



Conference of European Churches • Conférence des Églises Européennes • Konferenz Europäischer Kirchen • Конференция Европейских Церквей

Church & Society Commission

Executive Secretary: Elizabeta Kitanovic

Direct line: +32 (2) 234.68.36

E-mail: eki@cec-kek.be

Our Ref: 0090-08

Brussels, 28 October 2008

“Building A Europe For And With Children”

A Council of Europe Programme

From 8-10 September 2008, a CEC representative participated in a conference organised under the auspices of the Swedish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Stockholm under the headline: “Building a Europe for and with children – towards a strategy for 2009-2011”.

In 2006 the Council of Europe launched the programme “Building a Europe for and with children”. A brief description from the CoE website follows:

“The programme ‘Building a Europe for and with children’ is being implemented further to the Third Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (Warsaw 2005). It is also a response to the Organisation's mandate to guarantee an integrated approach to promoting children's rights and the decision to launch a three-year programme covering the social, legal, educational and health dimensions relevant to protecting children from various forms of violence.

The programme comprises two closely related stands: the promotion of children's rights and the protection of children from violence.”

The programme's main objective is to help all decision makers and players concerned to design and implement national strategies for the protection of children's rights and the prevention of violence against children.

The key concepts of its working methods are "transversality", "integrated approach", "partnerships" and "communication". In fulfilling its objectives, the programme relies on the pooled resources of both the relevant Council of Europe bodies and institutions and its outside partners to obtain sustainable results.”¹

¹ http://www.coe.int/t/transversalprojects/children/BriefDescription/Default_en.asp

Looking at the activities and programmes which have taken place under the “Children Programme” since its launching in April 2006 in Monaco, the Programme has achieved much progress. As tools, the Council of Europe has set up a Co-ordination Unit, an intersecretariat task force and has appointed a thematic coordinator within the Committee of Ministers. All Council of Europe services, bodies, institutions etc. are involved. The Programme also seeks to combine all Council of Europe tools in the most efficient manner, establishing the much-needed links between legal standards, monitoring, policy development, bilateral co-operation and awareness raising.

Concerning the (more than 80) activities, the Council of Europe has given the following summary:

“Activities aiming to the promotion of the rights of the child have resulted in an important increase of visibility and impact of Council of Europe standards and policies. These activities include work in the areas of migrant children, Roma children, children with disabilities, the rights of children in institutions, positive parenting policies, child friendly justice, adoption, education on human and children’s rights, children’s participation and access to information, child-friendly cities and support to ombudswork for children. The visibility of all these actions has increased through the creation of a website facilitating access to all Council of Europe documents, activities, resources and events relevant to children’s rights.

The programme of action ‘children and violence’ (2006-2008) aims to ensure an adequate follow-up to the recommendations included in the *United Nations Secretary General’s study on violence against children*. It has so far focused on the in-depth analysis of the national policies developed by volunteer countries. It has also resulted in a new convention (against sexual exploitation and abuse of children), a training programme on violence reduction in schools, a Europe-wide initiative against corporal punishment of children (launched in Zagreb in June 2008), the analysis of case studies of cities addressing the issue of street children and an on-line game to teach children internet safety.

At the launch of the Monaco process, the Council of Europe invited its partners to contribute to the setting up and implementation of Europe’s agenda in the field of children’s rights. This has resulted in an important increase in co-operation between the Council of Europe and key international partners, such as Unicef, the OHCHR, the European Commission, major NGOs and professional networks, the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children, the media and the business community.”²

The purpose of the Stockholm conference was to develop a new strategy for the years 2009 to 2011 to strengthen this work under the heading “Protection, provision and participation for children in Europe”.³ Apart from sharing and assessing progress achieved since 2006, the conference objectives were to support the implementation of the recommendations included in the UN Secretary General’s Study on violence against children and to identify the elements of what could be the strategy.⁴

² From: http://www.coe.int/t/transversalprojects/children/Source/ConferenceOutline_en.doc

³ The three Ps, a commonly used subdivision of the rights in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, according to Prof. Eugeen Verhellen: Provision: the rights of the child to access to certain goods and services such as education, health care, an adequate standard of living and social protection; Protection: the right of the child to be protected from all forms of violence, such as maltreatment, abuse and exploitation; Participation: the right of the child to be heard and involved in decision-making.

⁴ The conference gathered representatives from governments, international organisations and institutions, NGOs and professional networks, parliamentarians, local authorities, ombudspersons, judges and children’s advocates as well as young people. Three technical seminars were held on the first day followed by high level plenary sessions on days two and three. Conference Outline: http://www.coe.int/t/transversalprojects/children/First_announcement/firstannoucnement_en.asp

The conference worked and discussed on the basis of a draft “Stockholm Strategy”.⁵ The paper contains the Programme aims: to support the implementation of international standards in the field of children’s rights by all member states and to introduce a child rights perspective in all politics and activities of the Council of Europe and to support an approach within the member states. The headlines of the strategic objectives are “Mainstreaming and coordination”, “Promotion of children’s access to justice”, “Eradication of all forms of violence against children”, “Participation of children and their influence in society”, “Special focus on particularly vulnerable children and integration of the gender dimension”.⁶

The current campaign "Raise your hand against smacking", the Council of Europe initiative against all corporal punishment of children,⁷ was promoted in a more detailed way: High level government representatives as well as the Queen of Sweden signed a document to support abolition of all corporal punishment of children.”

Churches are invited to inform themselves on the Programme, activities, material, key legal texts, working documents and campaigns. Information can be found on the very helpful website: http://www.coe.int/t/transversalprojects/children/Default_en.asp

⁵ Council of Europe Strategy on the rights of the child 2009-2011 – Draft elements:
http://www.coe.int/t/transversalprojects/children/Source/Sweden2008%20Folder/elementsStrategy_en.doc

⁶ For more details:
http://www.coe.int/t/transversalprojects/children/Source/Sweden2008%20Folder/elementsStrategy_en.doc

⁷ http://www.coe.int/t/transversalprojects/children/violence/corporalPunishment_en.asp