

Newsletter

ENOC News & Announcements

ENOC Chair, Bernard De Vos participated in a pre-election dialogue with members of the European Parliament to discuss child rights issues

A pre-election dialogue on child rights issues and concerns with members of the European Parliament from different political groups was organised by the Child Rights Action Group (CRAG) on 11th February 2014, and hosted by MEP Jean Lambert. The event took place in the European Parliament in Brussels.

This special event provided child-focused organisations with an opportunity to engage with representatives MEPs and to question them about their political group's position on a range of issues affecting children in Europe and worldwide. The ENOC Chair participated in the event on behalf of ENOC.

ENOC Chair, Bernard De Vos, participated in the launch event of the joint Eurochild/UNICEF publication "Realising Children's Rights Everywhere"

"Realising Children's Rights Everywhere-Moving Forward with the EU", a recent joint Eurochild/UNICEF publication, has been launched at a special event organized on 12th February 2014 in Brussels. The launch event was addressed by key European institutions' representatives competent in the children's rights field, including Ms. Viviane Reding (Vice-President of the European Commission), Mr. Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos (Head of Equality and Citizen's Rights Department, Fundamental Rights Agency), and other representatives of relevant departments of the European Commission. The main purpose of the event was to give space to reflect on the current and future role of the EU in protecting and promoting children's rights across internal and external policy and actions.

You can read the ENOC Chair's reflections on perspectives related to children's well-being in Europe (see page 38 of the publication) here: http://issuu.com/eurochild_org/docs/eurochild_unicef_realising-children

ENOC at the European Conference "My destination is unknown. Children on the move: will the EU deliver on its commitments?"

Organised by Terre des Hommes International Federation with the support of the Group of the Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) and hosted by Nathalie Griesbeck, member of the European Parliament (EP), the event took place on 19th February 2014 in the EP in Brussels. Starting from the view and testimony of Farah Abdi Abdullahi, a 18 year-old-boy from Somalia, and following the recent development on EU asylum policy and the adoption of the EP Report on the situation of Unaccompanied Minors in the EU (Rapporteur MEP Nathalie Griesbeck), the Destination Unknown EU Public Conference raised awareness of the reality of children on the move in the light of EU responses. Stephan Durvieux, representative of the ENOC Chair, took part at the Conference and distributed to all participants the ENOC statement on "Children on the move" (2013), and information related to the ENOC documentary on "Children on the move: children first!". More event related information here: <http://destination-unknown.org/>



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ENOC Membership fees for 2014

ENOC members are kindly invited to proceed to the payment of their annual membership fee as early as possible, and preferably by end of March, 2014.

For further questions on membership fee, please contact the ENOC Secretariat.

ENOC Website under upgrade

The ENOC website is undergoing a structural and design upgrade and is therefore temporarily offline. The upgrade is progressing and we hope the new website will be online again by end of February.

New materials available to mark the 1st anniversary of General Comment n°17

February 2014 marks the first anniversary of the UN General Comment (GC) on Article 31 (right to play) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. To mark the event and to continue lobbying for a thorough implementation, monitoring and reporting of article 31 by countries, the International Play Association (IPA) makes available a number of relevant materials: the film "This is Me" celebrating of children's right to play <http://article31.ipaworld.org/> (to be released in 9 more languages); IPA child-friendly resources on Article 31 and the GC at:

<http://article31.ipaworld.org/fun-things/>

IPA is also holding a World Conference on "Access to Play" to take place on 20-23 May 2014 in Istanbul, Turkey. More information on the event is available here: <http://ipa2014.org/ipa/en-US/general-information>

Council of Europe Committee of Ministers for an enhanced role of national Ombudspersons for Children

The Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) Recommendation 2015 (2013) on "Young people's access to fundamental rights" recommends the appointment of an Ombudsperson at Council of Europe (CoE) level to ensure that the rights of young people are respected and protected. In its reply to the PACE recommendation, the Committee of Ministers considered the proposal and decided the establishment of such a body is not necessary since various bodies of the CoE, such as the Commissioner for Human Rights, follow these questions. However, the Committee of Ministers encourages member States to enhance the role of national ombudspersons in this regard.

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

New EU programmes to strengthen justice and rights adopted

On 17 December 2013 after two years of negotiations, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU adopted the "Justice Programme" and the "Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme", covering the period 2014-2020. Both programmes will support European Commission's efforts to build an EU-wide area of justice and rights, focusing on activities with increased added value at EU level. The Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme are meant to promote and protect specific rights and freedoms deriving from EU law. The promotion of children's rights and fighting violence against women, children and young people, will also be funded by this programme. The first calls for funding will be launched in April 2014, once the work programme for 2014 has been adopted. For more information: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/news/newsletter_new_eu_programmes_2014_en.htm

European Commission adopted a proposal on procedural safeguards for children suspected or accused in criminal proceedings

The European Commission has adopted a package of criminal law proposals to strengthen procedural safeguards, one of which concerns children suspected or accused of a crime. The EC proposes the adoption of a Directive on special safeguards for children suspected or accused in criminal proceedings. The Directive should guarantee a range of procedural rights to children accused or suspected of a crime such as mandatory access to a lawyer at all stages of the procedure; right to receive prompt and age-appropriate information on their rights; the right to be assisted by their parents (or other appropriate persons); the right not to be questioned in public hearings; and the right to receive medical examination and to be kept separate from adults inmates if deprived of liberty.

