



**ENSCW**

**Report on the Symposium on**

***Street children and youth as a priority of the EU's  
social inclusion policy for the new Member States  
in Central and Eastern Europe***

**organised by the European Network on Street  
Children Worldwide (ENSCW)**

**9-10 December 2004, Brussels**



**ENSCW**

**HELP ENSCW TO SAVE CHILDREN FROM THE STREET**

## 1) Introduction

The ENSCW Symposium aimed to analyse to what extent excluded children and street children have to be considered as a priority within the joint initiatives of the European Commission and the new EU Member States in Eastern Europe in the framework of the EU's new social inclusion policy. Furthermore, the seminar aimed at an analysis of the approaches of the EU, the relevant authorities of the Member States and the NGOs working in the field towards this growing problem in Eastern Europe. A particular interest of the seminar was to bring together the actors from these different levels in order to analyse the present situation in the light of their perceptions, to facilitate the exchange of information and best practice on this topic and to create permanent networking links between them in order to ensure a better co-ordinated and sustainable joint action in the future.

James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, confirmed in a video message the World Bank's commitment to supporting ENSCW initiatives in favour of street children and excluded children, claiming a proper partnership between official institutions and civil society, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, in order to fight against this phenomenon as well as against poverty as one of the most crucial problems of the century.

Street children are considered as a particularly vulnerable group which needs tailor-made solutions and major attention in European policy development preventing poverty and social exclusion. With this objective in mind, the European Network on Street Children Worldwide has brought together the relevant players in this field such as qualified officials from the European Commission, Members of the European Parliament, representatives of the concerned governments and of the NGOs involved with street children from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation and the Slovak Republic. In addition, representatives of the World Bank and the Council of Europe attended.

## 2) Statistics and definitions

The symposium revealed that the number of street children cannot easily be estimated. In Romania figures range from 5,000 to over 9,000 or to 60,000 according to the international press, but there is agreement on the geographical coverage of the phenomenon.

The Polish organisation "Foundation for Poland" estimates that there are about 15,000 street children in Warsaw. A common problem is to find reliable statistics about the exact number of street children as they do not appear in official statistics; they are mobile and change their way of living from time to time. In the Czech Republic 17,000 social services' clients out of 40,673 were young people under 15 years of age. In Poland, according to the police, in 2002 there were 5,625 children who had run away from home (4,042 were under 15) and 6,662 who had run away from residential care institutions to go back to the streets. These figures show that different specific criteria can be used to calculate the number of street children, which can be even more useful than an overall calculation.

It is difficult to agree on one general definition of street children commonly used by specialists working in this field. According to UNICEF: “Any boy or girl for whom the street in the widest sense of the word has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults”. Sometimes the terms “excluded children” or even “children without a future” are used instead of the term “street children”. In Poland for example, street children are those who spend most of their time on the street in peer groups. Other ways of describing street children are according to specific groups of children that NGOs work with, for example, Roma children - this category is included in a narrow definition of street children “living and working” in the street; youth who are engaged in prostitution - these are boys and girls aged between 14 and 17, mostly coming from post-Soviet countries, as well as Romania and Bulgaria; children who run away from their family homes; children from dysfunctional families; children who run away from residential care institutions; children working in the street (most of them belong to one of the groups mentioned above, in contrast to other street children); children and youth who spend most of their time on the street.

In Estonia there is no legal definition of street children and four categories are used by experts: children who are without a home and family and who live in the streets; children who are constantly on the streets, but who have home and family; children who are in danger of falling into a situation where they would go on to the streets; and children who are evading the obligation to attend school and children deprived of parental care. In all documents these categories of children are considered as children at risk. It must also be taken into consideration that most street children in Eastern Europe maintain some relations with their family and sometimes even with school. These examples prove that a definition has not yet been invented to simultaneously describe the peculiarity of the life on the street and the link to other risks (work exploitation, drug addiction...). In this sense the definition of street children can still be a good synthesis, even if not exhaustive.

