 December 2005 the European Commission adopted a **Green Paper on tackling obesity**. It forms the basis for a public consultation on the promotion of healthy diets and physical activity in the EU. Its aim is to gather information for a European level action on obesity to complement, support and co-ordinate existing national measures. The Green Paper acknowledges that the obesity epidemic has many causes and that a diversified approach to tackle the problem is therefore necessary. Action is needed in terms of nutrition, promoting physical activity and healthy lifestyles.

A shift in daily diet towards high energy, fat, salt and sugar intake, the sedentary [spending too much time sitting down and not enough physical activity] nature of modern life and increasing urbanisation have made obesity one of the most serious health challenges facing the EU. A number of food directives are also currently in the process of approval or revision: health claims made on food (low fat, sugar-free) food supplements (vitamins and minerals) and food safety laws.

For the Green Paper of the Commission: http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/nutrition/documents/nutrition_gp_en.pdf
For more information about the Commission's activities in this area:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/nutrition/nutrition_en.htm

Integration of disabled people in the EU

In 1992 the United Nations proclaimed, the 3rd December as the International Day of Disabled People. The European Day of Disabled People is also celebrated on the same day since 1993, as a means of raising the awareness and promoting European co-operation in this field. In 2005 the theme of the European Day of Disabled People was "Living Together in Society".

Ombudsman quizzes Commission on integration of disabled

In November 2003, the European Ombudsman Mr. Nikiforos Diamandouros asked the European Commission what it was doing to integrate people with disabilities. He inquired about the Commission's practices on a number of issues such as employment, information policy and accessibility of buildings. For more information: <http://www.euro-ombudsman.eu.int/disabilities/en/default.htm>.

Communication on 'active inclusion' of people with disabilities in the EU

In December 2005 the Commission issued a Communication putting forward concrete measures designed to improve the lives of disabled people in the EU during 2006-2007. Its overall aim is to improve the 'active inclusion' of disabled people and to promote the concept of independent living. It also proposes to ensure that the disability issue is mainstreamed (i.e. taken into consideration) into EU decisions and actions in other areas. The Communication builds on the citizens' concept of disability, as reflected in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

For the Communication, see:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2003/oct/com650_final_en.html
European day of disabled people:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/disability/day_en.html

Communication on Education through Sport

Following the positive results of the European Year of Education through Sport (EYES 2004) and in response to the expectations raised during the Year among European civil society, the European Commission adopted a Communication entitled: "**The EU action in the field of Education through Sport: building on EYES 2004 achievements**", on 23 December 2005. The Communication presents the Year's main achievements together with proposals for follow-up in the field of education through sport.

For the Communication: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2005/com2005_0680_en01.pdf. For more information, see: http://europa.eu.int/comm/sport/index_en.html

During the Austrian Presidency, the Institute for the Economics of Sport (*SportsEconAustria*) will produce a study on sport's contribution to EU economies. Its reasoning is that sport's business aspects are becoming more and more important. Sport makes a sizeable contribution to the Austrian economy through skiing for example. Sport and fitness, sport and volunteer work, major sports events' transport problems, sport and tourism plus sport's role in creating jobs are among the areas that Austria has singled out for special attention.

Tackling the EU's Drugs Problems

There are up to 2 million problem drug users in the EU and around 8000 people die of a drugs overdose every year. Drug use is at historically high levels and remains a threat to the entire international community. To confront this challenge the Commission has organised a two-day conference on 26-27 January in Brussels on "Civil Society and Drugs". The meeting was attended by over 140 participants, representing European NGO networks and voluntary organisations from 16 Member States, 4 Candidate Countries and Norway.

The Conference was a forum to discuss ways of improving communication with civil society on drug issues at EU level. The voluntary sector in Europe plays an important role in the drugs field, working at regional and local level delivering services mainly in the area of demand reduction, including education and prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

As a key objective of the EU Drugs Action Plan (2005-2008) is to strengthen the involvement of civil society in EU drugs policy development and evaluation, the Commission will also publish a Green Paper on drugs and civil society in the EU, in 2006.

2006 Annual Progress Report on Growth and Jobs

The European Commission published its new Annual Progress Report on the Lisbon Strategy, the partnership between the EU and Member States for growth and jobs on 25 January 2006.

The report identifies 4 Key Challenges:

- Knowledge - investing in Higher Education, Innovation and Research;
- Enterprise - cutting red tape and creating a better business climate for entrepreneurs;
- Jobs and Ageing - adopting a lifecycle approach to employment, with **key focus on young people, women and increased childcare support**, & active ageing policies for over 45's;

- Energy - Guaranteeing a secure and stable energy supply.

The Report will go to the Spring European Council in March 2006, where the Commission will urge Heads of State and Government to make the commitments required. The Commission will work with Member States to support their efforts to implement their National Reform Programmes, to discuss how programmes can be strengthened and to ensure that other EU instruments like cohesion funding are used effectively to support Growth and Jobs.

For more information, see:

http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/annual-report_en.htm

White Paper on Communication Policy

Falling participation in European elections and several surveys have made clear that the EU has a growing problem connecting with its citizens. To tackle this "democratic deficit", the Commission appointed a Vice-President for Communication. Mrs Margot Wallström consulted with many stakeholders, what resulted in July 2005 in a 50-point **action plan to modernise the Commission's own internal communication culture**. After the 'No' votes in the EU Constitution referenda in France and the Netherlands, EU leaders decided to call for a period of reflection and Mrs Wallström launched the idea of a **Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate** to stimulate broader debate between the European institutions and the citizens.

Now Commissioner Wallström will present a **White Paper setting out a "European agenda for communication and democracy"**. The document aims to set out a more coherent vision for communication policy. It identifies several key areas for further action and tries to move away from the Brussels-centric approach that characterised other information strategies. Based on the principles of inclusion, diversity and participation, it will propose a European Charter or Code of Conduct on Information and Communication. It foresees an important role for the other EU institutions, Member States, local and regional governments and national political parties. The paper will also present several actions to "empower citizens" and make them more active in influencing EU policies.

The Commission will present its White Paper on Communication Policy on 1 February 2006.

