



# Learning for Well-being

## Consortium of Foundations in Europe

On the 6<sup>th</sup> September 2011 the Working Group on the Quality of Childhood at the **European Parliament** held a meeting hosted by **MEP Karin Kadenbach (SD, Austria)** on:

### **Learning for Well-being A Policy Priority for Children and Youth in Europe A Movement for Change**

The meeting brought together 45 participants from the European Parliament and European NGOs.

After a welcome by **Michiel Matthes**, Secretary General of the Alliance for the Quality of Childhood a member of the European Council for Steiner-Waldorff Education, **Daniel Kropf** the Chair of the Learning for Well-being Consortium of Foundations and Executive Director of Universal Education Foundation presented the Learning for Well-being Movement.

The keynote presentation of the policy glossary was made by **Professor Ilona Kickbusch**, Director of the Global Health Programme at the Graduate Institute of International Development Studies in Geneva, on behalf of the '**Learning for Well-being**' Consortium of Foundations in Europe.

In summarising the presentations, Karin Kadenbach emphasised that too often everything is dealt with in small packages and that we need interaction to ensure that child well-being is in all policies. She underlined the need for values in politics and that it's not money and power that should count, but people.

Rich discussion with the participants followed the presentations. The key issues raised and suggestions made were:

- The role of parents in children's well-being is crucial because it's the parents that guide children from when they are very small until they can take responsibility for themselves. But parents are over challenged. A survey on mothers was carried out recently by the *Mouvement mondial des mères* of which the key outcome was the desire for recognition of their contribution and for more time with their families. This information stimulated further discussion on parenting. There was an agreement that parents need to have more space in policy making as well as children. Insufficient focus is put on positive relationships and on citizens who are responsible in the public space. A further discussion point was whether the aim should be mainstreaming "caring" in order to move away from a societal approach that focuses too much on "curing".
- Participants considered that children's empowerment is essential. It was noted that though good work has been done on children's rights, we mustn't forget about the

importance of their involvement and adults must ensure that the voice of children and young people can be expressed and heard.

- Perceiving the voice of the small child can be difficult so it's important to include parents and small children together in play situations. It was suggested that the observation skills for staff working with small children are critical to be able to observe what happens when their well-being is stimulated through play, activities and relationships that support their growth. For the policy glossary, we were reminded about the current contributions to understanding children's learning made by brain research. Participants emphasised that small children are complex, show great diversity and are born with all they need to become adults, but they lose some of it through growing up and hence the need for different mindsets and approaches.
- Comments were put forward about the need to promote learning and encourage society look at the learning by children, both what they learn and the way they acquire it.
- It was suggested that we need to take a broader view of the targets that are set in society, especially in education, not just focusing on the potential value to the economy but so that the subjective aspects and what are often seen as the non-measurable indicators are taken into account.
- The importance of putting together the policies that are not usually put together was emphasised and also shifting mind frames and decision-making processes. We live in complex societies where everything cannot be easily digestible and there is a need to look at the longer term, i.e. more than just a 3- or 4-year policy cycle, which is never easy and cannot be done in isolation. It implies partnerships and dialogue such as in the new approaches to policy making in 21<sup>st</sup> century for example for health impact assessment where there is a move from "after the fact" to impact dialogues together on what one wants to achieve. This is part of the changing values of what is recognized as a contribution to society and the new focus on life course issues - one issue frequently raised is that people have the least time when they need it, when children are young.
- We were advised that though there is a tendency to say that children's well-being is important, the policy glossary also needs to evoke what happens if you don't focus on well-being. Though there are a lot of initiatives in education, many things can go wrong and can lead to use of drugs, suicide, etc. so we need to understand what serves their needs and purposes and what doesn't. We need to create the urge and work out in practice what well-being actually means. Getting a balance between disturbing data and positive aspects is advised.
- How can the messages be translated into usable tool kits to change the situation?
- 2012 will be the Year of Active Aging and Intergenerational Solidarity in the EU with initiatives by the UN and WHO. We should think about how to position learning for well-being for children and youth as critical part of this inter-generational agenda.

This meeting concluded the consultations on the first full draft of the policy glossary "Learning for Well-being; A Policy Priority for Children and Youth in Europe. A Movement for Change". If you want to know more about the consultations, please visit our website: <http://www.eiesp.org/site/pages/view/77-learning-for-well-being-a-policy-priority-for-children-and-young-people-in-europe.html>

We are very grateful to all the organisations and colleagues who have contributed to shaping this policy document.

The launch will take place at a one day conference on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2012 at the Palais des Académies in Brussels. If you would like to be kept informed, please email: [andrea@learningforwellbeing.org](mailto:andrea@learningforwellbeing.org)

To download the Presentations of Daniel Kropf and Ilona Kickbsch, please visit our website: <http://www.eiesp.org/site/pages/edit/admin/73.html>