### **3) Legal framework**

All countries represented at the symposium acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in the early 90s. From these discussions it emerged that some countries have general legislation on the family and child protection whereas others also have specific measures concerning street children. Regarding the legislation in Romania, Vali Sonia Botezatu (President of the Romanian National Authority on Child Protection) stressed that, since June 2001, an intervention programme in favour of street children was put in place, beginning with emergency measures and an action plan regarding the social inclusion of street children entered into force on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2001. This was signed by the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption (NACPA) and the General Police Inspectorate. Every year, NACPA implemented National Interest Programmes for the inclusion of children living in the street. Through the reform of the legislative framework, the institutional reform as well as specific interventions, the Romanian Government (2001-2004) targeted the de-institutionalising of children in the residential care systems, guaranteeing their social and professional integration and their education.

A new legislative package in the field of child protection was approved in June 2004 and came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005. For the first time, it explicitly stipulates that parents have the primary responsibility for the raising, caring and development of children, that the local community has a subsidiary responsibility and that the state interferes only complementarily. Finally, the legislation introduced important changes on the legal status of adoption and set up a new Romanian Office for Adoption. Roelie Post, the Commission official in the Romanian team on child protection, minorities and civil society, strongly affirmed that, in Romania, child protection should be the task of the State and local authorities. The State (and not the NGOs) should provide funds to carry out and monitor the activities in this field. Nevertheless, NGOs always maintain an important role for public awareness on urgent situations and, for this reason, they are constantly consulted. All too often, according to Ms Post, children are put in care institutions without proper investigation; children are, above all, a problem of the family.

An early result of the Bulgarian National Strategy and the Action Plan for the protection of the rights of street children for 2003-2005 (focusing on the development of preventive work and modern social services), is that, in 2004, for the first time the total number of children provided with a family environment exceeds the number of those placed in specialised institutions, bearing in mind that until recently the placement in a specialised institution was the only alternative for children at risk. Data presented by the Bulgarian NGO showed that unemployment among Bulgarian Roma in recent years exceeded 50% and the largest numbers of children, adolescents and young people in the street in Bulgaria are of Romany origin. This reminds us of the need to find specific solutions for this target group that presents specific problems.

In recent years both Romania and Bulgaria have opened shelters and day centres for temporary settlement. Estonia considers that these services should be supported by local governments.

According to the representative of the Polish Government, the accession to the European Union created a challenge: the Lisbon strategy and goals of the Nizza summit, the Community Action Programme to combat social exclusion and the European Social Funds as a financial instrument are all very important for the new and future EU Member States. However, the first priority must be an action in the field of education to prevent social exclusion of young people. The co-operation between all partners through effective plans, especially at local level, is crucial; until now local players have not felt the need to create and be part of this national strategy, to influence knowledge and to participate in strategies to fight social exclusion.

In the Czech Republic, the protection of children at risk is guaranteed by the State through the support of NGOs and local organisations. Local government authorities are responsible at regional and local level and have two departments - child and family care and social protection. In the latter, social workers are more focused on the lifestyle risk of children and youth. Two types of social workers exist: trustees or guardians (specialised employees) and social assistants (street workers intervening in urgent cases). In Estonia, one of the biggest challenges of 2004 was the drafting of a proposal for child protection. Representatives of different ministries, local authorities, NGOs and other childcare organisations were involved in the preparative work. The concept will be followed by a

new Child Protection Act (it should be finalised by the end of 2005) following Government approval.

#### **4) Indicators**

The first point is that indicators on street children are not included in the NAPs/incl. (National Action Plans on social inclusion) and the Open Method of Co-ordination is seen as a good way of starting the discussion on how to use indicators in practice. Both the lack of comparable indicators (Laecken indicators) and of common criteria make it difficult to find common European strategies to combat poverty and social exclusion among excluded children. The discussion within the sub-committee on indicators is considered very important, but the situation is still at the beginning regarding the EU common criteria on social exclusion. In the NAPs/incl. of the Czech Republic, one of the primary Laecken indicators is relevant: the rate of risk of poverty according to age. In this country the highest risk of poverty and social exclusion concerns children up to the age of 15. A special programme called "First Chance", focusing on preventing unemployment of young people aged 15 and over has now been launched.

