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**8^{EME} REUNION DU GROUPE DE COMMISSAIRES “DROITS
FONDAMENTAUX,
LUTTE CONTRE LA DISCRIMINATION ET EGALITE DES CHANCES”**

Mercredi 29 mars 2006, 14h30 – 16h00

Berlaymont, 13^{ème} étage, salle Hebdo

COMMUNICATION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

INFORMATION NOTE PRESENTED BY VICE-PRESIDENT FRATTINI

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The protection of the Rights of the Child within the European Union and the mainstreaming of children's rights within its policies constitutes one of the structural monitoring tasks attributed to the Group of Commissioners on Fundamental Rights. This issue was already discussed on three occasions in the Group:

- On 16 February 2005, the elements for a policy strategy were presented to the Group. A consensus on the general approach was reached and President Barroso concluded by inviting Vice-President Frattini to present an issues paper identifying all relevant contributors within the Commission and an operational agenda.
- On 27 April 2005, a global table summarising the contributions received from other Commissioners and services was presented and discussed. The Group supported the general approach with a view to prepare a “Pact for the Child”. The added value of Europe would be to enable the exchange of good practices, and to launch common actions aimed at upgrading the protection of the child.
- On 23 November 2005, the Group gave its general support to an outline of the draft Communication, confirming that it should be an ambitious text and include both the internal and the external dimension.

State of play :

Following the last discussions in the Group, two informal consultations with all services concerned on a draft text including annexes and a draft impact assessment have been carried out, by the end of last year and in February this year respectively.

Moreover, informal discussions have been held with international organisations such as UNICEF, UNHCR, the World Health Organisation, the International Labour Organisation, the Council of Europe, the Network of Ombudspersons for Children and civil society, i.e. some 40 Children NGOs and experts.

Main lines of the draft Communication :

- A single **global objective is suggested**: *"The European Commission proposes to launch a long-term strategy to actively promote children's rights in the internal and external policies of the European Union. This challenge can only be achieved through a coherent and co-ordinated plan of actions. The present Communication sets up an umbrella of coordination of EU activities in the realm of children's rights"*, This reflects the previous conclusions of the Group of Commissioners.
- The strategy proposed fits into the international instruments already in place (UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, European Charter on Human Rights, etc.). It seems clear that this communication must contribute to build a specific community dimension in the international challenges related to children's rights, in which the EU constitutes a central actor.
- Therefore, the communication will be a cross-cutting document including internal and external policies on children's rights in a coherent way, fully consistent with the already existing community action plans such as, for instance, the *Action Plan on Children in Development Cooperation* and the *Action plan on trafficking in human beings*.

- A key measure to be announced in the draft Communication would be the appointment of a single “**EU coordinator of Children’s Rights**”, acting as a contact person of the European Commission, making Children’s Rights more visible, and ensuring coordination of the strategy.
- Also, to ensure a correct implementation of the actions proposed, the necessary resources should be made available. It is therefore proposed to allocate a part of the available budgets of the existing programmes to actions of the present communication, by way of inclusion in their annual work plans, and consequently, in full respect of each programme's objectives and priorities. The intention is not to build a "common pot" but to ensure that each policy devotes the necessary resources to actions in favour of children's rights within its own area of competence.
- The draft suggests an action plan in 3 sets covering different periods. The first two sets (2006-2008) would start immediately and the third one (2008 onwards) once a more in-depth analysis of the needs has been carried out. The first set would set up the necessary internal coordination within the Commission and the mainstreaming of children’s rights within EU policies. The second set takes stock and analyse in-depth the achievements, gaps and needs. This could result in a White Paper towards the end of 2008. This White Paper and the results of the subsequent public consultation could allow for the launching of additional concrete measures along the identified priorities.

Examples of concrete actions:

- The **concrete actions** could be listed in an annex to the communication, divided into 14 sections corresponding to the different Rights of the Child.
- Actions to be proposed for 2006-2007 could include :
 - The development of a **web site** fully dedicated to children’s matters and rights, with the documents accessible in all languages and with a globally accessible vocabulary (in 20 languages);
 - Support for the creation of a **single telephone number** in Europe for children helplines;
 - The allocation of parts of the **budgets** of existing and future EC programmes for actions in favour of children (i.e. make a better – and more efficient - use of available money in favour of poverty reduction, prevention of violence, employment, etc. for children);
 - The implementation of the European Youth Pact;
 - The implementation of the Action plan against Trafficking in Human Beings;
 - The presentation, when justified, of legislative proposals under all relevant existing legal bases.
 - The preparation of a **White Paper** based on an in-depth analysis of children’s rights in the Union.
- Coordination and implementation mechanisms to be considered in 2006 could include:

- The creation of a formal **inter-service group** to coordinate the implementation of the strategy;
- The creation of a **European Forum for the Rights of the Child**, including Member States, UNICEF, CoE and representatives of civil society;

and as of 2007:

- The setting up of a systematic **Data collection** on children;
- The establishment of an **inventory** of Member States' actions;
- The presentation of a **report every other year** on the implementation of the CRC by Member States, based on the inventory and aiming at stimulating exchange of good practice;
- The presentation of a **five-year report** on the impact of EU legislation, policy and programmes connected to or impacting on children's rights.

Remaining steps and timing:

- April (first half) : consultation with all services concerned on the latest version of the Communication and the Impact Assessment in view of further contributions;
- April (mid) : Organisation of an interservice meeting at an appropriate level to finalise the common documents;
- April (second half) : formal inter-service consultations;
- June : adoption by the College.