

Press release: 19 November 2007

Child Rights come of age...but not yet in the EU.

" I would pretty much need a robot, in the shape of an adult person, who can speak on my behalf. Then maybe someone would listen to what I have to say."

- Respondent from a child in Europe to a Save the Children consultation with children.

November 20th marks the 18th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). As the world's most ratified international convention reaches the age of majority, EU leaders have finally recognized that children are citizens too with the Lisbon Treaty which will mark the first time children's rights have been included in the internal and external objectives of the EU.

"In July 2006 the EC committed to developing a strategy to promote and protect the rights of the child within and outside the EU. The Communication¹ was a big step forward but now it is time for action with a White Paper on the EU's Strategy on Children's Rights."

- Jana Hainsworth, coordinator of the NGO Action Group on the EU Child Rights Strategy

18 million children in the EU are living in relative poverty – almost one in five. Globally, 38% of the world's population is under the age of 18. That figure rises to 50% in the least developed countries. The majority of these children are living in poverty. Serious violations of children's rights including violence against children, trafficking in children, and inadequate judicial processes for children in conflict with the law take place daily in Europe and around the world.

Why is additional action needed at EU level? Because EU actions and legislation have a direct impact on children's lives inside and outside the EU; because children and young people are more likely to suffer from poverty, violence, abuse and discrimination than any other population group; and because children are too often invisible in EU policy-making and should be heard as citizens in their own right.

"There is no child rights without children. And for every decision made in the EU, children should be involved."

- Respondent from Mikumi, Tanzania to a Plan International consultation with children.

The NGO Action Group is calling for:

- The launch of a Green Paper **consultation** - including with children - leading to a **comprehensive EU Strategy**, a child rights White Paper, by end 2009.
- The allocation of sufficient **financial and human resources** for the EC to act on its commitments – including a dedicated Child Rights coordination unit.
- The EU to set out its vision for meaningful and safe **child participation** at EU level, particularly in the planned EU Forum on child rights.

With adoption of the new EU reform Treaty, the EU has a legal basis on which to act, and with the Communication, the EU has a clear framework for action. No more excuses.

Press contacts: Jana Hainsworth, Eurochild, +32 02 511 70 53
Karen Schroh, Plan International, +32 02 504 60 52

NGO Action Group on the EU's Child Rights Strategy



¹ Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, COM 2006 (367), 4 July 2006