Poland has three relevant indicators: the unemployment rate among young people (15-20 years old) which has reached 40% (this group is in danger of social exclusion), the difference between the lowest income and the average income is not so great and, finally, the level of young people in secondary and higher education which is one of the highest in Europe, giving them a chance for better social inclusion. In Estonia, relevant and useful indicators would be considered through: statistics gathered from a new telephone line for children in need, created by the government, the number of interventions by the police in cases of acts of violence in families (a new law now permits the police to intervene in this case), the number of child protection workers and school social workers per child and, finally, the number of pupils in classes. (in Estonia, thanks to a new law, the latter has been reduced from 45 to 25).

The child protection system in Bulgaria is measured on the following available data: the prevented placements of children in specialised institutions, the placement of children with relatives, the number of children reintegrated into their families, provided with a family environment and placed in a foster family or specialised institutions.

#### **5) European social policy on the inclusion of street children**

As already stressed by the governments representatives, Marie-Anne Paraskevas, the Commission's official in the DG Employment and Social Affairs, confirmed that from the "Analysis of the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion (NAPs/incl. 2004-2006) submitted by the 10 new Member States" compiled by the European Commission (not yet published), the poverty risk appears to be higher when faced by children (20%) and young people (16%), whereas older people have almost a relatively low poverty risk (8%). Households with three and more children (25%) and single parent households (20%) are at a particularly high risk. Furthermore, in the Commission's analysis, the high level of poverty and social exclusion experienced by children is widely recognised as a key challenge in most Member States. This is confirmed by strategic approaches,

objectives and targets set and the measures adopted in the NAPs/incl. in many of the Member States.

According to the Analysis, “Estonia notes that child poverty and exclusion as one of the key challenges. Hungary also makes the well-being of children one of its key objectives. Poland includes it as one of its four most important objectives over the next two years, taking up educational, social and health activities preventing exclusion as well as setting the scene for equal opportunities for children and youth”. As an objective, some countries (the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Slovenia) target particular groups of children, such as children in institutional care, young offenders, children at risk of violence, pre-school children, Roma children. The Estonian NAP/incl. is also paying attention to the following risk groups: school dropouts or young people in danger of dropping out, children with special needs, disabled people, people with housing problems and victims of crime and violence.

Unfortunately, the development of concrete targets for reducing child poverty and exclusion is rare. Only Estonia sets specific overall quantified targets for poverty reduction for children. However, the Commission’s Analyses point out that “in many countries there is no acknowledgement of the rights of children and it seems as if priority is given to basing children's services on an adult understanding of what children need rather than on their rights to universally agreed services. Children are generally not seen as a discrete group, but more as an aspect of family life. Child care is most often looked at from the perspective of increasing female participation in the labour market rather than the needs of children”.

In the Analyses, the lack of child-oriented data and indicators to describe the poverty and exclusion experienced by children and street children is confirmed. Planning is too often based on out-of-date data and/or with a lack of local knowledge and information held by children's NGOs, which does not seem to have been exploited very much. The different policies proposed mostly aim to increase families' financial resources, reducing expenses of families and focusing on prevention and child wellbeing.

Marie-Anne Paraskevas criticised the report compiled by the High Level Group on the Lisbon strategy, the so-called Kok Report, where the message is that while all three pillars of the Lisbon strategy (economic, social and environmental) remain valid, the priority now is for Europe to boost its economic growth rate and increase employment. In this situation, there is the high risk of forgetting social priorities.

Jérôme Vignon, Director of the European Commission’s DG Employment and Social Affairs, confirmed the need to tackle the roots of child poverty and break the intergenerational inheritance of poverty if the social inclusion process wants to be successful in making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty.

