

A VISION ON CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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This paper was discussed on 4 March 2008 by the Working Group on the Quality of Childhood within the European Parliament, under the chairmanship of MEP Karin Resetarits. The persons present in the session are mentioned in annex 3.

The members of the Alliance for Childhood European Network Group have also commented on the paper. For the list of the members see Annex 2.

PREAMBLE: WHY A VISION ON CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Commission undertakes at present a consultation in the framework of the fundamental review of the EU budget, which the Commission was invited to undertake in the May 2006 Interinstitutional Agreement. The budget review is a unique opportunity for a thorough assessment of the EU budget and its financing, free from the constraints of a negotiation on a financial framework.

This consultation is open to interested parties at local, regional and national levels, as well as at the European level.

On January 24, 2008 the Civil Society Contact Group held a meeting in Brussels on the subject, whereby the Alliance for Childhood European Network Group was encouraged by the representative of the European Commission to submit before 15 April 2008 a 'Vision on Children and Childhood in the European Union' in the context of this consultation. This paper is a response to that dialogue.

1. INTRODUCTION

The European Commission published on 12 October 2006 a Communication entitled 'The demographic future of Europe, from challenge to opportunity' (COM (2006) 571 final). In this Communication it is assessed:

- The population in the EU is aging;
- The balance between people in working age and older people will change;
- Too few children are born.

In the Communication a number of recommendations are made how to address this challenge. This Communication has been looking at the numbers of people in the European Union:

- The numbers born
- The numbers working
- The numbers retiring
- The numbers dying etc.

However, this paper does not consider how children grow up and the quality of their childhood.

Furthermore reference is made to the Communication of the European Commission 'Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child' of 4.7.2006 COM(2006)367 final.

This is a very valuable document, which provides policy makers with a rich list of considerations and recommendations concerning the rights of children.

Both documents are important steps to address questions regarding children, but it does not provide a vision for children and childhood in the European Union.

It is good to develop together a 'Vision with regards to Children and Childhood' in order to guide our policy efforts and to help the multitude of actors in this field to cooperate and to support each other.

The Alliance for Childhood European Network Group has chosen for its own work the theme: the 'Quality of Childhood in the European Union'. In this paper the same approach has been selected, because it is what is fundamentally important for people.

The structure of the paper is as follows:

- Paragraph 2 addresses the question: can we describe what is a good quality of childhood? At the end of this paragraph the authors asked themselves whether the responses are legitimate and whether they fit into the nature of things?
- Paragraph 3 addresses the question: how to improve the quality of childhood in society?
- Paragraph 4 is entitled: The role that the European Commission could play.

2. WHAT IS A GOOD QUALITY OF CHILDHOOD?

In this note it is assumed that a poor quality of childhood is harmful for children. When society as a whole improves this quality, it will be beneficial for the children and adolescents in question and for the societies in which they grow up.

The next question is then: can we describe what is a good quality of childhood? In this paper we try to go deeper into this matter and specify it for seven different categories. When drafting it we were inspired by among others the following publications:

- Learning the treasure within, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by Jacques Delors
- UNICEF Report Card No 7, An overview of child well-being in rich countries
- Great Transitions, Preparing Adolescents for a New Century, Carnegie Corporation of New York
- Jesper Juul, presentation to the Working Group on the Quality of Childhood within the European Parliament on 6 March 2007.
- Publications of DECET (Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Training).
- Every Child Matters: Change for Children by the UK Government.
- Children's Defence fund in the USA.
- The various books of Janusz Korczak.

The Vision starts with an inventory of characteristics that a society could wish with regards to its childhood environment. Each society can use this list as a starting point for its own discussion and amend it, enrich it and adapt it to its own local environment and the phase of its development. The categories of the inventory are as follows:

In general:

- The child is respected as a fellow human being with his or her own aspirations to develop his/her inner potential.
- The child grows up in a society, that acknowledges the multiple (cultural and other) identities of children and families.
- A childhood whereby they can learn from each other across cultural and other borders, and whereby they are learn how to address prejudices and discrimination.
- He / she is empowered to develop the diverse aspects of his/her identity
- He / she is challenged to live a meaningful life
- He / she has learned to actively addresses bias through open communication
- He / she has acquired a willingness to grow and to work together to challenge institutional forms of prejudice and discrimination
- He / she has acquired a reliable basis for making informed choices
- He / she knows how to use the support systems available to him or her
- He / she expresses constructive curiosity and exploratory behaviour
- He / she believes in a promising future with real opportunities

Material well-being

- He / she lives in sufficient material well-being (% of children living in poverty should be brought down continuously)

- He / she is ready and able to participate in working life and has acquired the technical and analytic capabilities to participate in a world-class economy
- He / she learned to learn and has acquired the inquiring and problem-solving habits of mind for life-long learning
- He / she acquired the capabilities to achieve economic well-being.