News from the planned Code of Conduct for non-profit organisations

On 22 November, a cross-sectoral NGO delegation (composed of representatives from the Social Platform – of whom Eurochild AISBL is a member, Green-10, Human Rights and Democracy Network and the Civil Society Contact Group), met with Commission Vice-President Franco Frattini to discuss the Commission's proposal to set up a Code of Conduct for non-profit organisations.

The aim of the future Code of Conduct is to promote, on a voluntary basis, transparency and accountability best practices within the non-profit sector, with a view to prevent their exploitation for the financing of terrorism and other types of criminal abuse (see July-August 2005 e-News Bulletin).

Responding to concerns from NGO representatives on the consultation process and the content of the Code, Mr Frattini stressed that substantial improvements were made to the text, following an on-line consultation last summer. In particular, the proposal to organise awareness programmes on the vulnerabilities of the non-profit sector to terrorist financing was withdrawn. Mr Frattini also acknowledged the need to consult with civil society and to gather knowledge on the working conditions of NGOs on the ground.

The Communication has been adopted in December 2005 by the College of Commissioners and will now be presented to the Council and the European Parliament.

News from the Services Directive

The Parliament's Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) adopted the report on the Directive on Services in the Internal Market on 22 November 2006, maintaining the disputed country-of-origin principle. MEPs watered down the Commission's draft, although less than rapporteur Evelyne Gebhardt had wanted. They supported the Commission's objective to establish an internal market for services and voted for only a few of the safeguards she wanted introduce. Trade Unions from the EU's old and new Member States were opposed to the version of the Services Directive adopted in the IMCO Committee.

After two years of discussions on the Services Directive, the Commission decided to speed up the adoption process: after the European Parliament's vote in plenary on 15 February, the Commission will issue a new proposal before the Spring Council of 23-24 March. According to the Commission and the Austrian Presidency this change in the schedule will make it possible to reach an agreement on the Directive before the end of the Austrian Presidency. However, diplomats point to big differences in the position of Member States. Vienna has so far positioned itself between more liberal countries - like the UK, Ireland and several states from Central and Eastern Europe, and more protectionist countries, such as France, Italy and Germany. The Austrians appear closer to those preferring a less ambitious version of the law, with chancellor Schüssel recently suggesting the whole text should be scrapped and rewritten.

Commission's website on the Services Directive:
http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/services/services-dir/index_en.htm

EP Committee on Internal Market:
http://www.europarl.eu.int/comparl/imco/default_en.htm

Background note:

The Directive on Services in the Internal Market was presented by the Prodi Commission in January 2004 as one of the key elements of the Lisbon reform agenda. Then known as the '**Bolkestein Directive**', it aimed at breaking down legal and administrative barriers to trade in services across the EU. The Commission says the proposed directive would guarantee service providers more legal certainty if they want to exercise the two fundamental freedoms of establishment and service provision enshrined in the EC Treaty. It argues that this will boost European competitiveness as the services sector accounts for over 70% of jobs in the EU. Critics, however, have attacked the directive for leading to 'social dumping', and they have argued that services of general interest like healthcare should be excluded from the scope of the directive. It has sparked fears that opening up of the sector could lead to lower social standards and lower quality of services in Europe.

European Parliament

Strategies to prevent trafficking in women and children

The European Parliament has adopted a report proposing strategies to tackle the growing worldwide problem of trafficking in women and children, including measures to deal with the supply and demand sides as well as the traffickers. The report calls on the Member States, especially Germany, to take appropriate measures in the course of the World Cup football tournament in 2006 to prevent trafficking of women and forced prostitution. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to this modern form of slavery.

Successful strategies are needed to deal with the main causes of trafficking. It is, however, not possible to address the prevention of trafficking through individual actions by each Member State. MEPs suggest a holistic and integrated multidisciplinary approach at the EU and international level. The EP also calls for research, at national and European level, into the underlying causes, particularly of trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation. The report suggests practical action, such as awareness raising campaigns to inform of the dangers and educate the vulnerable members of society in the countries of origin, to alert and sensitise the public about the problem and reduce demand in the countries of destination. Another measure envisaged is national and international telephone help-lines. MEPs also highlight the need to tackle the tendency to use the Internet for sexual exploitation.

The European Parliament calls on the Member States to enforce the law and strengthen the

prosecution and punishment of traffickers, accomplices, persons seeking sexual services from minors and to prosecute the laundering of the proceeds of trafficking.

For the full report, see:

<http://www.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade3?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2006-0005+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=0&NAV=S&LSTDOC=Y&LSTDOC=N>

European Council

Informal Employment and Social affairs Council meeting

An Informal Council meeting took place on 19-21 January 2006 in Villach, Austria. The Employment and Social Affairs points were discussed on 20 January. The main two items on the agenda were 'Flexicurity' (promoting both labour market flexibility and job security with social protection) and the social dimension of the revised Lisbon strategy.

Prior to the European Council meeting, the issues on its agenda were discussed at a meeting on 19 January between the Commission, the EU Troika Ministers (the past, present, and upcoming Presidencies of the EU), the Parliament, European social partners and NGO's, who were represented by the Social Platform, of which Eurochild AISBL is a member. The Social Platform submitted a detailed written submission to the Council on the two themes of flexicurity and the social dimension of Lisbon.

The meeting was opened by the Austrian Federal Minister for Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection Ursula Haubner, followed by Commissioner Spidla and Jan Andersson, MEP (chair of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee). Fintan Farrell, EAPN (European Anti-Poverty Network), leading the Social Platform delegation, presented the Platform's key messages for the Council meeting.

Financial Perspectives for 2007-2013

After long negotiations, at the European Council meeting of 15-16 December, the Council finally agreed on its position on the financial perspectives for 2007-2013. It set the overall budget for the seven-year period at a higher figure than the UK Presidency had originally proposed, but considerably less than the Commission had asked for.

The allocation of only 520 million Euros per year is a considerable cut compared to the Commission proposal and would necessarily result in budget cuts. Also, there was no room foreseen for any budget increases throughout the seven year period. Many civil society organisations have expressed disappointment with this situation and asked that the financial perspectives be improved, especially in the areas of culture, education, youth and citizenship.