Zbigniew Zaleski (Polish MEP) and Ms Paraskevas took part in a very interesting inter-institutional debate which took place between the European Parliament and the European Commission about their respective roles and their internal ability to strengthen the European social inclusion policy of children at risk within the Union and the candidate countries, making public opinion aware of this important and urgent social problem. Both

speakers recognised the need to clearly identify the competent institutional interlocutors in charge of children's rights within the Commission and the Parliament. It is regrettable that in the latter's case there is not a clear division of competencies on this matter. The attention on this issue is now higher and even if, in the past, mainstreaming was an excellent idea, it should not lead to a disappearance of the very concrete subject of child protection and prevention within a more general topic such as "social inclusion". Reinhold Müller, ENSCW Executive Director, underlined that this happened, for example, in the last decade to the issues of family and disability policies, which even lost their specific units or budget lines existing in the Commission.

Both speakers agreed on the need to raise political support for the creation of a Children's unit within the Commission and action from the Parliament that should indicate clearer competencies on several aspects concerning children's rights in the different committees of the European Parliament. Mr Zaleski invited all present to send him data and statistics on this crucial issue in order to raise a political debate in the Parliament in view of the compilation of a future report on street children. Finally, Ms Paraskevas stressed the need to increase social research funds in this field; as an example she mentioned the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme, which contains projects on the reconciliation of the family and work, but not one on children.

## **6) The new Constitutional Treaty and the future development of children's rights**

Regarding a possible development of children's rights issues in future EU legislation, Alain Brun, the Commission official in DG Justice and Home Affairs, presenting the implications (if ratified) of the Constitutional Treaty on the EU policies concerning children, analysed the following points: the possible accession of the European Union to the European Convention of Human Rights, the insertion of the Charter of Fundamental Rights into the Constitutional Treaty and the developing EU policies in the field of children, following the inclusion of children's rights in the internal and external objectives of the Constitutional Treaty.

Even if the present Treaties do not explicitly mention the protection of children in EU policies, EU legislative decisions already provide children's rights protection, such as the Council Framework Decision on combating trafficking in human beings, the Framework decision on combating the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography.

The Court of Justice of the European Communities in Luxembourg in the famous "Case Chen" decided that non-national citizens (in this case a Chinese mother) who have no other right to reside in the UK but have an Irish citizen child (i.e. a child who was born anywhere on the territory of the island of Ireland), may be able to apply to remain in the UK on the basis of European Community law. To exclude the mother would effectively deprive the child of the right to reside in the European Union, and would therefore be contrary to EU law. The Court said: "For Catherine to be able to enjoy her right of residence, she must, as a young child, be entitled to be accompanied by her mother, who is her carer."

According to Mr Brun, the accession of the EU to the Convention is not possible until the Treaties have been ratified and will ensure an external control on the activities of the European Union's institutions, including the Luxembourg Court of Justice.

In other words, the insertion of the EU Charter into the Treaty will have legally binding effects but we have to consider that the protection of the fundamental rights was already ensured by Article 6 paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Treaty. The important point is the legally binding effect of all the provisions inserted in the Charter that are now clearly presented in the text to the public.

The developing EU policies in the field of children as a consequence of the inclusion of children's rights in the internal and external objectives of the Constitutional Treaty represent a big challenge and it is difficult to foresee the consequences since, according to Mr Brun, all will depend on the political pressure put on the European Commission by the European Parliament and the European Council to develop the EU legislation in the field of children. In any case, in the future the European Institutions will formally have to use the legal competencies in developing policies in this field. The Agency on Fundamental Rights that will replace the existing European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia in Vienna is also linked to the protection of children. The Commission now has the mandate to draft a regulation in that field but, before doing this, it has launched a public debate to define what the Agency could be in the future.

Nevertheless, according to Mr Brun, it is clear that the Agency will have to deal with all fundamental rights listed in the Charter and the rights of children should have an important place on its agenda.

