

Brussels, 17 October 2007

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

On 17 October, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, Eurochild urges EU member states to keep fighting child poverty also beyond the 'light year'

Of the 72 million people still experiencing poverty in the European Union (EU) many are children. Across the EU, families with children under 16 are more likely to be at risk of poverty than the overall population (19% compared to 16%). Despite increased economic growth, these numbers have been increasing rather than diminishing in recent years.

In view of these facts, the European Council in March 2006 concluded that EU member states should "*take necessary measures to **rapidly and significantly reduce child poverty***". This commitment was further underlined by the Council Conclusions of March 2007, stressing "*the need to fight poverty, especially **child poverty***".

As a consequence, 'child poverty' has been chosen as the thematic focus for the 2007 'light year' within the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) on social inclusion and social protection. This process has enabled a number of actions at EU level, designed to make possible an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon and facilitate exchange of policy and practice between member states.

Such a thematic year provides an opportunity for member states to learn from one another about successful policies and practice. However, Eurochild is concerned about how this thematic year is being implemented and fears that it risks falling short of its true potential.

Our members feel that:

- a questionnaire survey of member states policies to tackle child poverty followed by a one-day peer review meeting are wholly inadequate to deal with the complexity of policy approaches needed to tackle child poverty.
- Member states and the European Commission have failed to engage key stakeholders during this thematic year.
- Neither the European Commission nor member state governments have given publicity to this year's thematic priority.

It is as yet unclear what concrete outcomes will emerge from the 2007 thematic focus on child poverty.

Eurochild believes that:

- **this thematic year has only touched the surface of the potential mutual learning that is possible through the OMC.**
- Follow-up work is vital if concrete outcomes are to be realised for children and young people in Europe.
- There should be clear targets for reducing child poverty at EU level, as well as new indicators that can better reflect progress towards child well-being.

Eurochild is voicing these concerns during the 6th European Round Table on Poverty and Social Inclusion, being held on the Azores under the Portuguese Presidency of the EU on 16-17 October. These Round Table meetings are key milestones in the EU's fight against poverty and social exclusion. **Eurochild hopes that this year's Round Table will contribute to keeping up the momentum to fight child poverty beyond the framework of this years' thematic focus.** Eurochild has drafted a Policy Statement for this occasion, which can be downloaded from its website www.eurochild.org.

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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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