The European Parliament rejected the budget proposal during its plenary session on 18th January 2006. It is asking for 975 million Euros. Some MEPs are wondering how an enlarged European Union with more ambitious goals is supposed to function with 30% less money than before. However, the Parliament is ready to negotiate and has proposed a compromise solution to the Commission.

For more information, see:

http://www.europarl.eu.int/news/expert/background_page/008-4356-19-1-3-901-20060113BKG04268-19-01-2006-2006--false/default_p001c006_en.htm

The Austrian Presidency would like to adopt the EU budget for 2007-13 during the spring Council. If this is not achieved, the budget will have to be negotiated annually, without a pre-defined framework.

Presidency of the European Union



Austria at the helm of the EU

On 1 January 2006, Austria took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union from the United Kingdom. According to Austrian Economics Minister Martin Bartenstein, the Austrian Presidency's priority is to ensure the revised Lisbon Strategy is back on track. In his opinion it is important to boost the commitment of Member States, but national action plans must be backed with concrete action at EU level. To this end, the Austrian Presidency aims to make progress with the Services Directive at the Competitiveness Council, and the Working Time Directive at the Employment and Social Affairs Council.

Secondly, the Austrian Presidency will focus on 'flexicurity - flexibility through security' based on the Scandinavian model, combining the institutional features of a flexible labour market with a high level of social security. One issue will be to look at concrete policy consequences of the paradigm at European level, taking into account the very different forms that social security systems take in each Member States.

Other issues on its agenda are certainly the Financial Perspectives 2007-2013, the Growth and Jobs Strategy, enhanced security cooperation and the debate over the future of Europe.

For more information: www.eu2006.at

Austria and Finland announce plans for 2006 EU Presidencies

In preparation for the Austrian and Finnish Presidencies in 2006, a joint draft operational

programme of the Council aims to finalise a number of actions in the field of education:

- The Joint Interim Report on Education and Training 2010 will be finalised in the first half of 2006. Both Presidencies will aim to enhance the strategic objectives of improving the quality and access to education.
- The Presidencies will enhance European cooperation in the field of vocational education and training. The second half of 2006 will see conclusions on vocational education and training with the Finnish Presidency organising a follow up conference in December 2006.
- The European Quality Charter for Mobility will be finally adopted and both Presidencies will work on the European Indicator of Language Competence and the European Qualifications Framework.

Depending on Commission preparations, a possible item on the Council agenda will be a recommendation on the quality of teacher training.

Ministers fix order of future EU Presidencies

EU Foreign Ministers have agreed the order of future EU Presidencies for the coming 13 years, with Estonia to take the helm in June 2018 as the last of the current 25 EU Member States. The EU presidency hosts the meetings of the European Council, the diplomatic seat of the Member States, and arranges and chairs all the Council's meetings and working groups. This gives the country holding the Presidency significant control over how often the Council and Council bodies meet, the items they discuss and what happens during the meetings. The presidency is held for six months (from January to June, and from July to December) by each Member State on a rotating basis. The EU Constitution, which has been shelved by EU leaders following the French and Dutch "No" to the text, had proposed creating the post of a permanent president of the European Council.

The order will be as follows:

- Austria: January – June 2006
- Finland: July – December 2006
- Germany: January – June 2007
- Portugal: July – December 2007
- Slovenia: January – June 2008
- France: July – December 2008
- Czech Republic: January – June 2009
- Sweden: July – December 2009
- Spain: January – June 2010
- Belgium: July – December 2010
- Hungary: January – June 2011
- Poland: July – December 2011
- Denmark: January – June 2012
- Cyprus: July – December 2012
- Ireland: January – June 2013
- Lithuania: July – December 2013
- Greece: January – June 2014
- Italy: July – December 2014

- Latvia: January – June 2015
- Luxembourg: July – December 2015
- Netherlands: January – June 2016
- Slovakia: July – December 2016
- Malta: January – June 2017
- UK: July – December 2017
- Estonia: January – June 2018

European Ombudsman

Ombudsman criticises EU Council opaqueness

The European Union's Ombudsman Nikiforos Diamandouros, the European citizens' watchdog against maladministration in Brussels institutions, has said that the EU Council, the Member States' decision-making body, still has a long way to go to open all of its meetings to the public, with Ministers still holding their "delicate" discussions behind closed doors. The Ombudsman said that it is obvious that more steps remain to be taken by the Council, despite a move towards more openness in December 2005.

On 21 December EU Member States announced that discussions and votes on EU legislation under the so-called co-decision procedure - where the European Parliament also has a full say - would be held in public. But according to the Ombudsman this "only partially" responds to his demand for full transparency of its lawmaking work. The December decision is limited to the Council's first deliberations after the European Commission has presented its proposal and the final vote. The debates in between are still closed to the public.

Mr Diamandouros also pointed to the fact that December's decision does not cover policy areas which fall outside the co-decision procedure. This means that substantive issues, including certain issues relating to justice and home affairs legislation are not affected.

For more information, see: <http://www.euro-ombudsman.eu.int/release/en/2006-01-18.htm>

Background note:

The European Ombudsman investigates complaints about mal-administration in the institutions and bodies of the European Union. He usually conducts inquiries on the basis of complaints but can also launch inquiries on his own initiative. Many of the complaints lodged with the Ombudsman concern administrative delay, lack of transparency or refusal of access to information. Any citizen of the Union or any natural or legal person residing or having its registered office in an EU Member State can lodge a complaint with the Ombudsman by mail, fax or e-mail. A complaint form is available from the Ombudsman's office and can be downloaded from the Ombudsman's website www.euro-ombudsman.eu.int.

10th anniversary of the Institution of European Ombudsman

On 6 December, the Institution of European Ombudsman has celebrated its 10th anniversary. The first European Ombudsman, Jacob Söderman, was elected by the European Parliament in 1995. Since then, the Ombudsman has dealt with more than 20,000 complaints and opened more than 2,750 inquiries. The result has been a greater access to documents, the abolition of age discrimination in recruitment, fewer problems with late payment, to name but a few of the outcomes.

Ten years of the European Ombudsman have led the first steps on the way to a more open and accountable EU administration. However, there are areas that still give cause for concern. Over one-fifth of the Ombudsman's inquiries concern a "lack of transparency" in the EU administration.