Physical and psychological health and safety

- He / she is in good health, physically, mentally, psychologically. When he / she is ill or handicapped, he / she will be cared for in a good way;
- He / she has been shown what is self-esteem and self-confidence. The self-esteem is a basis for a healthy mental development and for self-confidence to grow.

Educational well-being

- He / she has been shown what it is to be relationally competent. The quality of the relationships of the child with important adults and others is a key element of the quality of his/her childhood and for his/her growth as a human being.
- He / she has shown that one can learn from each other across cultural and other boundaries.
- He / she is offered childhood education services, free from any form of - overt and covert, individual and structural - discrimination due to their race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
- He / she has learned things and has learned to learn.
- He / she have been shown what it is to live together with people from diverse backgrounds.
- He / she has been shown what it is to be.
- He / she has been brought in contact with art and has been invited to relate to it.
- He / she has cultivated a sense of responsibility and empathy for others and his/her environment.

Family and peer relationships / sense of belonging / social skills

- He / she has a parent / primary care giver who has the ability to form secure relationships.
- He / she has been shown what is the value of respect for other human beings.
- He / she has been shown what it is to belong to a group.
- He / she has been shown how to find ways of being useful to others.
- He / she has been helped to find a valued place in a constructive group.
- He / she has been shown how to form close, durable human relationships, including an intimate relationship with another person.
- He / she has been shown how to acquire social skills, including the ability to manage conflict peacefully.

Citizenship

- He / she has been shown the requirements of responsible citizenship.
- He / she has been shown how to respect diversity in our pluralistic society.
- He / she has been shown what it is to be a national and European citizen and a citizen of the world.
- He / she has been shown what it is to participate as an active citizen.

Subjective well-being

- He / she can live in peace
- He / she has been shown what it is to be authentic
- He / she has been shown to live on the basis of integrity and as an ethical person
- He / she has been shown to take personal and social responsibility. Personal responsibility comes first. When acquired there is a good basis to attain social responsibility.

From a philosophical point of view: is it right to address these questions?

From a philosophical point of view we must ask ourselves the question: are we on the right track when we try to look into the question of the quality of childhood, and ways and means to improve it, or do we intervene in a improper way in the lives of ourselves and of fellow human beings?

The Alliance for Childhood European Network Group is of the opinion that we may undertake this initiative because of the following considerations:

- When drawing up this list we should bear in mind that the child is respected as a fellow human being with his or her own aspirations to develop his/her inner potential. In this context we like to mention that we should be careful not to dictate to a child ‘to be authentic’. We go deeper into this question in paragraph 3.4, which is entitled ‘The philosophy of interventions’.
- We should also respect the various organisations, that work for and with children.
- But when we discover that children and young people are harmed in one way or another and if we are aware how things can be improved we may bring it forth and try to convince actors and stakeholders concerned, in a normal democratic way, and in dialogue with them, about the new insights acquired.

3. HOW TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CHILDHOOD IN SOCIETY

The Alliance for Childhood European Network Group recommends the following steps:

3.1 Consider the whole system of childhood

If we want children and young people to grow with regards to the above mentioned qualities we should create childhood systems that reflect these qualities. This should be the case for the 'entire childhood system'.

Please find below a system for the whole of childhood, based on the notion of time:

Table 1 Framework for the whole system of childhood

Age categories	Home Situation	School Situation	Free Time Situation
25 and older	(6) (4)	(1) (4)	(4)
19-24			
15-18	(2)		
13-14	(3)	(3)	(4)
6-12	(5)	(1)	(5)
4-5			
0-3			
Pregnancy and birth			
Period from e.g.. 3 years before birth	(2)(6)		

As we know from many scientific disciplines studying the subject of children and childhood there is often a relationship between one event in the life of a child in one sphere, for instance the Home Situation, and other occurrences later on in his or her life, for instance his or her Home Situation later on (relationships etc), Work Situation or Free Time Situation. With these arrows we want to depict these relationships.

