

Newsletter



ENOC News & Announcements

ENOC 20th Annual Conference “Equal Opportunities for All Children in Education”: follow up

ENOC 20th anniversary Annual Conference on “*Equal Opportunities for All Children in Education*” took place on 20 & 21 September 2016 in Vilnius, Lithuania. The Conference brought together over 100 participants, among which, Ombudspersons for Children and advisors, representatives of the UN, the Council of Europe, the EU, the OSCE, NGOs, academics, and other experts. In addition to a number of keynote speeches in plenary, three breakout sessions, one with workshops on the Conference theme, two with ENOC member countries’ updates followed by a presentation of ENYA activities and the screening of the ENYA video on Equal Opportunities in Education completed the conference agenda. The Annual Conference was followed by the 20th Annual General Assembly meeting of ENOC which took place on 22 September 2016. The General Assembly, led by Ms. Edita Ziobiene, Lithuania’s Ombudsperson for Children’s Rights, also the Chair of ENOC for one year, elected a new Bureau, discussed ENOC business and approved the ENOC statement on Equality in Education. Two ENOC members joined the new ENOC Bureau: Mr. Tuomas Kurttila, Ombudsman for Children, Finland, who was elected Chair-elect for the period 2017-2018, and Dr. Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children, Ireland, was elected at the position of past Chair for the period 2016-2017. Mr. George Moschos (ENOC Treasurer) and Ms. Maria Jesus Larios (ENOC Secretary) will continue in their roles for another year. A short brainstorming session on ENOC’s future activities took place at the end of the General Assembly. After discussions and various theme proposals, ENOC members agreed on the issue of ‘relationship and sexuality education’ as a priority theme of ENOC for 2017.

Full Conference information (agenda, list of participants, speeches, workshop presentations etc.) available [here](#)

ENYA 2016 films “Equal Opportunities in Education” available [here](#)

ENOC video “Article 6 UNCRC-Children on the Move: Children First!” (May 2016, Calais), available [here](#)

ENOC Position Statement on “Equal Opportunities for All Children in Education”, available in English, French, Greek, Spanish and Catalan [here](#)

ENOC continues to closely monitor the situation of children on the move in Europe

The previously established ENOC Task Force on Children on the Move will operate in 2017 electronically as a Working Group. ENOC members and especially those most concerned (frontline, transit or destination countries) agreed to continue monitoring and reporting on the situation of ‘children on the move’ in Europe and more precisely to exchange relevant information and good practice regarding the respect of their rights; but also to continue with public attention on their vulnerable situation and to contribute to detecting harmful state practices disrespectful of the rights of children on the move to be protected.

In this context, concerned ENOC members remain extremely active on specific situations such as the ongoing dismantlement of the Calais migrant camp where four Commissioners for Children (Belgium/Flemish, Belgium/FR, England and France

continues

Inside this issue

ENOC news & announcements:	1
Update on European & International activities in the CR field	2-3
Update on ENOC member institutions’ activities	3
Upcoming events	3

ENOC activities in 2017

The ENOC working theme for 2017 will be around the issue of “**relationship and sexuality education**” as a transversal right under children’s right to information, education, and health. Work on the priority theme will progress at Ombudspersons for Children’s level (ENOC) and at ENYA level through the implementation of the “**The Road to RIO: Where Do Young People Get Respect, Information and Opinions**” (RIO child participation project-2017). An ENOC Seminar and an ENYA Forum are tentatively scheduled to take place in spring 2017, if the necessary funding for all the above activities is secured. Further details to follow...

UNICEF report “Uprooted: The Growing Crisis for Migrant and Refugee Children”

This new UNICEF [report](#) presents the best available data from around the world on child migrants and refugees including: where they are born, where they move, and the dangers they face along the way. The report was [released](#) in advance of the 19th September UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants and called for placing children at the center of discussions. Children represent a disproportionate and growing proportion of those who have sought refuge outside their countries of birth: they make up about a third of the global population but about half of all refugees. UNICEF urges governments to take the following actions: protect child refugees and migrants, and especially UAM, from exploitation and violence; end the detention of children seeking refugee status or migrating; keep families together as the best way to protect children; provide access to education, health, psychological support, housing, nutrition & water; address the root causes of conflict, violence and extreme poverty; prevent the rise of xenophobia and racism.