## **7) Best practice presented by the NGOs**

Walther Specht, a professor at the University of Tübingen, clarified that the concept of Mobile Youth Work is an important tool for a good and effective intervention for children at risk. It is an outreach youth counselling concept being put into action for youth social work in the framework of group and individual social-pedagogic work. Mobile Youth Work is district and social area-related and aims at preventing or cancelling exclusion processes of young people. Resources and self-aid techniques are used as a means of solving social problems in the community. Mobile Youth Work relies on structures of trust and youth volunteering and a subject-oriented position by offering young people or older children development options and chances for life management without violating laws. The concept of Mobile Youth Work is divided into four fields: individual aid, street work, group work and community work, weighted according to the local situation. The concept of community-based Mobile Youth Work includes the amalgamation of existing local offers in the sense of an institutional community network and the creation of respective institutional structures as in, for instance, district working groups.

**A) The Alliance for Children and Youth (Bulgaria)** was founded in September 2002 by the Free and Democratic Bulgaria Foundation, the Sofia Municipality and the Bulgarian Red Cross. Its mission is to defend the rights of street children and youth and provide them with acceptable conditions for their physical, mental, moral and social

development, as well as to work for their reintegration into society through partner interaction between recognised public institutions.

The target groups of the Alliance for children and youth are uncontrolled children and adolescents, homeless adolescents and young people aged between 16 and 25. Directing and settling of the uncontrolled and homeless children in shelters and centres is the result of hard work in the street carried out by social workers from the centres as well as on information given by citizens, the police, the departments of child protection and the local commissions fighting against antisocial activities.

Two new projects exist:

- ***Faith, Hope and Love Centre*** is a project financed by the European Commission's Phare Access – 2000 Programme and aims to create lasting positive change in the lives of socially excluded children through the adoption and implementation of a successful fostering programme in Bulgaria. This is an innovative learning -based project supported by the main institutions involved in the child welfare reform in Bulgaria. The main activities of the project include training seminars, handbook development for social workers and professionals based on the principles, policies and best practices, development of educational materials, and the placement of street children with foster families.

- ***16+ Youth Day Care Centre*** is a three-year project financed by the Oak Foundation, Geneva. The aim of the project is to develop new programmes and activities, through which the Centre will expand and enrich its services. These programmes complement the centre's existing activities and are structured around four basic areas - Education, Employment, Health and Social Contacts.

**B) The Nobody's Children Foundation** (Poland) carries out activities addressed to physically, psychologically, and sexually abused and neglected children, their parents and guardians, as well as professionals dealing with cases of child abuse. Its main goal is to develop an efficient aid system for abused children, a system that would integrate activities of State institutions, local authorities and non-governmental organisations working for the benefit of children in the particular region.

The Foundation runs two specialised multidisciplinary child abuse intervention and prevention centres:

- ***The Child and Family Centre*** was founded in 1996 thanks to support and funds provided by the French organisation Médecins du Monde (Doctors of the World). Appreciating the importance of the problem, the Social Aid Centre in Warsaw's Praga-Południe district offered premises to the newly-established Centre. The Centre operates in the Praga-Południe district of the Warszawa Centrum municipality, providing specialist services to abused children and their families, as well as to professionals dealing with such cases.

- ***Centre of Help for Children - Victims of Crime "Mazowiecka"***

Established in 2003, it is a professional institution designed to apply and promote innovative methods of assisting children – victims of crime. The Centre functions in co-operation with the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration

and institutions reporting to them in Warsaw. The Centre provides crisis intervention services in cases of crime against children, especially sexual abuse and violence. Children and their families are offered free psychological and legal assistance (consultations, therapy and support groups).

**C) The Tallinn Centre for Children at Risk (Estonia)** is a temporary home for children in need (established in 1993). The Centre consists of two separate shelters with 60 workers:

- *Nõmme tee Centre* specialises in children with addiction problems (32 places in the shelter for children aged 10-18). The Centre offers medical, psychological and educational rehabilitation where the child also continues its education in the Centre and, if necessary, the child is provided with a new school. Since autumn 2000, 160 children with addiction problems have stayed in Nõmme tee Centre, 62% of them have abstained from addiction, 25% of the children were girls. In autumn 2003 the number of girls sent to the Centre was due to alcohol consumption sharply increasing. Thirty per cent of the children were Estonian-speaking and 75% of the children went back to their homes after the social programme.

