

Newsletter

ENOC News & Announcements

The ENOC 18th Annual Conference on « The impact of austerity on the realization of children's rights »

ENOC is organizing its 18th Annual Conference and General Assembly scheduled to take place on 22-24 October 2014 in Edinburgh, Scotland. ENOC and Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People will host the event.

The focus of the Conference will be the impact of austerity on the realization of children's rights, particularly in respect of access to, quality and costs of public and business sector provision of relevant services to children and young people, as well as States' obligations in regard to the prevalence of child poverty.

The ENOC Annual Meeting will also provide a forum for participating Ombudspersons for Children to share information about national practices, recent activities and achievements, and new developments at international and European levels in the children's rights field.

The ENOC Participation Project Exhibition

ENOC is currently creating, with the help of the Council of Europe, a new media resource that aims to show the impact of austerity on the realization of children's rights. The project is being developed by Scotland's Commissioner for Children & Young People and will be presented, in the first instance, as an exhibition at the ENOC Annual Conference on 22-24 October 2014 in Scotland.

The project's aim is to support children and young people from across Europe in expressing their views on the impacts of austerity on the realization of their rights.

A group of artists from Scotland is currently travelling in eight European countries to facilitate the project. They are working with children and young people affected by austerity, helping them share their experiences through the production of 32 film clips of around two minutes each.

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Registration for the ENOC 2014 Annual Conference & General Assembly meeting

Registrations for the Annual Conference will be closed soon. ENOC members or invited observer organizations/experts who have not yet registered for the Conference and/or the workshops should do so as soon as possible and send their registration at secretariat@ombudsnet.org

Belgium ratified the CRC complaints procedure (OP3CRC)

Belgium has become the 11th country to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure (OP3 to the CRC). The State ratified the treaty on 30 May. Children and their representatives will be able to bring complaints against Belgium from 30 August 2014.

Belgium joins Albania, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Gabon, Germany, Montenegro, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and Thailand who have already ratified the treaty. A further 36 states have signed but not ratified OP3.

Belgium has also become the fifth state to accept the “inter-state” communication procedure, which will allow one state to bring a complaint against another. To date, Albania, Germany, Portugal and Slovakia have made declarations using this mechanism.

You can track the latest ratification news here: <http://ratifyop3crc.org/fr/ratification-process/#.VAmKpWS1YyA>

The FRA releases a new handbook on guardianship for children deprived of parental care

In June, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) published a handbook on strengthening national guardianship systems for children in Europe, as part of the EU’s anti-trafficking strategy, which recognizes the vital role guardians play in protecting children from harm.

This handbook has been developed to help standardize guardianship practice so that EU Member States are better equipped to deal with the specific needs of child victims of trafficking. It provides specific guidance for Member State officials and guardians on how both guardianship systems and individual guardians can cater for the particular needs of child victims of trafficking and protect their rights.

The handbook is available here: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/guardianship-children-deprived-parental-care-handbook-reinforce-guardianship>

Update on European & International activities in the children’s rights field

PACE resolution on child-friendly justice

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is promoting steps for making juvenile justice more child-friendly.

PACE has called on States to set the minimum age of criminal responsibility no higher than 14 years, with no exceptions even for serious offences, and for the creation of a range of suitable alternatives to formal prosecution for younger offenders.

The Assembly said that children should be detained as “a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time” and never imprisoned for life.

PACE also suggested that multi-professional teams - including the police, social workers, psychiatric nurses and youth workers - could be set up to help investigate crimes committed by young offenders and offer them and their families support and rehabilitation. The resolution is available here:

<http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/News/News-View-EN.asp?newsid=5120&cat=8>

The Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, says that austerity cuts are affecting children’s health rights

In his latest “Human Rights Comment”, the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, pointed out that universal access to health services is compromised by austerity measures arising from economic crisis in Europe. Cuts in health services are affecting children who he identified as a particularly vulnerable group.

He notes in Spain, children’s health is threatened by austerity measures giving rise to increasing poverty, homelessness and malnutrition. The Ombudsman from Catalonia asserted that children belonging to disadvantaged social groups are six times more likely to develop mental health problems compared to other groups.