The European Ombudsman, currently in his second mandate, is P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, former national ombudsman of Greece. He was elected by the European Parliament and has held office since 1 April 2003.

★ ★ General European News ★ ★

European Youth-Week 2005

Youth takes the floor

The European Youth Week (EYW) 2005 under the title "**Youth takes the floor**" took place from 5 to 7 December. As in 2003, this second European Youth Week was intended to give visibility to the YOUTH Programme and European youth policy. This year's Week has focused on the **active involvement of young people in the European project**.

200 youth delegates from all over Europe gathered in Brussels working in both plenary and working groups, as well as being given the opportunity to discuss with the European Commission and the Parliament and voice their opinions on key issues such as the future direction of the EU, their active citizenship and the need for better opportunities for young people. They adopted concrete recommendations for European policymakers on: the future of Europe, active citizenship and the European Youth Pact. The points that were presented to Commissioners Figel, Špidla and Kovács called for dialogue with young people to be more structured; more continuous; to involve all relevant actors; and include all areas relevant to the lives of young people in Europe.

For more information: <http://europa.eu.int/youth>

Youth opinion

At the beginning of the European Youth Week, on 5 December, a Eurobarometer on young EU citizens' expectations for the future of the EU was released. It provides invaluable information for Commission and Member State policy-makers. According to this Europe-wide opinion poll, the three highest priority areas that young EU citizens want the EU to tackle are: fighting unemployment (52%), fighting poverty and social exclusion (45%) plus maintaining peace and security in Europe (30%). As many as 68% of young Europeans in the new Member States want the fight against unemployment to be the EU's top priority.

Two thirds (68%) of all young Europeans fear the transfer of jobs to other Member States, as compared to 72% of all EU citizens. The concern is more widespread among young Europeans living in the 15 'old' Member States than among those living in the 10 'new' Member States.

For the full Eurobarometer, see:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/notes/back_note_en.pdf

EU campaign to protect young workers

An EU-wide campaign will start in 2006 to address the safety of young people at work. According to Eurostat data, the risk of work accidents is at least 50% higher among those aged 18-24 years than in any other age category. Accidents and damage to the health of young workers are particularly distressing where the young person has to live with the consequences for the rest of their lives. The campaign is:

- promoting risk awareness in children and young people,
- promoting the preparation of young people for the health & safety aspects of working life,
- promoting quality work for youngsters - safe and healthy workplaces and practices,
- supporting networking and information exchange among stakeholders,
- supporting the European Youth Pact for employment and education and training.

It will include a week of activities across Europe on 23-27 October 2006. The **European Week for Safety and Health at Work** is an annual information campaign designed to raise awareness and promote activities to make Europe a safe and healthy place to work. It is coordinated by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work and will be run in the Member States, as well as EFTA and candidate countries. In 2006 it will focus on **young workers**.

In anticipation of the campaign, the European Agency has launched an on-line information portal on the safety and health of young people. For more information, see: <http://osha.eu.int/youngpeople>.

Background note:

The *European Agency for Safety and Health at Work* was set up by the European Union to help meet the information needs in the field of occupational safety and health. Based in Bilbao, Spain, it aims to improve the lives of people at work by stimulating the flow of technical, scientific and economic information between all those involved in occupational safety and health issues.

Conference on eTwinning

eTwinning, the European scheme to encourage school partnerships on the internet, was launched in January 2005 and has quickly established itself as a major instrument for school collaboration in Europe. In less than a year, over 11 000 primary and secondary schools have registered at the eTwinning portal, and close to 2000 of them are already participating in collaborative projects. These cover pupils of all age groups, all subject areas, and all of the official languages of the EU.

On 13 January 2006, in Linz, Austria, prizes have been awarded for the first time to the best eTwinning projects launched in the past 12 months by Ján Figel', European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism and Elisabeth Gehrler, Austrian Federal Minister for Education.

The three-day conference showed case examples of best practices in eTwinning through workshops and displayed them in an exhibition hall. More than 400 teachers from all over Europe have taken part in the event, together with representatives from the European Commission and the eTwinning European and national Support Services.

For more information: <http://www.etwinning.net>

Culture 2000 Programme

Culture 2000 is the Commission's cultural programme and supports annual as well as multi-annual cooperation projects, encouraging and promoting the establishment of European cultural networks. In 2005, 217 projects have been selected. In addition to the 25 Member States of the EU, the EEA (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway) countries and two acceding countries (Bulgaria and Romania) participated in the programme. This year ten projects were selected under Culture 2000 (2000-2006), promoting cultural cooperation with third countries. For 2006, the programme will support projects in all artistic and cultural fields without a sector priority.

The European Commission has proposed a new cultural cooperation programme for the period 2007-2013 which will concentrate on three priorities: mobility of artists and cultural workers, mobility of works and intercultural dialogue. The future programme received the political support of the EU ministers at the last Council.

For more information, see:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/index_en.html

Green Week 2006 School Competition

The annual environmental conference and exhibition, Green Week, will take place in Brussels between 30 May and 2 June 2006. Part of the event is the annual Green Week School Competition, which encourages young people from all EU Member States, candidate and EFTA countries to learn about environmental issues and express themselves artistically. The 6th edition of the Green Week School Competition builds on the success of past years. Last year pupils created more than 3 000 entries on the theme of climate change. This year, the school competition will focus on biodiversity.

Younger children can enter the competition with drawings and paintings illustrating their opinions about biodiversity while older pupils are invited to submit short digital videos on the same theme. The top three winners of each category will be invited to Brussels for the awards ceremony during Green Week. A selection of the best entries in each category will be presented at the conference. Deadline for entries is 25 March.

For more information: <http://greenweek2006.eun.org>

Human Rights Day - 10 December 2005

International Human Rights Day was celebrated on 10 December. It commemorates the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December 1948, 57 years ago. The Universal Declaration "recognises the equal and inalienable rights accorded to every human being" and "calls upon every individual and every institution of society to strive, by teaching and education, to promote respect for human rights and to secure their universal and effective recognition and implementation". Today it reminds us of the work that still needs to be done to promote and protect human rights around the world, especially of the most vulnerable and socially excluded ones.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, declared on that day that the EU takes its obligation to promote and protect the rights of our fellow members of the human family seriously, and has a very active human rights policy. She promised that the EU would actively support the establishment of a Human Rights Council to replace the current UN Commission on Human Rights, decided by the UN's Summit in September 2005. This will provide a mechanism to better protect and promote human rights around the world.