- *Lilleküla Centre* specialises in children without parental care (16 places in the shelter for children aged 3-18). For eleven years the organisation has worked with more than 1900 children and approximately 60% went back to their homes after work in the shelter - 55% were boys and 45% girls.

**D) The Romanian Foundation for Children, Community and Family (Romania)** aims to protect children's rights, focusing on the responsible and active role of the family, the community and the State. The organisation runs six projects in six Romanian counties. The target groups are children in difficulties and their families, children from different types of institutions, children with special needs, foster carers, youngsters leaving childcare institutions, and poor rural communities. In 2003 the number of beneficiaries was more than 20,000.

The *Everychild Community Centre Cluj-Napoca* is an abandonment prevention project that protects the rights of children coming from disadvantaged families of Cluj-Napoca and is supported by the community through the involvement of volunteers in the activities and financial support from the local community and successful businesses. Basic services provided by the Community Centre are: social care, psychological, legal and medical counselling, learning support and school evolution monitoring, support groups for teenagers and parents, preparing children for school, leisure time activities and occasional material support in crisis situations. After attending the Centre, 92% of the children felt more self-confident, 88% of the children had more friends, 87% of the children had better school results, and 73% of the children were more optimistic and confident.

**E) Proxima Sociale (Czech Republic)** was founded in December 1993 with a vision to create projects based on social work and a community approach. In January 1995, the "Community Centre Krok" was opened with the support of Phare, the Ministry of Social

Affairs and the local government of Prague 12 as an experimental regional centre for endangered people. Following the design of the project, the community centre is comprised of six parts:

- a. Low-threshold club for unorganised youth (aged between 12 and 22);
- b. Direct outdoor work, street work;
- c. Alternative punishment programme – probation;
- d. Social flats for girls and mothers with children in distress as an alternative to placement in an institution;
- e. Citizen Advisory Bureau (CAB) for people living in the community;
- f. Job club for unemployed and people who are difficult to employ.

**F) Odyseus (Slovakia)** has the mission of participating in human rights, observing and increasing the quality of life of vulnerable communities, mainly drug users, sex workers and youth, and to help them to regain their equal status in society. Odyseus began its first project, ‘Protect Yourself’ in October 1998 and focused on injection drug users and commercial sex workers. The aim of the programme is the prevention of blood and sexually transmitted diseases. The social dimension of the project was strengthened in 2000 when outreach workers with specialist knowledge, for example psychological counselling, gynaecology, human rights and child welfare services, joined the team of outreach workers. In September 2003, Odyseus signed an agreement with the magistrate of Bratislava to rent space in social welfare housing in Kopčany – an estate in Bratislava.

The *project “Community Centre Kopčany”* has been in operation since November 2003. The target group of the project are children and young people living in the Kopčany area, most of them in social welfare housing. The project includes outreach work as well as activities in low threshold clubs focusing on developing life skills.

In the spring of 2003 the local government of Senec invited Odyseus to assist them in mapping the free time activities of “unorganised” young people in their town. This project resulted in contact with 120 eleven to nineteen-year-olds and the joint preparation and realisation of activities based on street culture, for example skate-boarding, graffiti and hip-hop music.

**G) The Teenager Institute (Russian Federation)** is a private organisation working on the problems of social help and protection of children and teenagers in St. Petersburg. The staff of the Institute comprise specialists with 10 years of work experience with a foundation of social work with street children and teenagers. At present the Teenager Institute is a leading city organisation in the study of youth protest formation.

The projects of the Institute are:

- *“Street of St. Petersburg”*, which was set up by the Institute’s staff. Its aim is to work with street children to prevent homelessness. This is achieved by returning the child in crisis to his natural family and by preventing the running away from home of the children from the “risk group”. The “Street of St. Petersburg” project is a part of the City Administration programme of social protection of families and children.

