

Budapest, 6 November, 2008

5th Annual Conference starting today aims to draw attention to child poverty in Europe

Eurochild - a network of organisations and individuals promoting the rights and welfare of children in Europe - in partnership with Family, Child and Youth Association (Hungary) has opened its 5th Annual Conference today in Budapest, Hungary. The theme of the conference is: "Including Children: a child rights approach to child well-being".

160 participants from 23 EU countries, including experts, civil organizations and young people from 4 countries are participating in Eurochild's 5th Annual Conference. Catriona Williams, Eurochild's President, a representative from the European Commission and Peter Kiss, Minister of the Prime Minister's Office of Hungary have opened the conference.

The event aims to highlight how EU instruments – and in particular the EU's social inclusion process - can support government efforts to develop long-term, comprehensive children's strategies and to reduce child poverty.

The Eurochild conference takes place just one month after the deadline for Member States to submit their 2008-2010 National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion (NSRSPSI) to the European Commission. Despite identifying child poverty as a priority, there is a huge gap between aspiration and reality on the ground. Statistics show that child poverty is not falling in most of the member states, in fact it is growing. Already some 72 million European citizens live in or on the edge of poverty, an estimated 19 million of them are children.

The social inclusion strategies do not have child specific targets to reduce child poverty in Europe. They do not frame children's health, education or welfare in terms of their rights. Very few countries take a child rights approach and refer to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Child poverty has a multi-dimensional nature and it is not always acknowledged. Some member states offer a more complete set of indicators to measure child well being, acknowledging the multi-dimensional nature of child poverty. In most countries however, targets are still almost exclusively income based.

If EU Member States are to take children's rights seriously, they need to involve them directly in the decision making processes. At its 5th conference, Eurochild has invited children and young participants to express their views on the national situations.

The global economic crisis has already started to affect the lives of vulnerable children and families in Europe. Although the EU has recently announced a rescue package of €2 trillion for the financial sector, many member states have introduced serious cuts to the budgets in areas affecting directly children such as education, benefits and early child care. In some high income countries such as Nordic countries, inequality between people and risk for social exclusion have risen. With this event, Eurochild is taking the opportunity to increase public awareness of the nature and extent of child poverty and social exclusion and what needs to be done about it.



About Eurochild: Eurochild^{AISBL} is an international network of organisations and individuals working in and across Europe to improve the quality of life of children and young people. Its work is underpinned by the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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For more information, please contact:

Jana Hainsworth, Secretary General

Tel: +32 (0)2 511 70 83

e-mail: secretarygeneral@eurochild.org