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In this Issue:

- Introduction
- The Commission regrets delay in transposition of European rules on procedures for granting asylum
- Launch of the paper 'Children's Security in Post-conflict Peace-building' by Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces.
- Entry into force of Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
- Priorities of the Slovenian Presidency in the field of Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
- Launch of Slovenian study on 'Enhancing the EU response to children affected by armed conflict with particular reference to Development Policy'

- Follow-Up on the Process Towards a Strategy on the Rights of the Child

- European Parliament signs Resolution on Children's Rights
- Forthcoming Events
- Save the children Conference on Child Abuse Images: 6th March 2008
- Call for Proposal
- Publications
- News in Brief

Introduction

Welcome to the January issue of the Save the Children Brussels Office Newsletter which provides information on the activities of the Brussels office as well as on the latest EU policy developments on children's rights. This Newsletter is written by Espérance Kana (Information Officer), Marta Ballesteros (Head of Office), Karin Lundell (Policy and Advocacy Officer), Rebecca O'Donnell (Asylum and Migration Officer) and Tamira Gunzburg (intern). The Newsletter is free and can be received by e-mail. Articles can be reproduced, provided the source is acknowledged. Please distribute this newsletter widely within your organisation and let Espérance know if you would like to be placed on the mailing list. Her e-mail is info@savethechildren.be, tel. + 32 2 512 7851, fax + 32 2 513 4903. This newsletter is also available on our website at: www.savethechildren.net/brussels

The Commission regrets delay in transposition of European rules on procedures for granting asylum

Last December, only 6 Member States (Bulgaria, Germany, Luxemburg, Austria, Romania and the United Kingdom) have communicated their national measures indicating that they have transposed fully the Asylum Procedures Directive (Council Directive 2005/85/EC of 1 December 2005, on minimum standards on procedures in Member States for granting and withdrawing refugee status). For Member States: Belgium, Estonia, France and Lithuania have notified partial transposition.

Vice President Franco Frattini, Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security, said in a press release: "The delay in implementing the Directive sends a worrying message. The obligatory provisions of the Directive have brought to the EU asylum acquis a number of procedural guarantees and rights, which are of paramount importance for genuine refugees seeking protection in Member States. These guarantees shall now be recognised, implemented and, if necessary, enforced by courts within the national asylum systems. This should have already become an every day reality for asylum practitioners in Member States. After the delays in transposition of the Reception Conditions Directive and the Qualification Directive, this delay is indeed disappointing, particularly because it occurs at the time when there is a strong political will to complete the second phase of the Common European Asylum System".

Launch of the paper 'Children's Security in Post-conflict Peace-building' by Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces.

In December, the Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces launched its paper on children's security in post-conflict peace-building. The paper aims to link child protection imperatives to security sector reform (SSR) activities in the context of post-conflict peace-building and recovery. It was developed for the United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict as a contribution to the 10-Year Strategic Review of the Machel Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. The Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) is one of the world's leading institutions in the areas of security sector reform (SSR) and security sector governance (SSG).

The launch gathered key stakeholders involved in both promoting security and child protection, including UNICEF, the Council Personal Representative for Human Rights, Ms. Kionka and the Slovenian Presidency. Save the Children was invited to participate as a discussant. The meeting was a good opportunity to raise Save the Children's key advocacy messages including the crucial need for attention to children's situation in post-conflicts, the need for long-term predictable funding, the application of a community-based approach. Save the Children also promoted child protection as a multidimensional undertaking, gathering efforts from many different policy sectors, including education.

Entry into force of Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

On 1 February 2008 the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings has entered into force. The convention focuses on the protection of victims of trafficking in human beings, whilst also aiming to prevent trafficking and to prosecute traffickers. It is estimated that more than 600000 people are trafficked every year Europe. They are the victims of international criminals. More than 80 percent of them are girls and women, and 70percent of them are forced into sexual servitude. Other victims are traded for the purposes of forced labour, illegal adoptions and organ transplants. After the arms and drugs trade, trafficking in human beings represents the third most profitable criminal activity in the world as a whole. The Convention reinforces the prevention of trafficking, strengthens the prosecution of traffickers and protects the human rights and human dignity of the victims.

So far 14 member states of the Council of Europe have already ratified the Convention: Albania,

Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Georgia, Malta, Moldova, Norway, Romania and Slovakia. The next steps will be to insure an efficient implementation of the Convention through its monitoring mechanism, the Group of experts on action against trafficking in human beings (GRETA). The Council of Europe is not an EU institution but an international organisation based in Strasbourg. Its conventions are open to signature to non EU members States.