The full text of the proposal is available here: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52013PC0822:en:NOT>

Ratifications of the 3rd Optional Protocol on a communication procedure reach ten: the Committee on the Rights of the Child to handle individual complaints now

The new Optional Protocol to the CRC providing for a communications procedure is now set to take effect in April 2014, following the final (10th) required ratification by Costa Rica on January 14th, 2014. This new instrument allows children or their representatives to file a complaint within the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Previous to this children or their representatives should have exhausted all legal domestic avenues but could challenge only countries that had ratified the 3rd Optional Protocol. In the aftermath of this positive development, Committee Chair Ms. Kirsten Sandberg stated: "It means children are able to fully exercise their rights and are empowered to have access to international human rights bodies in the same way adults are under several other human rights treaties." She also urges States to develop their own systems to ensure that children's rights are respected and protected and their voices heard, and called on Governments that have not done so yet to ratify this Optional Protocol.

A major debate on young boy circumcision organized by the Council of Europe in margin of the winter session of its Parliamentary Assembly

Organised by the Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the occasion of its winter session (27-31 January 2014), the major hearing on the question of circumcision of young boys was attended by 300 parliamentarians, religious leaders, medical doctors, and civil society activists. The hearing follows the previously adopted (October 2013) Assembly resolution and recommendation on "children's right to physical integrity", and aimed to encourage open debate on this subject as called for by the Assembly. Prior to the hearing, the 1995 television documentary "It's a Boy", as well as extracts from a new film putting forward the point of view of the Knesset observer delegation, were also screened.

Programme and video of the hearing, interviews with the two documentaries' producers and other information is available here: <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/News/News-View-EN.asp?newsid=4851&lang=2&cat=133>

Updates from ENOC members

- ✓ **Ireland's Ombudsman for Children** published a research report on Child-Friendly Healthcare. The overall aim of the research is to identify how a child-friendly healthcare and a culture of respect for children's rights in healthcare settings can be further progressed in Ireland. The research identifies a number of "building blocks" that can support the implementation of child-friendly healthcare across healthcare settings in Ireland. The research highlights the importance of leadership at different levels of the healthcare system, the value of developing national policy on child-friendly healthcare, and the need to foster inter-sectoral alliances. The executive summary and the full research report are available at: <http://www.oco.ie/publications/research-commissioned-by-oco.html>
- ✓ The Young Advisors Team (YAT) of the **Cypriot Commissioner for Children's Rights** was given the great opportunity on Monday 20th January 2014 to meet with the Minister of Education and Culture, Kyriakos Kenevezos, at the Office of the Cypriot Commissioner for Children's Rights, Leda Koursoumba. Following a workshop at the Commissioner's Office on the issue of bullying, the YAT had a roundtable discussion with the Minister. Young people sent a very clear message to the Minister that bullying is a serious violation of the human dignity of children and of their right to privacy, freedom and a safe environment. They shared their experiences and communicated to the Minister their proposals on prevention and intervention procedures and policies for combating bullying. The Minister described this meeting as the most valuable experience promising that a new meeting with the YAT will be soon scheduled, to communicate to the YAT the actions that will be taken on the matter. This roundtable discussion between a Minister and an established diverse group of young people, from all over the island and from different backgrounds, is very significant as it marks the beginning of effective and substantial participation of children. The YAT, having been properly briefed on the issue, expressed their views directly, thus making their voice heard and their participation, a reality.
- ✓ **Ombudsperson for Child Rights of the French community, Belgium** published its 2012-2013 annual report, with a special focus on child and family poverty and the situation of children and young people living in precarious conditions. Details of questions submitted to the Ombudsperson for Child Rights over the past year as well as a series of recommendations for increased respect for the rights of the child in various areas such as school, family, migration, poverty and young people, are amongst the main issues addressed in the report. Mr. De Vos also presented a special DVD on "*Poverty: let the young speak!*" reflecting the results of a participatory project where 20 young people from the Wallonia region spoke about the extremely precarious situations they experienced in their everyday lives. The full report (in French) is available at: <http://www.dgde.cfwb.be/index.php?id=5305> The video of the child participatory project is available at: <http://enlignedirecte.be/a-la-une/pauvrete-parlons-jeunes/>

Upcoming Events

- ❖ **13 March 2014:** Human Rights Full Day meeting on the rights of the child dedicated to "Access to justice for children", Geneva, Switzerland
- ❖ **27-28 March 2014:** Council of Europe Mid-Term Review Conference "*Growing with Children's Rights*", Dubrovnik, Croatia. The ENOC Chair will participate at the Conference on behalf of ENOC
- ❖ **16-18 May 2014:** International Conference on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the adoption of the CRC "*Child-Friendly Justice: What it means and how it is realized*", Stockholm University Aula Magna

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).

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European Network of Ombudspersons for Children

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