Public Opinion

The "Autumn Standard Eurobarometer", presented on Tuesday 20 December reveals that an average of 50% of European citizens considers EU membership

of their country "a good thing", down from 54% in spring this year. The survey, conducted in October and November, is the first commission poll on EU citizens' opinion of the EU since the French and Dutch rejection of the Constitution in May and June, as well as the breakdown of the June summit on the bloc's 2007-2013 budget.

Of the 25 Member States, Austria and the UK appear the most euro-sceptic. On the other side of the coin are the Union's greatest supporters, Luxembourg and Ireland. Remarkably, in the Netherlands, a country that overwhelmingly rejected a European constitution in June, 70% of citizens say that EU membership is a good thing.

Despite the referendum failure in France and the Netherlands in May and June, support for a European Constitution has increased in the bloc of 25, with a majority of EU citizens in favour of a redraft of the faded constitution. The number of Europeans opposed to further enlargement has grown since the spring, from 38 percent to 39 percent, with Austria, Germany and France in particular concerned about expansion, and Greece, Slovakia and Poland most in favour.

For the full Eurobarometer, see:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb64/eb64_en.htm

ECB to launch anti-inflation cartoons

To convince citizens of the importance of keeping Euro inflation in check, the European Central bank (ECB) has launched an education package featuring Anna and Alex, two price stability-loving cartoon children. The project, a school initiative to be unveiled by central banks in all capitals of the Euro-zone and on the ECB web site on Monday 12 December, presents "euro-children" Alex and Anna who teach the virtues of price stability to children across the monetary union.

The campaign is part the bank's attempt to convince citizens in the 12-country Euro-zone about the advantages of the common monetary policy and keeping inflation and deflation under control. The ECB however, may have to switch its gaze from the 12-country Euro-zone to the East, as reports from the new EU Member States show that resistance against joining the single currency is growing.

Council of Europe News

"All different – all equal" 2006

all different
all e q u a l

After the success of the 1995 campaign with the same name, the Council of Europe has again launched another "All different – all equal" project, in co-operation with the European Youth Forum and the European Commission.

The aim of the **European Youth Campaign for Diversity, Human Rights and Participation** is to encourage and enable young people to participate in building peaceful societies based on diversity and inclusion, in a spirit of respect, tolerance and mutual understanding. In its undertaking, it will highlight the links with the 1995 Campaign against Racism, Anti-Semitism, Xenophobia and Intolerance. To this end,

the slogan selected for the Campaign is that of the previous initiative: "All Different – All Equal".

The partners in organising this Campaign are the Council of Europe, mainly the Directorate of Youth and Sport (DYS), the European Youth Forum. Its activities will be undertaken essentially by young people in partnership with public authorities; the target group of the Campaign is the civil society, both at European and national levels. However, the Campaign should of course reach out to as many young people in Europe as possible, with a particular focus on those who are victims of discrimination, and in particular through activities involving schools.

The Campaign will take place in 2006, with continuation of activities and follow-up in 2007. For more information, see:

http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural%5FCo%2Doperation/Youth/1_News/News/060_youth_campaign.asp#TopOfPage

United Nations News

Children's Rights at the World Summit on the Information Society

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) took place in Tunis, last November. The objective of WSIS was to generate a global discussion on the contemporary global information society and take action on the issue of the digital divide between the rich and the poor.

Thanks to active lobbying on the part of international child rights NGOs such as Child Helpline International (CHI) and ECPAT, **children's rights are mentioned in the Tunis Agenda** (articles 90q and 92) and the Tunis Commitment (article 24). The articles signify major milestones achieved in placing children on the telecoms agenda. Having achieved the above, all children networks and NGOs will be

able to adequately lobby for children's rights and protection. Moreover, civil society organisations that took part in the Summit wrote a statement together, called "Much more could have been achieved".

For more information about the World Summit: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/tunis/index.html>
For the civil society statement, see: www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/tunis/contributions/co13.doc

The Drafting of a Disability Convention

People with disabilities have argued for many years that disability is a human right, not a welfare issue. Their arguments were finally accepted when the UN, in 2001, agreed to set up an Ad Hoc Committee to consider proposals for a new Human Rights Convention to address the rights of people with disabilities. The 7th session of the Ad Hoc Committee on a *Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities* is taking place in New York on 16th January to 3rd February. The aim of this Ad Hoc Committee meeting is to draft a text of the Convention to submit it to the General Assembly for its adoption, hopefully at its 61st session.

The aim of the Convention is not to create new human rights standards. All rights embodied in the existing Human Rights Treaties apply equally to people with disabilities. The problem lies in their implementation. People with disabilities are widely denied equal civil rights, rights to family life, recognition of legal capacity and are disproportionately vulnerable to both physical and sexual violence. Yet any review of government reports reveals a virtually total absence of acknowledgement of how the rights of disabled people are being realised. In many ways, people with disabilities are rendered invisible. Accordingly, the aim of the new Convention is to introduce obligations on governments to implement existing human rights for people with disabilities on an equal basis with non-disabled people.

Despite the unique provision in the **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** which explicitly includes disability as a ground for protection from discrimination, children with disabilities continue to face extreme forms of discrimination in most countries around the world. Analysis of government reports to the Committee on the CRC reveals that virtually the only issues ever addressed by them in respect of disabled children relate to education and social welfare. Other rights (to participate, to play, to information, to freedom from violence, to an adequate standard of living, and indeed, the right to life) are rarely, if ever, addressed. It is therefore imperative that this new Treaty pays attention to children as well as adults with disabilities in imposing obligations on governments to ensure that the rights of all people are equally respected.

To date, the text does not achieve this objective. It contains one article dedicated to children (Art.7). However, the wording is largely lifted from Article 23 of the CRC and as such, serves to add very little to strengthen existing rights. Children's rights are not addressed anywhere else in the Convention except in relation to education.

For more information, see: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable>.

