

Newsletter

The ENOC Chair, Ms Dominique Versini, and the ENOC Secretariat are wishing a happy and a very successful new 2010 year to all ENOC members

Update on European and international activities in the children's rights field

Final Peer to Peer workshop on separated/unaccompanied children

Co-funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe, the Peer to peer programme aimed to raise awareness of human rights issues in general while the final workshop that took place in Padua on 20-22 October 2009 was dedicated to the situation of separated and unaccompanied children. Four ENOC offices were represented at the Seminar. Emily Logan gave a formal presentation at the opening session on ENOC and Ombudspersons for children and their role as national human rights institutions vis à vis S/UAM. Mila Jelavic gave a formal presentation on the experience of the Croatian Ombudsman for Children's office. The next programme, called "Peer to Peer II", will start in January 2010 but due to insufficient funding there will be only 5 seminars.

Annual Dialogue on the Multilevel Promotion and Protection of Fundamental Rights -13th November 2009, Brussels

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the CRC, the first edition of the annual dialogue co-organized by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the Committee of the Regions focused on the rights of the child i.e. the right to education, especially for particularly vulnerable children, child abuse and child trafficking, the right to expression, and the use of indicators to measure the implementation of these rights by local and regional authorities. Ms Dominique Versini, ENOC Chair, gave a formal presentation on the different approaches used by Ombudspersons for Children offices across Europe to make sure that children express their views efficiently and the way these views are taken into account. After having presented different examples of child participation projects carried out by the Ombudspersons for Children's Offices of Ireland, Scotland, France, Malta, Lithuania, Denmark, Madrid, Sweden, Belgium etc, Ms Versini underlined that the rights to expression and to participation, as enshrined in the CRC, are the rights that prepare children to play an active and constructive role, a role that the society is expecting from them.

EU Action Plan on Unaccompanied minors

A consultation meeting with NGOs and other organizations dealing with children's rights on the upcoming EU Action Plan on S/UAM organized by the European Commission took place on November 17th in Brussels. A representative of the ENOC Chair took part in the meeting the main discussions of which focused on: the main problematic to be addressed when UAM on the EU territory; the main challenges to be addressed by the Action plan i.e. applicable procedures, reception standards and procedural guarantees, increase cooperation between EU members, the risks of child trafficking, the detention of UAM, the need for durable solutions and individual assessment of the best interests of each UAM; aspects of cooperation with countries of origin and of transit; the question of return of UAM.

Eurochild's 6th Annual Conference 11-13 November, Limassol, Cyprus

Under the theme "Monitoring child well-being: better policy and practice", the Conference brought together more than 100 policy makers, practitioners and academics from 28 European countries and 60 Cypriot.



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Membership fees

Dear members,

As usually at the beginning of the New Year and with new ambitious projects already under way, we would like to kindly invite you to proceed **as soon as possible** (via the ENOC Secretariat), to the payment of the membership fees. When paying your membership fee, please respect the amount fixed by the General Assembly decision in September 2009 in Paris.

ENOC Statement on children and armed conflicts

As decided during the ENOC General Assembly meeting on 23-25 September 2009 in Paris, the ENOC statement on children and armed conflicts is now adopted after expiration of the time limit for submission of comments and suggestions.

The statement is now made available on the ENOC website under:

<http://crin.org/enoc/papers/index.asp>

ENOC Chair met with Thomas Hammarberg

The ENOC Chair met with the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights on January 11th in Strasbourg. Topics on the agenda concerned the Commissioner's positions (taken and to be taken) in the children's rights field but also the situation of unaccompanied minors. The ENOC Chair presented ENOC's upcoming activities and especially the ENYA project on which the Commissioner expressed great interest.

ENOC Chair met with the European Commission authorities

The ENOC Chair met with the Director of the European Commission's Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Directorate, Mr Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea, and with representatives of the "Immigration and Asylum" Directorate of the EC. The discussed items concerned the EC Action plan on unaccompanied minors but also how ENOC can contribute to the 2 expert groups on violence against children and invisible children. The ENOC Chair presented the ENYA project and the lessons to be drawn from on issues of common interest.

New Provincial Ombudsman in Vojvodina

Mr. Dejan Janca has been appointed the new Provincial Ombudsman of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina thus succeeding to Mr. Petar Teofilovic. Mr Janca assumed his duties as of end of October 2009.

The Cypriot Children's Rights Commissioner and ENOC member, Ms Leda Koursoumba delivered a key note speech stressing that "monitoring is an ongoing process during which children's views should be taken into account while the best interests of the child should be always a top priority in all stages of the implementation process". She also urged for the strengthening of the commitment to children's rights and support for the implementation of international standards.

Ms Koursoumba chaired the Workshop on "indicators in service development and delivery-children's participation" which examined how children's participation in the family, in schools, in the society and the public life can be efficiently monitored and how this can help to improve services for children.

