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Press Release

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Young people at the European Parliament challenge MEPs on social exclusion issues: education, discrimination, anti-social behaviours, lack of money at top of the list.

12 young people aged between 13 and 15 years will challenge the Members of the European Parliament and representatives of the European Commission on how social exclusion affects their lives and make proposals for change.

The young people coming from Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Hungary and the United Kingdom convened yesterday in Brussels in order to share their concerns around social exclusion, to learn from one another's situations and agree on a number of the most important issues to bring forward to MEPs and the European Commission. Those issues are: education, discrimination, anti-social behaviours and lack of money.

The event entitled "Can you hear me?" will take place on 2nd March 2005 from 17.00 to 19.00 in the Members Room of the European Parliament in Brussels. The reception is organized by Eurochild AISBL with the support of Mrs. Eluned Morgan, Member of the European Parliament.

This event takes place at the eve of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council, which will prepare a communication to the Spring Council (22-23 March 2005) largely taken up with the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy. One clear common objective set by this strategy was "to move towards the elimination of social exclusion among children and give them every opportunity for social integration".

Two Hungarian young people pointed out: "lack of money means life is very limited; we don't have pocket money to go to expositions, to play sports, to buy CDs, we can't do what other children do." They are happy that the Members of the European Parliament are willing to hear their proposals on how things could be improved.

"Eurochild AISBL and its members are extremely concerned that social cohesion is removed as a priority of the future Lisbon Strategy and that young people are solely seen as a future labour force without balance between consideration of children's future prospects and a good childhood now" commented Catriona Williams, President of Eurochild AISBL.

About Eurochild AISBL

Eurochild is an active network of organisations and individuals working in and across Europe to improve the quality of life of children and young people. Eurochild's work is underpinned by the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Eurochild AISBL is currently pursuing a work programme to contribute to the fight against child poverty and social exclusion. A key element of the programme is the assessment of the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion from the perspective of children and young people.

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