Visit of the Special Rapporteur on Child Trafficking to Albania and Greece

The Special Rapporteur on the Sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Juan Miguel Petit, visited Albania from 31 October to 7 November 2005, and Greece from 8 to 14 November 2005. He met with representatives from the Parliament and government, as well as with representatives from local authorities, the police, judiciary, international organisations, donors, NGOs and the media. The purpose of visiting two neighbouring countries was to better understand trans-national dynamics of phenomena like child trafficking and migration flows of unaccompanied children.

In the area of child trafficking, **Albania** has several achievements to report: the legislative and policy frameworks are in place; there is more awareness in society; the police is better trained to deal and investigate this crime; border control improved; the establishment of the Court and the prosecutors' office for serious crimes increased the prosecution capacity; NGOs gained a valuable expertise in delivering rehabilitation programmes for victims of trafficking and in providing social services to communities. Nevertheless, in the opinion of the Special Rapporteur, there is a long way to go for Albania to eradicate the problem of child trafficking.

With regards to **Greece**, the Special Rapporteur noted several achievements: relevant international instruments have been ratified and some others are in the process of ratification; new laws have been adopted on trafficking of human beings and migration. Nevertheless, even though there are relatively few registered cases of child trafficking or sexual exploitation, the institutional capacity to respond needs to be further improved. There is still a need to improve the coverage of social programmes with staff specialised in work with foreign unaccompanied minors, street children and victims of trafficking. The protection of unaccompanied minors is to be improved. The situation of Roma & Roma children is a concern as well. Mr Petit also underlined a lack of an overarching institutional set up for child protection.

For more information, see: <http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/children/rapporteur/>

Further Reading

Report on the State of the World's Children 2006

Hundreds of millions of children are suffering from severe exploitation and discrimination and have become virtually invisible to the world, **UNICEF** says in its "***The State of the World's Children 2006: Excluded and Invisible***". The agency said that millions of children disappear from view when trafficked or forced to work in domestic servitude. Other children, such as street children, are very visible but are excluded from fundamental services and protections. The report is a sweeping assessment of the world's most vulnerable children, whose rights to a safe and healthy childhood are exceptionally difficult to protect. It is UNICEF's annual flagship publication and a comprehensive survey of global trends affecting children. For more information: <http://www.unicef.org>.

In conjunction with the publication of the "State of the World's Children 2006" report on excluded and invisible children, **UNICEF's Voices of Youth project** held discussions on how young people think these children can be reached. These discussions are included in the December issue of "***What Young People Are Saying***", Voices of Youth's bi-monthly newsletter. The objective of "What Young People Are Saying" is to further links between programming and the concerns of today's youth. By providing easy to navigate summaries, relevant quotations, and suggested action points, it offers an additional means of connecting with young people globally, interweaving their concerns with UNICEF's priorities and objectives. For more information: <http://www.unicef.org/voy>.

Publication on children's participation in decisions affecting them

Number 36 in the **Bernard van Leer foundation's** Working Papers series has recently been published: "***Can you hear me? The right of young children to participate in decisions affecting them***" emphasises that participation enhances children's self-esteem and confidence, promotes their overall capacities, produces better outcomes, strengthens understanding of and commitment to democratic processes and protects children more effectively. However, creating environments where these entitlements are fulfilled for young children will require profound change. In most countries throughout the world, there is a continued perception of young children as passive recipients of care and protection. Their capacities for participation are underestimated, their agency in their own lives is denied and the value of involving them is unrecognised. Yet there is a growing and persuasive body of evidence to challenge these barriers. For more information: <http://www.bernardvanleer.org>.

Publication on the role of social protection in securing child rights

Plan UK has recently published a **policy briefing** on the importance of social protection for the poorest and most vulnerable children. The paper examines the new understandings of social protection and how these relate to child rights. It argues that social protection instruments, and in particular, cash transfers have enormous potential to reduce child poverty. However, in order to maximise the benefits for child wellbeing, social protection systems need to be grounded within a rights based approach and linked to wider development in a holistic manner. For more information: <http://www.plan-uk.org>.

Publication on eliminating corporal punishment of children

The **Council of Europe** has published a report on "***Eliminating corporal punishment: a human rights imperative for Europe's children***". For the CoE, children are not mini-persons with mini-rights, mini-feelings and mini-human dignity. They are vulnerable human beings with full rights and they need protection, which always takes the best interests of the child into account. Banning all corporal punishment, including within the family, in all its 46 Member States is a major concern and commitment for the CoE. The foundation for this commitment is provided by the human rights standards set by various legal instruments, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter. For more information: <http://book.coe.int>.

Publication on the impacts of trade liberalisation on poor children

A new policy brief from **Save the Children UK's** Young Lives project "***The Social Impacts of Trade Liberalisation: How Can Childhood Poverty Be Reduced?***" examines the impacts of trade liberalisation on poor children. Although issues related to children, particularly children's wellbeing, children's rights and child poverty are marginalised from debates on the consequences of globalisation and trade liberalisation, these processes are likely to have a major impact on the lives of poor children and their families. Trade liberalisation does not generate homogenous benefits to the whole population, and its effects on poverty reduction are not always experienced in the short term. Given that children comprise a significant proportion of the population in developing countries where children are overly represented among the poor, any discussion of the social impacts of trade must be approached from a child-sensitive perspective. For more information: www.younglives.org.uk.

Publication on "Stealing the Future: Corrupting in the Classroom"

Corruption in education seriously undermines political, economic and social development and has a devastating effect on the lives of students and parents, according to "Stealing the Future - Corruption in the Classroom", a new research report by **Transparency International**. Bribes and other illegal fees required for admission to schools, to ensure good grades or for lessons in the required curriculum are a heavy burden on families, particularly for the poor, and help explain low school enrolment and high drop-out rates. The 85-page booklet was launched as part of the **International Anti-Corruption Day** (9 December). It presents the local reality of corruption in education and documents hands-on tools to prevent it. Through public opinion polls, household surveys and tracking of expenditures at the local level, the studies present a panorama of views and experiences. For more information: <http://www.transparency.org>.

