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## Press Release

### **The voice of children and young people should be taken into account in the EU policy process! Eurochild AISBL to bring children to the Round Table on Social Inclusion**

Child poverty and the social exclusion of children are the first concerns of Eurochild AISBL, and these phenomena are at the heart of its activities. This is why it welcomes the holding of the 4<sup>th</sup> European Round Table on Poverty and Social Inclusion, which will be held in Glasgow on 17-18 October 2005 under the British Presidency of the European Union.

This meeting is an important part of the EU's approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion. Its aim is to allow all those people across Europe who have an interest in this field - in particular the EU institutions; national, regional and local government; the voluntary sector; grassroots organisations and European NGOs, and in the ideal case: people experiencing poverty - to come together and discuss the fight against poverty. It will coincide with the International Day Against Poverty.

Eurochild AISBL has succeeded in ensuring that there is an opportunity for the voices of children and young people to be heard during this important Round Table. *"In our experience, there has never been the opportunity for children and young people to voice their views directly at a Round Table"*, stated Catriona Williams, President. For this purpose Eurochild AISBL is co-operating with its member organisation Children in Scotland, to assist with the facilitation of input from youngsters, to ensure they are not forgotten in the process. The youngsters will intervene in one of the work shops, with the title "Making a decisive impact: Supporting children at risk of social exclusion".

With the financial support of the UK Presidency, Eurochild AISBL has also produced a video diary showing poor and socially excluded children and young people from all over Europe, which is going to be shown during the plenary session.

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, Secretary General of Eurochild AISBL.

However, one of the main points to arise from the assessments of the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion is the lack of visibility of children and young people in the social inclusion planning process. They were, for the most part, given little or no opportunity to air their views. *"We hope this opportunity to contribute to the workshop will go some way towards redressing*

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*this imbalance and bring children back into the forefront of our concerns about poverty and social exclusion”, added Catriona Williams.*

During its preparations for the Round Table, 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. Eurochild AISBL will try to make sure that the issue of child poverty is taken up and included in all EU policy proposals and hopes that the informal Summit on the European Social Model of 27-28 October 2005 will not forget about them either.

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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.