UNICEF report on the impact of air pollution on children

The new UNICEF [report](#) “*Clear the Air for Children: The impact of air pollution on children*” uses satellite images to show for the first time how many children are exposed to outdoor pollution that exceeds the global guidelines set by the WHO. The images confirm that around 2 billion children live in areas where outdoor air pollution exceeds the minimum air quality guidelines. The study also examines the heavy toll of indoor pollution, caused by use of fuels like coal and wood. Together, outdoor and indoor pollution are directly linked to pneumonia and other respiratory diseases that account for almost one in ten under-five deaths, making air pollution a leading dangers to children’s health. The report was published in advance of the Marrakesh UN Climate Change Conference (COP22) and addresses a number of recommendations to world leaders.

New UNICEF-LSE study on children and internet

“*Children worldwide gain benefits, face risks on the internet*” -the Global Kids Online Research [Synthesis Report 2015-2016](#) produced by UNICEF Innocenti and the London School of Economics aims to build a global network of researchers investigating the risks and opportunities of child internet use. Global Kids online offers high quality, flexible research tools freely available worldwide.

paid [a joint visit](#) prior to its closure to make sure the situation of 1291 minors living in the camp remains a priority for the authorities and their safe and appropriate re-accommodation guaranteed. [France](#) and [England](#)’s Commissioners for Children continues to daily monitor the situation of minors who have been moved to newly set up reception and orientation Centres across France and of those whose applications are being processed with as eligible to move or already moved to the UK. The Greek Deputy Ombudsman for Children’s Rights remains active on the field and issued last September [an update](#) on the situation of children on the move in Greece putting a focus on their right to access education. For regular updates on this topic, please check the [ENOC website](#) under “News”

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

First meeting of the Council of Europe Ad-hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child (CAHENF)

The [Committee](#), set up to guide the implementation of the [Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child \(2016-2021\)](#), met for the first time on 28-29 September 2016 in Strasbourg. Responding to the migration and refugee crisis, the Committee decided to work on standards on legal guardianship and age assessment to secure safeguards to children caught in the migration process. The Committee will also develop Guidelines for member States to empower, protect and support children’s safe access to their rights on the internet. Working groups have been set up for both tasks. ENOC members from Armenia and Cyprus participated in the meeting on behalf of their countries, and the ENOC Secretariat attended the meeting on behalf of ENOC. The Committee will hold its 2nd meeting in March 2017.

Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights issued a Human Rights Comment on Violence against Children

In his latest Human Rights Comment released at the end of September, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, spoke exclusively about violence against children in Europe. This includes relevant international and European legal standards and also relevant European Court of Human Rights case-law, as well as conclusions and findings. After regular fact-finding visits to European countries, the Commissioner affirmed that: violence against children remains widespread as too often considered as socially acceptable and tolerated in Europe; the most affected groups of children are refugee children, displaced children and those in conflict zones, children in state care, children with disabilities, children from minority groups, children in poverty or those affected by austerity measures. The Commissioner remains strongly concerned about the extremely high rates of violence in the circle of trust and on violence through the Internet. See [here](#) the full text of the HR Comment and Commissioner’s recommendations to Council of Europe member States.

Surrogacy and children’s rights

A draft recommendation based upon a report prepared by Petra de Sutter (Belgium) on surrogacy and children’s rights was adopted by the Committee on Social Affairs of the Council of Europe (CoE) Parliamentary Assembly at the end of September 2016. The Committee recommended that the CoE Committee of Ministers consider the desirability and feasibility of “drawing up European Guidelines to safeguard children’s rights in relation to surrogacy agreements”. Read [here](#) the report containing the adopted text.

