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Press Release

Measuring Child Poverty

Developing indicators to measure child poverty and well-being in Europe

Eurochild^{AISBL} welcomes the launch of the 7th *Innocenti* Report Card dedicated to child well-being in rich countries on 15 February 2007 by UNICEF in Brussels. The report offers a comprehensive assessment of the lives and well-being of children and adolescents in economically advanced nations, based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC).

“The true measure of a nation’s standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialisation, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born”, the report says.

“We welcome this broader approach to measuring children’s well-being in rich countries,” said Jana Hainsworth, Secretary General of Eurochild, today during a live debate on BBC World with David Bull from UNICEF. *“However we do need to be cautious about the ranking of countries. All countries have weaknesses that need to be addressed and none have room for complacency.”*

The measurement of poverty and social exclusion is by now a well established process at the EU level – for adult citizens. However, until now there has only been a limited focus on collecting data and information about children and young people’s experiences of poverty and social exclusion – so far failing to recognise them as citizens in their own right. For the first time, the UNICEF Report Card also takes account of children’s health and safety, education, their relationships and emotional well-being. Eurochild hopes that this will contribute to a better monitoring system at EU level, since Member States are expected to adopt a new child well-being indicator or set of indicators by the end of 2007.

According to Eurochild’s recent review of member states’ strategies on social inclusion¹, child poverty is on the increase in several member states. Even in traditional social welfare states, there are growing inequalities in society that have a disproportionate effect on children. For example, the real value of family allowances in Finland are estimated to have fallen by 10% over the last decade and levels of child poverty have tripled, even if it remains low compared to other EU Member States². Furthermore countries with high economic growth show increasing levels of child poverty. In Ireland, the rate of consistent poverty among children under 15 increased from 9.5% in 2004 to 10.2% in 2005, and this in a year of exceptional economic growth³.

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Eurochild welcomes the long overdue attention that is now being given to children's well-being within the EU. We also welcome the commitment made by heads of state at the Spring Summit in March 2006 to "*rapidly and significantly reduce child poverty*". We are calling for all member states and the EU to set clear targets for the reduction of child poverty, matched with serious, long-term investment in services for children and families. We also call for a stronger link between policies aimed at tackling child poverty and social exclusion and the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, that should stand as the guiding principle for all policies affecting children.

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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 is funded by the European Commission within the Community Action Programme to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion. However, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Commission.

¹ Ending Child Poverty within the EU? A review of the 2006-2008 national reports on strategies for social protection and social inclusion. Available from www.eurochild.org

² Finland country report (ibid.) prepared by Central Union for Child Welfare, Finland www.lskl.fi

³ See Childrens Rights Alliance, Ireland www.childrensrights.ie