The Convention can be accessed on the following link: [CETS n° 197](#)

Priorities of the Slovenian Presidency in the field of Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

On 22 January, Dragutin Mate, Slovenian Minister of Interior presented the priorities of the Slovenian Presidency to the European Parliament Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee (LIBE). Flow of information, cooperation in police matters and Human Rights will be the main areas the Slovenes want to focus on. On **Borders**, Slovenia will insure a high level of security and reduce risks as Schengen Information System (SIS I) passes to its second generation (SIS II). Slovenia also wishes to promote the use of modern technologies in the surveillance of its external borders, to ensure quick passenger control. In the **Migration area**, Slovenian launched discussion in the Council on the proposal for a Directive on highly skilled workers, it is discussing the introduction of Blue Card, together with the framework Directive introducing a single application procedure for a single permit for third-country nationals to reside and work legally in MS. One of the challenges facing the Slovenian Presidency will be to find a common ground on return of illegal immigrants and failed asylum seekers topic. The Slovenian Presidency will have to reconcile different views on return procedures that the EU wants to put in place and that will have implication on the overall migration policy. The next steps have been envisaged:

- A first political triologue was organized in December
- A second one to take place in February or March
- Sanctions against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals should be discussed.

In the field of **asylum**, proposals for the second phase of the common asylum policy are expected at the end of the Slovenian Presidency. The Slovenes also wish to set the future practical cooperation between Member States on asylum by the end of their presidency. Many MEPs expressed their concerns about the lengthy detention period before the return is effectively undertaken. The need for a common source of data was stressed, in order to avoid the “protection lottery”. Sexual abuses and detention conditions were denounced by LIBE Committee members.

Launch of Slovenian study on ‘Enhancing the EU response to children affected by armed conflict with particular reference to Development Policy’

The on-going Slovenian Presidency (until June 2008) is seeking to further advance EU work on Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC) and develop ideas for how EU development programmes might more adequately address the needs of children affected by armed conflict in post-conflict situations. In order to tackle the issue, the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) was commissioned to undertake a study on this question which took place between June and December 2007. Save the Children has provided substantial input to the study.

On 11th of January the study was launched and its main findings presented. A panel of speakers responded to the study, including Tanya Cox from Save the Children's Brussels office. Other speakers included representatives from the German and Portuguese ministries for foreign affairs.

Tanya emphasised that the EU policy on Children Affected by Armed Conflict is good but implementation resulting in real changes on the ground for children is very limited. She put forward some suggestions on how to improve implementation:

- Establish a multi-Working Party dialogue on Child Protection combining Human Rights, Development and crisis management groups.
- Make a plan that coordinates the work of the council working groups on human rights, development respectively civil protection and crisis management.
- Ensure a continuity, i.e. that the forthcoming presidencies include CAAC as part of their priorities in order to have a positive impact.
- As suggested in the study, work on Country Strategy Papers. Suggestion to choose a few of the EU priority countries on work with Children Affected by Armed Conflict and do a situation analysis of children's situation, applying a child rights based approach. See what issues need to be addressed and try to marry them with competencies, resources etc.

The Slovenian presidency will during its presidency continue to gather ideas from stakeholders on how to enhance the EU response to Children Affected by Armed Conflict and present council conclusions by the end of the spring.

The study can be found on:

[http://www.dgroups.org/groups/CoOL/docs/CFSP-Enhancing EU Response to Children Affected by Armed Conflict-ECDPM 0108.pdf](http://www.dgroups.org/groups/CoOL/docs/CFSP-Enhancing%20EU%20Response%20to%20Children%20Affected%20by%20Armed%20Conflict-ECDPM_0108.pdf)

Follow-Up on the Process Towards a Strategy on the Rights of the Child

Save the Children's Brussels' office together with other members of the NGO Child Rights Action Group (CRAG) is closely following the process towards a future European strategy on the rights of the child as well as the European Forum on the Rights of the Child. Since the adoption of the EC Communication – Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child – in July 2006, Save the Children has observed that the EC has shown clear difficulties in delivering or developing actions in line with the Communication. Two key elements of the process are the European Forum and the consultation process for the forthcoming strategy and to ensure children's active participation in the process. To follow up on that process, Save the Children raised its concerns in a letter to some European Commissioners. Save the Children has also met with Commissioners Frattini and Wallström's cabinets. Save the Children welcomes the organisation of the European Forum on the Rights of the Child which is to take place on 4th March.

European Parliament signs Resolution on Children's Rights

On 16 January 2008, the European Parliament adopted a resolution that was prepared in response to the 2006 European Commission's Communication entitled "Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child."