Joint European Commission-Council of Europe Conference on "Challenges in adoption procedures in Europe: Ensuring the best interests of the child"

The Conference took place on 30 November-1 December 2009 in the premises of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. The Conference was divided into two parts: the 1st one concerned national adoption procedures where different examples have been presented; the 2nd part was devoted to international adoption. The main themes which were dealt with: the revised 2008 European Convention on the Adoption of Children and the best interests of the child, the children and the adults in the adoption procedure, the role and responsibility of State authorities, the access to one's origins and how to find a balance between the different parties involved, from national to international adoption and the 1993 Hague Convention on adoption, the right to a family in the international legal framework and in the practical experience, towards a European adoption policy?. A representative of the ENOC Chair participated in the Conference on behalf of ENOC.

Council of Europe Group of Experts on child participation and on child friendly justice

The 1st meeting of the Council of Europe Ad hoc Advisory Group on Child and Youth Participation took place on 1-2 December in Helsinki, Finland. Mr. George Moschos participated in the meeting on behalf of ENOC. The main discussions concerned the setting up of an Action plan and a timetable.

The Council of Europe Group of Experts on child friendly justice held its 3rd meeting on 8-10 December in Strasbourg preceded by a hearing with NGOs and other key stakeholders. The ENOC Chair's representative and the ENOC Secretariat took part in the hearing where the state of advancement of the draft guidelines and a possible meaningful child consultation has been further discussed. For more information: www.coe.int/childjustice

Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, published a viewpoint on children in institutions

"The process of de-institutionalization in post communist countries is going too slowly", has said the Commissioner during his intervention at the ENOC Annual Conference last September. In its viewpoint published on 28 December 2009, the Commissioner re-iterated its concerns about the de-institutionalization of large scale institutions for orphans and children with disabilities but underlined that this has to be pursued with care in the best interests of the child. Stating that suitable alternatives must be developed and supported by the authorities - also in a period of economic crisis he calls governments to enhance the process of supporting children at risk with a strong political backing and sufficient budget resources. Analysing the existing gaps, he considers that public policies should combine step-by-step closure of the old residential care institutions, determined efforts to support vulnerable families and creation of support services such as foster families.

The full text of the viewpoint is available under: http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/Viewpoints/091228_en.asp

Also the Commissioner's declaration on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the CRC is available (available in French and in Russian) under: http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/Viewpoints/091116_en.asp

Update on member institutions' activities

The Greek Ombudsman promotes proposals for democratic school governance

The Greek Ombudsman for Children's Rights held a public discussion between the members of its Youth Advisory Panel and the Minister for Education on the subject of "*School Regulations and Democratic School Governance*". The discussion was transmitted live on the internet.

Previous to the meeting, the Ombudsman had sent a formal letter to the Minister, addressing a set of suggestions and recommendations deriving from case ombudwork as well as from listening to the pupils' opinion and proposals for a democratic school that respects individual rights and needs.

Earlier this year, 130 students representing 60 schools of secondary education discussed in public with the Ombudsman on the meaning and content of school regulations and on the crucial role that can be played by students in forming the contents of school regulations and supporting their implementation. The Ombudsman attempts to record good practices in schools around the country, regarding the promotion of school democracy, in order to strengthen legislation and guidelines to teachers, supporting the right of all pupils to express their views freely, to be respected and considered in everyday school life.

Children's Commissioner for Wales published its annual report

"The current financial climate should not be used as an excuse to backtrack on delivering high quality and consistent services to children and young people across Wales" is one of key points highlighted within the Children's Commissioner for Wales' Annual review published on November 10th, 2009. Keith Towler detailed his frustration around the lack of consistent implementation of Welsh Assembly Government policies and the failings of local authorities to put the best interests of children at the heart of decisions.

The full text of the report is available under: www.childcomwales.org.uk

The Children's Rights Commissioner of the French community in Belgium published its annual report and a thematic report on *the consequences and the impact of the poverty on children, young people and their families*

On the eve of the European year for combating poverty and social exclusion the child poverty report tends to present some real figures on the impact poverty has and will have on children and their families in the French community in Belgium. While there is no provision in the CRC that deals with and resists to the question of poverty, a special attention and hug efforts in the field need to be afforded in the coming years.

The full texts of the two reports are made available (only in French) under: <http://crin.org/enoc/members/member.asp?ID=3060>

Upcoming Events

- ❖ **1-3 February 2010:** 1st meeting of the working party of the European Committee on family law tasked to draft one/more new legal instruments on the rights and legal status of children and parental responsibilities (CJ-FA-GT3), Council of Europe, Strasbourg
- ❖ **25 February 2010:** meeting of the EC Group of experts on violence against children (focus on bullying & cyber bullying), Brussels
- ❖ **26-27 February 2010:** 1st meeting of the ENYA Coordinators, Paris
- ❖ **11 March 2010:** expert meeting of the EC group on invisible children, Brussels
- ❖ **23-25 March 2010:** CoE Octopus Conference on cyber crime, Strasbourg

The ENOC website needs your input to continue to grow. Send us information about new web resources, research or data related to Children's Rights. If you have any suggestions or if you would like to include any information or upcoming events in our newsletter please send the details to secretariat@ombudsnet.org (Re: ENOC Newsletter).

JANUARY 2010

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