



Press Release

Street children in Central and Eastern European EU Member States: EFSC workshop highlights the key issues and barriers hindering their social inclusion : a wholesome dialogue with representatives from the European Commission, European Parliament, member state governments, NGO's and experts

On the 5th and 6th of May 2008, the European Foundation for Street Children (EFSC) carried out at its premises in Brussels a very successful two day workshop within its PROGRESS work programme 2008 on: ***Social exclusion and extreme poverty as major reasons for the life situation of street children in the Central and Eastern European Member States - National analyses, reports and strategic concepts to prepare the new National Strategies 2008 - 2011.***

The workshop succeeded in bringing together representatives from national governments and locally active NGOs from Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Estonia and Hungary that enabled a systematic analysis of the national contexts of these Central and Eastern European Members States mostly concerned by the phenomenon of street children as well as of the governmental strategies and different intervention methods adopted by NGOs, many of which are EFSC member organisations.

A constructive and politically dense discussion, with the valuable contribution of experts and representatives of the European Commission and the European Parliament, took place concerning the approaches and practices to protecting the rights of the street children in Europe. Particular focus was made on the issue of extreme child poverty and the migration effects leading to the existing phenomena. EFSC expects that the results and contributions of this workshop will impact and enrich the drafting of the National Action Plans for Social Inclusion, which Member States have been called upon to submit to the European Commission by September 15th, 2008.

Furthermore, the workshop has provided EFSC at an early stage with relevant street children related information on these countries especially on migration and extreme poverty issues, useful to providing a valuable input to the assessment of the national reports which the Commission will make from October 2008 onwards.

In this context, it is of particular importance to stress that Christa Prets, Member of the European Parliament, informed the participants about her commitment towards establishing an Intergroup on Street Children at the European Parliament and about the written question that she submitted to the Commission on "EU measures concerning street children in Europe". In this question, which has been based on documentation provided by EFSC, she stresses the fact that the number of children and young people living on the street is drastically increasing also in Europe. Furthermore she states that according to estimates by NGOs, approximately 150.000 – 250.000 children are currently living on the streets of Europe. In this context she requires the European Union to apply itself "more intensively to this issue and to develop and implement concrete measures to combat child poverty and support street children". In this context she asks the European Commission to what extent it has dealt with this issue to date and what measures are being taken at EU level regarding street children in Europe.

These are important political steps towards getting the issue of street children higher in the European Commission's agenda and to make this most vulnerable group of children an integral part of the EU policy design to fight against social exclusion and poverty.

Please find the text of the written question at:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+WQ+E-2008-1977+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

At a later stage EFSC will publish a more detailed summary report of the workshop, including strategic recommendations, which will be developed on the basis of the discussions. This will serve as a resource base both for the advocacy actions of EFSC member

organisations within their national contexts as well as for the next steps to be taken by the European Commission to develop its social inclusion policy within PROGRESS. In this context EFSC will also monitor the extent to which street children's rights have been mainstreamed in the National Action Plans.

For more detailed information on this workshop or on the 2008 work programme of EFSC within the EU programme PROGRESS, please contact Ms. Mayen Enodien, EFSC Information, Communication and Fundraising Officer (mayen.enodien@enscw.org)

EFSC's workshop was supported by the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013). This programme was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these fields.

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

For more information see:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html