

'Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child' (INI/2007/2093)

Briefing for MEPs

The NSPCC welcomes the draft report: 'Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child', adopted by the LIBE committee in December 2007 (Rapporteur Angelilli). We are pleased at the strong message from MEPs in support of promoting children's rights both in EU policies and at national level and encourage you to vote in favour of the report, which will be discussed in plenary on 15 January (vote 16 January).

Why is an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child important?

This report is responding in particular to the Commission's Communication 'Towards a European strategy on the Rights of the Child' of July 2006, which proposes a variety of measures with a view to developing a children's rights strategy. The NSPCC¹ welcomed this Communication and continues to play an active role in the follow up to it.

The NSPCC along with our partners in the European Children's Network (Euronet) have been campaigning for many years for a European strategy on children's rights. This is to help ensure that the growing number of EU activities which affect children contribute to enhancing children's well-being and safeguarding their rights.

There are an increasing number of risks to children which transcend national boundaries and where cross-border cooperation is essential, such as child trafficking and protecting children online. While the primary responsibility for safeguarding children's rights lies with national governments, the EU provides significant opportunities to help address such problems. A children's strategy will contribute to ensuring that this is done.

The LIBE Committee² report

The LIBE Committee report raises a large number of important issues for children's rights both within and outside the EU. Many of these are issues on which the NSPCC campaigns in the UK based on evidence from our services and our work with children and young people. Some of the amendments concern calls which are directed primarily at Member States, others are issues where the EU also has a particular role to play. This briefing highlights some of the key issues from the NSPCC's perspective as a child protection NGO.

- **Mainstreaming Children's Rights.** The NSPCC supports the many proposals which will strengthen the integration of children's rights and needs in EU policy making. We welcome points which emphasise the importance of basing the EU strategy and other relevant actions, such as the work programme of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, on the United Nations

¹ The NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) is the UK's leading charity specialising in child protection. Our purpose is to end cruelty to children. www.nspcc.org.uk. The NSPCC is a founding and Board member of the European Children's Network (EURONET)

² Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We commend the reference to the role of the European Forum on the Rights of the Child in bringing together a wide range of stakeholders working in the field of children's rights as well as proposals for the establishment of a coordination unit in the European Parliament for children's rights. The NSPCC backs calls for increased participation of children and measures that will ensure that information on the rights of the child is effectively disseminated to children (paragraphs 36-41). We also welcome the proposal for the creation for a specific budget for children's rights to finance the implementation of the Commission's communication on child rights (5).

- **Sexual exploitation of children.** The EU has a key role to play alongside Member States in helping end the sexual exploitation of children. The NSPCC welcomes in particular the call on Member States to fully implement Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA (53); to ensure that sex tourism is covered by extraterritorial laws (75); to implement measures to ban all forms of exploitation (90); for the European strategy to focus on ending commercial sexual exploitation of children (101).

Protecting children from known sex offenders. The NSPCC supports paragraph 72 which calls on the EU to make progress on exchanging criminal record information about those who have convictions for abusing children, with a view to using this information to ensure that unsuitable people are not able to gain employment with children. Measures are also called for in order to avoid further offences, for example when a person convicted of sexual offences against children travels abroad³.

- **Violence against children.** The NSPCC welcomes the calls for action to end all violence against children – including all forms of violence and physical punishment in the home. (paragraph 42). It is important to note that domestic violence can profoundly affect children who are abused themselves or who witness abuse of family members.
- **Children in the criminal justice system.** The NSPCC is encouraged by the paragraph emphasising that detention of children should be used only as a last resort and with a view to the child's dignity (85). The NSPCC also supports paragraph 86 which calls for a comparative study of the age of criminal responsibility in EU Member States and how young offenders are dealt with.
- **Fulfilling the rights of all children.** The NSPCC supports the many paragraphs which call for particular attention to be given to implementing the rights of groups of children who are more vulnerable to infringements of their rights, such as children with disabilities, Roma children and children from other minority ethnic groups. It also supports integrating a gender perspective through all actions, including relating to sexual exploitation (in particular paragrphs 7, 12, 20, 22) while noting that the minority of boys who are sexually exploited must receive effective protection and support.

For any further information, including detailed advice on specific issues, please contact Kathleen Spencer Chapman, European Adviser on kspencer@nspcc.org.uk or +44 (0)20 7825 2758

³ [NSPCC report: Protecting children through safer recruitment in the EU](#) (summary version)