

Brussels, 18 June 2009

The fight against child labour is a core commitment of the EU's children's rights agenda

The 4th Meeting of the European Forum on the Rights of the Child will address a severe topic: Child Labour. The Forum will focus on how to effectively address child labour using instruments the EU has at its disposal. Within the main theme of child labour, the Forum will specifically focus on social protection and corporate social responsibility

"In 2005, the ILO has estimated that 2.45 million people are victims of human trafficking in the world, 43% for purposes of sexual exploitation and 32% for purposes of labour exploitation. Children represent 40% to 50% of victims", said Vice-president Jacques Barrot, Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security. "Europe must ensure that the rights of the child, as well as human rights in general are fully taken into consideration within the development and implementation of our policies. The Commission Communication on the "Stockholm Programme" clearly states that we must now continue to develop an ambitious EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. I believe that particular attention should be paid to the issues of violence and poverty and children in situations of particular vulnerability, particularly in the context of immigration."

Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy concluded that *"child labour needs to be tackled at all levels and through concerted efforts from governments, international community, civil society, industry and social partners. We need to ensure that children's rights are promoted throughout the world – with all our policies and programmes. Therefore we pursue a comprehensive approach to eliminate of all forms of child labour, covering political, trade, development and governance dialogue, and action on poverty alleviation, the labour market, social dialogue and social protection with an emphasis on free and universal primary education. After all, children are our future and we owe them the best possible start in life!"*

Facts and figures on Child Labour

Even though there has been a gradual decline in child labour, this problem has a global character and no region is free of it.

According to ILO (ILO, *The end of child labour: Within Reach*, Geneva 2006, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc95/pdf/rep-i-b.pdf>) estimates, some 250 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 are working, approximately 120 million of them are working full-time, and estimated 126 million are involved in hazardous work. Boys continue to be more exposed to child labour, particularly work of a hazardous nature, than girls. The difference becomes more pronounced with increasing age.

The indicator for employment by sector breaks down employment into three broad groupings of economic activity: agriculture, industry and services.

The problem of child labour is not confined to the developing world, it exists everywhere, also in Europe. In many cases, child labour in Europe is less visible than in other parts of the world.

In Europe, as in other parts of the world, there is not only the problem of child labour as it is defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO Convention. In Europe and in the world exploitation of children includes commercial sexual exploitation, slavery and similar practices, exploiting children for illicit activities, child trafficking, begging and exploitation of street children, and employment of children under hazardous conditions.

For further information on the activities of Vice-President Barrot, please visit his website at: http://www.ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/barrot/index_en.htm.

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