Report on "Protecting the rights of children in conflict with the law"

The **World Organisation against Torture** has recently published a report on "**Protecting the rights of children in conflict with the law - programme and advocacy experiences from member organisations of the inter-agency coordination panel on juvenile justice**". This document provides information on the Organisations that are members of the "Juvenile Justice Panel", their missions and activities, as well as innovative practices in areas like legal support, alternative sanctions and capacity building. Its main objective is to elaborate or to improve the legislative measures on juvenile justice and on children in conflict with the law, which already exist. To download the report: http://www.omct.org/pdf/cc/2005/protect_the_rights_of_children_in_conflict_with_the_law.pdf.

Report on children in conflict with the law

Save the Children UK has recently published a report, "**The Right Not to Lose Hope**", which addresses the issues facing children who are in conflict with the law. The first part analyses the experiences and situation of these marginalised children. The second part of the report looks at eight projects around the world that are working to support children in conflict with the law. It contains detailed case studies of community-based responses in 8 countries. This report was written as a contribution to the **UN Study on Violence against Children**. Its recommendations to look at the broad context of issues affecting children in conflict with the law: prevention, decriminalisation, diversion, the justice system, reintegration and rehabilitation. For more information: <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk>.

Publication on children as agents of peace

Save the Children Norway organised a seminar on "**Building peace out of war - children and young people as agents of peace**" during the "Childhoods 2005" conference, which took place in Oslo in July

2005. The seminar enabled a follow up of the organisation's recent evaluation on children affected by armed conflicts and disaster. It also allowed for children and young people's participation, and gave them the opportunity to voice their opinions on peace and conflict. This report is first and foremost meant to be document of reference for the participants and other people interested in this issue. The chapters follow the chronology of the events, starting with the workshop. The presentations of the children are included. For more information: <http://www.reddbarna.no>.

Publication on Institutional Childcare in Central and Eastern Europe

EveryChild has published a new report entitled "**Family Matters: a study of institutional childcare in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union**", written by Richard Carter. The report is a study of institutional childcare across Central and Eastern Europe and the former USSR, and reveals the true extent of the crisis today. There are over 1.3 million children living in institutional care across Central and Eastern Europe and the former SU, and, more alarmingly, the rate at which children are entering care is actually increasing. There is little support and virtually no alternative forms of childcare available to desperate parents, and many feel they have no option but to place their child in an institution. For more information: <http://www.everychild.org.uk>.

Publication of training materials on promoting diversity

Save the Children UK has produced a manual containing an extensive collection of exercises to train staff on issues of diversity and non-discrimination. "**Making A Difference: Training Materials to Promote Diversity and Tackle Discrimination**" covers diversity awareness; assessment and analysis; action planning and gathering information and is designed to all staff, including those with little or no experience of diversity programming. These materials should help programme staff analyse how discrimination impacts on the lives of children, in order to plan effective programming responses. To download the manual: <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk>.

Publication on young children in post-emergency situations

The **Bernard van Leer Foundation** and **International Catholic Child Bureau** have published a Newsletter on "Responses to young children in post-emergency situations" which includes articles by various child rights NGOs on: early childhood development in emergency situations, addressing the rights and needs of tsunami-affected children, rapid child protection assessments in emergency contexts, the impact of conflict on children and care for separated children. While the Newsletter was inspired by the tsunami, it looks at other, similar situations that leave children

unprotected and suffering and seeks to bring important information to organisations facing the needs of children in emergency situations who otherwise would not have access to it. It has been compiled by organisations that have first-hand experience in this area. For more information: <http://www.bernardvanleer.org>.

UK annual report on poverty and social exclusion

The UK Government has recently released its seventh annual report on poverty and social exclusion "*Opportunity for All*". The report provides information on a wide range of targets aimed at tackling poverty and takes stock of progress made in key areas such as child poverty. As well as outlining the UK strategy to tackle poverty and the progress in meeting targets, the report has separate chapters on women and poverty and the European dimension to reducing social exclusion. For more information:

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/ofa/reports/latest.asp>.

European glossary on educational institutions

The terminology used to denote educational institutions is constantly changing. For a more ready insight into their activity as cooperation between them intensifies in Europe, **Eurydice** has just updated the second volume of its European Glossary on Education first published in 2000. This new edition presents the institutions responsible for education in 30 European countries. It covers the various levels of education from pre-primary to tertiary education, while also taking account of institutions specialising in the education of persons with special needs or which offer adult education programmes. To download the glossary: http://www.eurydice.org/Doc_intermediaires/term_to_ols/en/frameset_glossaries.html#glossaire2bis.

@ @ Surfing the Web @ @

Online Child protection training material on Eastern Europe

The UNICEF Regional Office for CEE/CIS (Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States) and the Baltics launched an important new online Resource package on child protection in CEE/CIS in November 2005, the first online resource package on Child Protection issues from a specific region. The package includes reports, statistics, videos, photos, plus region- and country-specific information. It is an attempt to consolidate knowledge on the situation of child protection in the CEE/CIS region and the progress of reforms that UNICEF is concerned with, namely the child care system, juvenile justice system and the overall system of child protection. For more information: <http://www.unicef.org/ceecis>.

Polish youngsters play being virtual MEPs

The Polish Schuman Foundation has launched an on-line computer game based on the European Parliament. Players will try to guess the result of votes on key reports and laws in the real European Parliament, getting points for correct predictions and losing points for bad ones. Gamers can also win points by voting themselves in electronic ballots and lose points for absenteeism, with monthly prizes for "best virtual MEP". Players will be encouraged to join political factions in online discussion forums or to form their own groups if they find 15 or more gamers to join them. Like this young people will see how each of the 732 MEPs works. Registration opens on 1 February and the game will last until 30 June. The European Parliament itself, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation think-tank and the Polish government have also helped to set up the lark. To register for the game: <http://gra.schuman.org/pl/>.

Quick guide to EU employment and social policies

A "Quick guide to EU employment and social policies" is now available online in English at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/social_model/index_en.html. A set of 15 policy briefs looks at what the EU is doing to create more and better jobs, ensure social protection and promote equal opportunities for all. The briefs also underline the role of the different policy instruments of EU social policy. The final brief explains what the EU is doing to promote the social dimension worldwide and how the European social model offers lessons for global policy players.