- **“Neutral Zone”** that is aimed to study and to find ways of working with aggressive and socially potentially dangerous teenage groups such as punks, Satanists, skinheads, rap-fans, rock-group “Alice” fans, etc. The project presupposes the integration of these teenager groups into positive youth movements, e.g. the ecological movement, movement of role-games, etc.

## 8) Conclusions:

Most of the participants agreed that the Open Method of Co-ordination, combining National Action Plans and a programme presented by the Commission is a good method to strengthen EU co-operation on social inclusion and confirmed the need to intensify efforts to overcome the particularly high levels of exclusion and discrimination experienced by some ethnic groups, especially the Roma, to strengthen policies to support families and social networks and to protect the rights of children.

The analysis of the National Action Plans on social inclusion (NAPs/incl.) 2004-2006 submitted by the 10 new Member States and compiled by the European Commission (to be published in early 2005) confirms that the poverty risk appears to be higher when faced by children and young people, and the high level of poverty and social exclusion experienced by children is widely recognised as a key challenge in most Member States. This is stressed by strategic approaches, objectives and targets set and the measures adopted in the NAPs/incl. in many of the Member States. The accession countries of Romania and Bulgaria showed a high level of attention of both NGOs and governments to the issue of street children policies and legislation, confirming that they do not underestimate this alarming recent problem.

From the discussion the following points emerged which will be taken into consideration at European and national level to strengthen the inclusive social policies of the new Member States regarding the situation of street children:

1. Implementing and developing NAPs/incl. at social and municipal level: inclusion at local and regional level; multidisciplinary approach, putting together all actors to discuss problems, list common goals and shared actions (teachers, social workers, representatives of the local authorities, experts, etc.); strengthening the capacity building at municipal level.
2. Mainstreaming acknowledgement of the needs for an integrated and multi-dimensional strategy (considering factors such as education, health, communication, information) into the NAPs/incl., because the scale of what is proposed is mostly considered insufficient by the European Commission to make a decisive impact on the eradication of child poverty and social exclusion.
3. Ensuring a post-evaluation procedure to check the results in view of ongoing or changing strategies and actions and their sustainability.
4. Both local governments and State governments must develop a better communication including the NGOs intervening in the field.
5. Ensuring better participation in EU assistance programmes (the European Social Fund in particular) by both creating specific strands for children’s support projects and facilitating application procedures. For example, the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration activities (2002-2006)

should also foresee projects on children and not only on the reconciliation of family and work.

6. Providing new reliable data and elaborating clearer definitions and targets on street children.

The attending NGOs and experts agreed on the following priorities concerning the improvement of the intervention and inclusion strategies:

1. Mobile Youth Work staff development and qualification in connection with the networking and designing of life-oriented curricula for non-formal education and training.
2. Creating specific quality standards for work and training.
3. Exploiting new information and communication technologies to carry out childcare activities, organise public campaigns and distribute information within the networks.
4. Using young voluntary workers who are more acceptable to youngsters, even if the management of the organisation has to be directed by professionals.
5. Exploiting the European Structural Funds directed to the new Member States concerning child policies in a more professional and effective way.
6. Creating networks and round table discussions to enhance co-operation and partnership at local, regional and national level with the participation of NGOs working in the “old” EU Member States.
7. Being involved in lobbying and advocacy activities to apply political pressure through the media and the use of the Networks in the National, European and International institutions.
8. Monitoring children’s participation in the development of support strategies and methods - the need to avoid any political exploitation.
9. Supporting campaigns to convince young people to register or use identification documents, otherwise they deprive themselves of some principal rights, such as the right to education, work, social assistance, due legal process, vote, etc.
10. Co-ordinating future actions by joint strategies to influence the next round of EU National Action Plans on social inclusion compiled by governments in 2006 in favour of the rights of the most excluded children.

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