

Brussels, 08 November 2005

Press Release

**The voice of children and young people should be taken into account
in the EU policy process!**

Eurochild AISBL will discuss the issue of taking into account children, especially the most socially excluded ones, in the European decision-making process during its second annual conference with the title "***The position of socially excluded children in the EU policy process***" which will take place on 14 November 2005 in Brussels.

The conference will be held in the framework of the publication of the first draft of the **Communication on the Rights of the Child** by the European Commission in autumn 2005. Taking into consideration this and other important developments at EU-level related to children and their rights, the aim of the Conference will be to examine whether children, and in particular the most socially excluded ones, are taken into account in the EU policy process. If yes, in what context they are mentioned and thirdly whether they are included in the decision-making process on issues concerning them.

"Combating poverty and social exclusion among children and young people requires in the first place that child poverty is acknowledged as a social problem and set as a political priority." said Catriona Williams, President of Eurochild AISBL. Research clearly shows that those countries that have the lowest child poverty rates or put effort in reducing high levels of child poverty have children and/or child poverty high on the political agenda.

Unacceptable levels of poverty and social exclusion are still being experienced by children in the EU. Figures show that in the EU, 19% of children aged between 0 and 15 are at risk of poverty in the former EU 15 Member States, and 20% in the 10 new Member States. *"Not only does poverty affect the development of the child in terms of health, education, psycho-social well-being, participation in culture, sport, recreation activities, but it also undermines its future prospects and lifetime chances"*, reminded Heidi De Pauw, outgoing Secretary General of Eurochild AISBL.

Eurochild has noticed that despite renewed commitment expressed for example in the conclusions of the March 2005 European Council, stating that *"Social inclusion policy should be pursued by the Union and by Member States, with its multifaceted approach, focusing on target groups such as children in poverty"*, children are repeatedly left out from policy proposals by the Commission.

"The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child should be used as a framework for the development, implementation and monitoring of policies at EU and Member State level." Catriona Williams underlined. *"The EU should integrate the principles of the CRC into policy and legislation in order to make children visible at EU level and to better promote children's rights and well-being."* Eurochild will try to make sure that the EU sticks to its commitments in this area.

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Note to the editors: 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. Eurochild AISBL is funded by the European Commission within the Community Action Programme to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion, to contribute to this objective through the Open Method of Coordination.

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