European Commission's new web site on Roma

The European Commission has launched a new website dedicated to the Roma. It aims to provide information on the EU's activities in support of the Roma, Gypsy and Traveller community across Europe. The site is aimed at anyone interested in Roma affairs, from individuals to non-governmental organisations and government bodies. Users can access a range of information on the different policies, programmes and initiatives of the EU to promote social inclusion and combat discrimination against Roma. www.europa.eu.int/comm/roma

European year of workers' mobility website

2006 has been designated the European Year of workers' mobility. The Year aims to highlight the importance of mobility, the benefits it offers to workers and the economy, and the existing support instruments. To stimulate the debate, the European Commission has established a dedicated website where users can find information on all activities and

events organised in the framework of the Year, as well as updated news items, interviews with key stakeholders and facts and figures on mobility. For more information, see: <http://europa.eu.int/workersmobility2006>

News from the .eu domain name

The European Union's new internet domain ".eu" has been open for business since 7 December 2005. For the first four months, public bodies and business trade mark holders will be prioritised to register their .eu names. From 7 April 2006, the registry will become available for applications from the general public.

Since the launch of the .eu internet domain registrations last month, more than 165 000 companies around the EU have made applications, with registrants in Germany accounting for over a third of the total number. Latest statistics show that out of 166 232 applications so far, 34.7% were German, followed by Dutch with 15.6% and France with 13.4%. Registration for the .eu domain name is currently only open to trademark and prior rights holders in the European Union. A "first come, first served" policy for companies with equal claim to a specific domain name will be applied at the selection. Costly judicial processes over brand names and the right to attractive web addresses may mount however, as a first forecast indicates that some names will be fought for.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Conference on "Integrated Children and Youth Policies in Europe – Needs for disadvantaged neighbourhoods"

30 Jan - 1 Feb 2006, Strasbourg, France

This conference is organised jointly by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSJFJ), the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe, and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe. In the Hemicycle of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, more than 30 cities from all over Europe will present their practices and experiences. Well renowned youth researchers, foundations, NGOs and relevant European networks will also present their reflections and requirements in connection with the European initiative of the "Berlin Process". For more information: info@bmfsfjservice.bund.de.

Course on Childhood

1 January – 31 October 2006, UK

What does it mean to be a child in today's world? Do popular images of innocence and dependence match the reality of children's lives? How do modern technologies alter their play and their identities? What role do children themselves play in shaping their childhood? These questions and many others are the starting point for this course, which covers the age range 0 to 18 years. For more information: www3.open.ac.uk/courses/bin/p12.dll?C01U212.

41st session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

9-27 January, Geneva, Switzerland

Les rapports des pays suivants seront examinés: Azerbaïdjan, Ghana, Hongrie, Lituanie, Liechtenstein, Ile Maurice, Perou, Arabie Saoudite, Thaïlande. De plus, le Comité examinera les rapports d'Andorre, de l'Italie, du Kazakhstan et du Maroc sur la mise en pratique du Protocole facultatif sur la vente d'enfants. Ainsi que les rapports d'Andorre, du Bangladesh, de l'Italie et de la Suisse

sur la mise en pratique du Protocole facultatif sur les enfants et les conflits armés. For more information: <http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/crcs41.htm>.

Conference on the Need for New Child Inclusion Policies in Southern Europe

16-17 February 2006, Rome, Italy

The European Foundation for Street Children Worldwide (EFSCW) and the Representation of the European Commission in Italy are organising a forum on "*Child Inclusion as a Challenge to the Mediterranean Partnership of the EU - the consequences of migration on children at risk in the Southern European Member States*". The conference will be a forum for critical discourse on all aspects of the consequences of migration for children at risk in the Southern European countries and on current issues relating to their specific migration problems. Furthermore, it aims at the improvement of communication between the different national and European levels of policy making, governance and social intervention as well as early prevention methods. Finally, it will contribute to the creation of permanent networking links between these different levels in order to ensure a better co-ordinated and sustainable joint action, such as, in the field of unaccompanied migrant children, the fight against child trafficking and exploitation as well as the reintegration of ethnic minorities. For more information: <http://www.enscw.org>.

International Conference on Early Childhood Education

9-10 March, Arnhem, The Netherlands

Would you like to learn about worldwide developments and trends in early childhood education during a two-day conference by internationally recognized experts in this field? Would you like to participate in interesting discussions with policy-makers, scientists, decision-makers and other experts in the field of early childhood education and have two days to extend your international networking? Then join us for the

International Conference on Early Childhood Education on 9th and 10th March 2006! For more information: http://www.cito.com/i_edu312/conference/eind_fr.htm

**Conference on protecting children from sexual exploitation in tourism
10 March, Berlin, Germany**

The next consultative meeting of the Task Force to Protect Children from Sexual Exploitation in Tourism will be held on 10 March 2006 in Berlin, in connection with this year's edition of the Berlin ITB - International Tourism Fair. The thematic session will focus on campaign design and implementation for the prevention of sexual exploitation of children in tourism (SECT). It will feature guidelines and practical examples of campaign actions for the prevention of SECT. During the meeting, the Task Force will also provide opportunities for participants to exhibit their respective campaign material and posters. For more information: http://www.world-tourism.org/protect_children.

Seminar on children without parental care in Eastern Europe

The International Foster Care Organisation's "East-East Network" seeks to link together all those involved in the development of family-based care in the countries of Eastern Europe (CEE/CIS/Baltics). The IFCO 2006 Regional Training Seminar will be held in Bratislava in the residential conference centre established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic. It will bring together people from across the region and beyond to share and learn together in a busy programme of plenary and workshop sessions. All those interested in the development of foster care in Eastern Europe are welcome to attend - places are limited. Those interested in submitting papers for a plenary or workshop session should refer to the IFCO web site after 1 March 2006 or send an email to Stela Grigoras: sgrigoras@everychild.md. The submission deadline is: 14 April 2006. For more information: <http://www.ifco.info/>.

Please note that this list only mentions events to happen within the upcoming two months and does not pretend to be exhaustive!

Sharing Information

Do you wish to share information, announce something or make a contribution to the e-News Bulletin?

Please send it to: info@eurochild.org.

Eurochild



Eurochild AISBL is a network of organisations and individuals, who are working in and across Europe to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of children and young people. Our work is based on the principles enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. At the heart of our activities lies the Child Poverty Programme.

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