

## Expert conference 'Europe de l'Enfance'

### *The European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights*

**Antwerp, 8 – 10 September 2010**

Twice a year, ministers and/or high-level officials holding responsibility for childhood policies meet informally at the initiative of the EU Presidency in the Permanent Intergovernmental Group Europe de l'Enfance.

Youth and children's rights have gained momentum, as they are mentioned in the recent 'Treaty on the EU' and the 'Charter on the Fundamental Rights of the EU'. All EU member states have also ratified the 'UN Convention on the Rights of the Child'. Furthermore, the 'Council resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)' stipulates that a children's policy dimension should be considered in all appropriate fields of action: *"taking into account that the life and future prospects of young people are significantly determined by the opportunities, support and protection received during childhood"*.

There is a need to get an overview and **insight in the different policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights**. Therefore, the Belgian EU Presidency will provide the Council of the European Union Youth a document about the state of play in this field, which will allow participants to explore the possibilities for creating greater coherence and synergies between the different policy areas. This is the reason why the Belgian EU Presidency put this 'Europe de l'Enfance' meeting on the agenda of the EU Council Youth.

It is essential to ask the European Commission to take these European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights into account, as well as the need for greater coherence and synergies in this field. Especially because the European Commission intends to adopt a new Communication on an 'EU Strategy on the Rights of the child' in December 2010.

Finally, the 'Europe de l'Enfance' expert conference will also discuss the topics of 'early childhood education' and 'care services', acknowledging the major importance of early childhood in the later development of the child. There will be an opportunity to exchange views about quantitative and qualitative criteria for the future decade.

#### **What will be discussed?**

On 8 September the Belgian EU Presidency will present to the expert meeting "Europe de l'Enfance" **a document on the European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children's**

**rights.** The presidency will give the floor to the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the European Youth Forum, the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC), UNICEF, the EU and EFTA member states to give their reflections. The results of those reflections will be reported to the Council Working Party on Youth.

On 9 September invited experts on children, youth and children's rights policies will discuss **three priority themes**, which are linked to the Belgian EU Presidency Youth and the EU Council Youth. At the same time, the conference will give special attention to child poverty.

1. The conference will give an overview of the different European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights. It will provide space to discuss the analyses and comparisons regarding agenda-setting in these policy areas.
2. Experts will discuss the new European Commission Communication concerning a strategy on the rights of the child, foreseen to be adopted in December 2010.
3. This Antwerp conference will also take time to exchange views about criteria for early childhood education and care services in the framework for European co-operation in education and training ('ET 2020').

These themes will be introduced in plenary and deepened in working group sessions in order to come to a set of conclusions. In a closing session high level experts will give reflections from their point of view.

On 10 September 2010 presidency conclusions will be presented to the expert meeting on the document regarding the European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights and on the output of the working group sessions of 9 September 2010. The presidency will give the floor to the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the European Youth Forum, the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC), UNICEF, the EU and EFTA member states to give their reflections.

At the same time conclusions of the conference will serve as input for a declaration of the Ministers of Children at their meeting on 15-16 November 2010 Brussels.

### **Who will join the discussions at 'Europe de l'Enfance'?**

The Belgian EU Presidency invites **participants and experts from different backgrounds** to enrich the discussions about the three themes above. Different stakeholders are invited for different parts of the programme: governmental and non-governmental; academics and practitioners; national, European and international.

**>>> For the whole conference from 8 till 10 September 2010**, are invited:

- The members of the permanent intergovernmental group: 'Europe de l'Enfance'
- The secretariat of ChildONEurope
- As observers: European Commission, Council of Europe, European Youth Forum, UNICEF, ENOC and a representative of the ministry competent for childhood policy of the EFTA countries.

**>>> From 8 September dinner till 9 September 2010**, are invited:

- The representatives of the Ministries for Youth of the EU and EFTA countries
- The Children's Ombudsperson (member of ENOC) of each EU Member State and EFTA country

**On 9 September 2010**, the discussions will be enriched with a broad range of invited experts on children, youth and children's rights policies: national and international, governmental and non-governmental and academic.

### **A special conference in a special place**

The expert conference will take place in 'HETPALEIS', in the heart of the city of Antwerp. The choice for this venue is symbolic, because 'HETPALEIS' is a theatre for children, youth and young artists. 'HETPALEIS' promotes performing arts and strives to make theatre accessible (in the widest sense of the word) for each child in every family. Appropriately, the facade of the building is decorated with the poem "S M A L L", written by Flemish poet Bart Moeyaert, drawing the attention on the rights of the child.