Save the Children welcomes the initiative of the European Parliament to produce and adopt this resolution covering the rights of the child within the EU and in its external relations. Save the Children expects that this Parliament call for action towards the Commission will boost the process of designing and implementing the EU strategy on the rights of the child due in 2009.

We especially welcome the specific references to certain steps that should be taken if the EU is to

implement an EU strategy on the rights of the child, such as calling for the Commission to set up a budget line and monitoring system, and the Parliament proposal to set up a coordination unit for child's rights.

Save the Children has been following the process since the Communication "Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child" came out in 2006. It will continue its efforts in ensuring that this strategy incorporates children's rights in EU policies and its external relations according to the timeline put forward by the Commission.

Forthcoming events

Announcement: Conference on Child Abuse Images

The German region of Saxony-Anhalt and Save the Children, supported by the Slovenian Presidency are organising a conference on child abuse images in March 2008.

The conference is entitled "**Protecting Children By Disrupting the Production, Distribution and Collection of Child abuse Images - The Role of Online Payment Systems and the Need for Harmonization of Legislation**" and will feature speakers from various institutions such as the European Commission, Europol, Interpol, The Council of Europe, PayPal, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Saxony-Anhalt.

The conference will take place from 13:30 until 18:00 o'clock on the 6th of March 2008 in the Representation of Saxony-Anhalt, Boulevard Saint Michel 80, 1040 Brussels. Afterwards, there will be a reception with refreshments and the opportunity for further discussions.

For more information, please contact [Marta Ballesteros](#)

Call for Proposal

Call for proposal in the field of "Children and Youth": deadline 1st April

The first call for proposals under the "children and youth" component of "Investing in People" (DCI regulation) has been published. The deadline for the submission of the concept notes is 1st April for submission of the concept notes.

To find the "Guidelines for applicants", here is the hyperlink leading to the dedicated webpage; <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/cgi/frame12.pl>

when the page opens, on the left part of the screen choose "By program" and click on "open", "grants" and "submit query" and you will see appearing, on the right part of the screen, all open calls on thematic programmes and the "children" one is the last one (to date at least), i.e. at the bottom of the page. All actors from organizations around the world are eligible, provided they are working in the field of children's rights

Publications:

Social Inclusion and Structural Funds: EAPN Reports

The European Anti-Poverty Network, EAPN has issued the [report of the seminar on Social Inclusion NGOs' access to Structural Funds](#) the network co-organised last September in Porto

with REAPN (EAPN Portugal). The seminar brought together NGO activists from Portugal and different EU countries as well as representatives from public authorities.

As Member States were still negotiating their strategic priorities (National Strategic Reference Frameworks and Operational Programmes) with the European Commission, it aimed in particular at examining the place given to social inclusion in the new programming period of structural funds, focusing more specifically on mechanisms that can support social NGOs' access to the funds. The anti-poverty network has also published a detailed brochure on structural Fund for the period 2007-2013. To download the brochure, go to http://capn.horus.be/module/module_page/images/pdf/pdf_publication/EAPN%20Publications/nn/NN%20124_en.pdf

“Your Right to Education: A Handbook for Refugees and Displaced Communities”.

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children has produced a new field-friendly publication, “Your Right to Education: A Handbook for Refugees and Displaced Communities”. The brightly illustrated book, aimed at children, young people and adults, raises awareness of the universal right to education, especially in areas of conflict. The major messages have been translated into Arabic, English and French. A brief "user-guide" that includes examples of activities and questions for discussion is also available (Arabic and French forthcoming).

http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/right_to_ed_handbook.pdf and
http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/right_to_ed_user.pdf

Like any other Child? An overwhelming report on vulnerable children in the UK

A new report, **Like any other Child ?** published by Barnardo's claims an estimated 100,000 vulnerable children are condemned to a childhood of poverty, uncertainty and fear after being caught up in a UK asylum backlog that may not be cleared until 2011. Barnardo's, a major children's charity is calling for asylum seekers to be given the right to work, so that they can provide for themselves and their children, and at the same time recover the dignity they often lose during their fleeing and while waiting for their asylum claim to be processed. The report says children of asylum seekers often live in extreme poverty and in unfriendly environment. They often have to move and to change schools. Like Any Other Child? is calling for the Home Office to re-address the current UK asylum process, focusing on the needs of the children. [Download a summary of Like Any Other Child? \(PDF\)](#)

News in Brief

The 17 and 18 January 2008 an "opinion court" was organized by "Defence for Children International" and held in Brussels. Belgium was symbolically accused of ill treating innocent children held in closed detention centers. The judgment text is available here:

<http://www.dei-belgique.be/index.php>