The Commissioner also expressed his concern over the lack of psychological and psychiatric care available for children in Estonia.

He reiterated the World Health Organization’s warning regarding the long-term impact of extreme poverty on children’s health, which includes deficits in cognitive, emotional and physical development.

Mr. Muižnieks said that we should start considering inequalities in health in terms of human rights. The Scottish national action plan actively follows this approach under the current reforms to health and social services.

Reforms must be carried out to make health services more effective and not limited only to cost-cutting exercises.

SRSP calls for the establishment of ombudsman for children’s rights

At the launch of the 2014 UNICEF report “Every Child has Rights” in June, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Marta Santos Pais, identified progress in the area of child protection, but noted that many challenges persist a quarter-century after the adoption of the UN Convention on Rights of the Child. In this regard, the Special Representative highlighted the importance of establishing independent institutions for children’s rights, child sensitive counseling, and reporting and complaint mechanisms to address violence against children, as key components of effective national strategies to safeguard children’s rights.

New interdisciplinary Master’s programme on Children’s Rights in Italy

UNICEF Italy and the University of Milano-Bicocca with the support of the Italian Ombudsperson for Children, the ILO, UNHCR, and several NGOs, are organizing a new interdisciplinary Master’s degree programme (MiDIA) on Children’s Rights. The Master is in response to the needs of students and professionals in the sector, empowering them with specific knowledge and tools on child protection and the promotion of children’s rights. See: www.midia.name

Updates from ENOC members

✓The Office of the Commissioner for Children of Malta released its 2013 annual report. The report is structured thematically around the particular rights of children that the Office's activities, concerns and recommendations are geared to protect and promote. The document aims to raise awareness amongst the country's institutions and citizens alike about what needs to be done to advance the rights and interests of children in Malta. During the ENOC Annual Conference in October, the Commissioner for Children of Malta will present two initiatives; one on Internet safety resources, the other, a child-friendly version of the UNCRC entitled "My Rights". The report is available here: http://www.tfal.org.mt/MediaCenter/PDFs/1_tfal%20annual%20eng%20final%208.5.14.pdf

✓The Children's Commissioner from Wales, Keith Towler, recently published three reports on: independent professional advocacy for children in and leaving care, children and young people in pupil referral units, and short breaks provision for children and young people with disabilities and their carers in Wales. The reports are available here: <http://www.childcomwales.org.uk/uploads/publications/467.pdf>
<http://www.childcomwales.org.uk/uploads/publications/456.pdf>
<http://www.childcomwales.org.uk/uploads/publications/465.pdf>

✓The Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Latvia released its 2013 annual report. Ombudsman's Office activities in 2013 were related to solidarity in society, starting with the rights of children left without parental care to grow up in a family, rights of people with mental disabilities to live in the community, and, the everyone's right to receive a fair wage for their work and not be discriminated against in any way.

The report is available here:

http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/files/content/zinojumi/Tiesibsarga%20gada%20zinojums_2013_ENG.pdf

✓The French Defender of the Rights' Office released its 2013 annual report. Ms. Marie Derain, the French Defender of Children, says that activities around the protection of the rights and freedom of the child have increased. The number of cases where the defender of children is called on has risen 80% in three years. In the report, the new French Defender of Rights, Jacques Toubon, shared his activities in different fields related to the rights of the child. He also presented his aims for his mandate.

The report is available here:

http://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/upload/rapport_annuel_2013.pdf

Upcoming Events

- ❖ **12 September 2014:** Days of General Discussion of the UN CRC on "Digital media & children's rights", Geneva, Switzerland
- ❖ **9-10 October 2014:** European, Training & Youth Forum 2014 of the European Commission, Brussels, Belgium
- ❖ **9-10 October 2014:** Conference of the Council of Europe on "Combating gender stereotypes in and through Education", Helsinki, Finland
- ❖ **22-23 October 2014:** 18th ENOC Annual Conference on "The impact of austerity measures on the realisation of children's rights", Edinburgh, Scotland

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).

SEPTEMBER 2014

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*ENOC is financially supported
by the
European Commission*