PACE resolution on harmonising the protection of unaccompanied minors in Europe

On 13th October 2016, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) adopted a resolution based on the report of Manilio Di Stefano (Italy) calling on member States to improve the protection of unaccompanied migrant minors and to avoid them going missing. The Assembly focused on the need to treat unaccompanied minors first and foremost as children, not as migrants. In the context of national and regional policies, the resolution states that: unaccompanied migrant children should be duly registered upon arrival in Europe, allocated dedicated accommodation and given access to health care and education. In keeping with the [Parliamentary Campaign to End Immigration Detention of Children](#), the parliamentarians added that detention should be avoided at all costs. Read [here](#) the full text of the resolution.

Tallinn Conference on Children’s Rights in the Migration Crisis and in the Digital Environment

A Conference on Children’s Rights in the Migration Crisis and in the Digital Environment, as part of the Estonian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe, took place on 3-4 November 2016 in Tallinn, Estonia. The aim of the Conference was to share good practices and discuss two pressing issues that are at the spotlight in Estonia, in Europe and at global level: children’s rights in the turmoil of migration

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and children's rights in the digital environment. The panels focused on the rights of refugee children, their rights in the new homeland as well as on challenges and opportunities for children in the digital environment. ENOC members from Greece and Sweden took part as speakers in Panel One on Refugee Children. Click [here](#) for more information about the Conference and outcomes.

Children alone: pulled from the sea, fallen by the wayside

A [joint paper](#) from Oxfam and partner organizations has recently been released describing the reception conditions of unaccompanied minors in Sicily/Italy.

"Alone, confused and scared. Their rights curbed and hopes crushed. This is the state of far too many children who make it across the Mediterranean to 'safety'". By the end of July, 13,705 unaccompanied minors have arrived to Italy, more than the whole of 2015 (12,360 children), thus representing 15% of all arrivals. During the first six months of 2016, 5,222 unaccompanied children were reported missing, having run away from reception centres. They became invisible under the legal radar and are therefore even more vulnerable to violence and exploitation.

Updates from ENOC members

- ✓ ENOC is delighted to welcome a new full member- **the Commissioner for Children's Office for Slovakia** represented by Ms. Viera Tomanová, Commissioner for Children.
- ✓ The **Four UK Children's Commissioners** (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales) issued on 31 October 2016 a [joint statement](#) on Calais. The four UK Children's Commissioners have urged the governments of France and the UK to work to ensure safe, appropriate housing for children at the refugee camp in Calais. Almost 6,000 people left the camp at the end October when it was cleared by the French authorities. However, over a thousand of children and young people remained on site during the dismantlement.
- ✓ The **Dutch Ombudsman for Children** issued in October 2016 a general position [statement](#) on the character of "Black Pete" (Zwarte Piet) related to Saint Nicholas celebrations in schools and other settings gathering children in the Netherlands. The Ombudsman has received numerous complaints boiling down to Black Pete being a caricature and a breeding ground for discrimination and racism in society. A number of families complained that their children experience Black Pete as offensive. To prepare a well-informed statement, the Ombudsman for Children reviewed scholar and general publications on the subject and held interviews with a number of children about their experiences and opinions on Black Pete. The Ombudsman for Children concluded that the character of Black Pete in his present form as part of the feast of Saint Nicholas may contribute to bullying, exclusion and discrimination and be therefore in violation of 2, 3 and 6 of the UNCRC. Black Pete should be adapted in such a way that colored children no longer experience any negative effects and that every child can feel safe and comfortable during the feast of Saint Nicholas.
- ✓ The **Commissioner for Children, Malta**, is encouraging organisations to contribute to commemorating World Children's Day by making [this](#) as a profile picture on their facebook page. **#WCD2016**

Upcoming Events

- ❖ **15 November 2016:** UNICEF Seminar "National Human Rights Institutions & Accountability for Children", New York/USA
- ❖ **18 November 2016:** [2nd European Day](#) on the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse
- ❖ **22-25 November 2016:** 16th Lanzarote Committee meeting, Lyon/France
- ❖ **29-30 November 2016:** 10th European Forum on the Rights of the Child, Brussels/Belgium

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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