

# CHILDREN ARE ENTITLED TO KNOW THEIR RIGHTS

by Brenda Azzopardi



Now that there is greater awareness with regard to children's rights, the European Union has become increasingly conscious of the great importance of adhering to international agreements already in existence, such as the UN Children's Convention and the UN Millennium Development Goals, while maintaining a balance of familiarity with such human rights among its 27 Member States. The EU has specifically recognised children's rights in its own Charter of Fundamental Rights and through the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Lately the EU felt the need to conduct a Eurobarometer survey to determine the extent to which young people aged between 15 and 18 know about children's rights. 10,000 young people were selected from around the EU Member States. These ranged from full-time students to self-employed or unemployed. Only 49% of the respondents think that the authorities' lack of response when young people need help to defend their rights is a leading issue.

It is however worth noting that this survey reveals that more than 75% of the respondents felt that when it comes to tackling a problem and whom to contact, they were simply not aware of their rights. Information campaigns and more online facilities would help both national authorities and the EU to assist European citizens - particularly children and young people - to be more watchful and aware of such rights.

Among the EU-27, the Dutch and the Finnish topped the list of those who thought that someone in their age group would not

encounter any of the problems that were listed in the survey. As regards the protection of children, those who feel incompletely protected or not protected at all make up one fifth of the respondents. From the Eurobarometer survey it appears that although the Romanians were the ones most aware of the Rights of the Child, they are the most skeptical with regard to the protection of these rights in their country.

A very low percentage of young people know of someone who had sought assistance when they thought their rights had been infringed, with many thinking that procedures would be too lengthy and too complicated when seeking support or redress. When adopting legislation or making decisions, Governments must take into account the interests of children in the areas of education, security, as well as health and social affairs.

The only country where one fifth of the respondents selected the media as an area of special interest was Malta, with 23%. Other priorities include discrimination and racism, and poverty and social exclusion. For Malta, Spain and Cyprus these priorities should also be a major issue. Besides, more than 25% of Maltese young people believe that sexual exploitation of children, followed by violence against children and alcohol and nicotine abuse, are also key national priorities ©

Further details on this Eurobarometer survey are available on: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/flash\\_arch\\_en.htm#235](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/flash_arch_en.htm#235)

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