The arrows are drawn at random with the intention of tentatively coupling cause and effect, in both a positive and a negative sense. A few obvious examples:

1. if a child doesn't learn to read well between the ages of 6 and 12 he will have a learning problem thereafter.
2. if a girl of 17 becomes pregnant and bears a child she will often not be in a good position to bring up her child; her son or daughter will often be confronted with the

same problem at the same age. Her own training and development can also be hindered because she became a mother at such an early age.

3. if the parents/educators have (in)adequate contact with the school this also influences the school results of the child;
4. if a young person of 13/14 learns to use drugs or alcohol there is then a chance that that person will become addicted, and this will probably have a negative effect on his/her development. Moreover his or her brain may be damaged, and because of this he or she will not be able to reach his / her full (professional) potential;
5. if a child grows up in a 'good' network, that could be a 'home' network but also a school or free time one, or even all three at the same time, then this has a positive influence on the other areas of the table, even into the following generations.
6. brain research has discovered that the brain of a young child grows and develops in response to the communication of the child with the mother and father. If the situation is secure, emotionally comforting and wholesome it will be beneficial for the entire life of the person in question. But the opposite is also true.

Note:

In this note we used Table 1 to depict the whole system of childhood. However other authors use concentric circles to illustrate the same idea. The circle in the centre depicts then the child and his family, the next circle the school environment, after that his neighbourhood etc. The key element of these figures is, that the child lives at the same time in different environments. If we want to address a specific quality regarding the child we should look at the different environments simultaneously to address it.

3.2 Be aware of the complex organisational landscape of the whole system of childhood

The table in the previous paragraph gives useful assistance for the analysing of the problems pertaining to the living environment of the child, but it can also be used to determine which people and organisations, we also use the terms actors and stakeholders, are now active in the different compartments of the table

Table 2: Analytical table to show the present organisational set up

Age categories	Home Situation	School Situation	Free Time Situation
25 and older			
19-24			
15-18			
13-14			
6-12			
4-5			
0-3			
Pregnancy and Birth			
Period of e.g. about 3 years before Birth			

In each compartment in this table organisations and individuals are active; often they don't know each other, don't relate to each other and often they have a different perception of what is a child, a different set of objectives, and activities that may go against the activities of one or more of the other organisations.

The following conclusions can be drawn from this table:

- In every compartment there are people and organisations active who are trying to achieve an optimum situation for that compartment; you could say that every organisation in a compartment, for example the kindergarten, the nursery school, the playground association or the employment exchange, deliver a product to the child in a certain age category; every organisation has its own goals and these do not necessarily have to fit into the goals of the other people or organisations;
- However hard the different groups in a compartment do their best they will never succeed in realising their goals acting on their own; example: the Police will alone not be able to turn young delinquents into people with characteristics mentioned in the first paragraph; moreover, this is not a mission of the Police;
- In many cases organisations are geared to repair things that went wrong, instead of contributing to a good and healthy childhood system in the first place;
- Cooperation with the other groups and people in that compartment, and in all the other compartments, is essential;
- In our western societies we may say that there is not one organisation that overlooks the entire childhood system and its quality. We have created such organisations for the economy, for public health, for the environment, the telecom system, the road system etc., but not for children and childhood.

Remark:

Today many organisations have as a task to repair things that have gone wrong. However, we know that it is very beneficial to prevent things to happen in the first place. In this context please think about the following examples:

- If a baby up till 3 years does not get enough attention and opportunities to communicate with his / her primary care giver (Emmi Pikler states that the minimum is twice daily 25 minutes¹) his / her brain will not develop in an optimal way from a point of view of emotions, affection, relationship etc and this person will suffer from this his / her whole life and / or healing is difficult and very costly;
- If a young child does not have a primary attachment figure, that is sufficiently available, the child will suffer and bear the consequences for the rest of his / her life;
- If a pregnant mother uses too much alcohol or drugs and / or smokes the foetus is damaged and the person in question will have to bear the consequences for the rest of his / her life. The same is true for certain types of environmental pollution, that may enter the body of the mother and harm the foetus.

In this note we therefore advocate that persons and organisations dealing with children consider also to work on the role they could possibly play, together with other actors, to improve the quality of childhood and to prevent bad practices to occur.

3.3. Address the Perceptions of the various Actors and Stakeholders and of the General Public regarding Children and Childhood

In paragraph 3.2 we have described in a schematic way the complexity of all the actors and stakeholders, and the way they influence each other or not, within the whole system of childhood. If we want to work on the quality of the whole system of childhood we have also to address the perceptions of the various actors and stakeholders and of the general public.

¹ Remark by Jesper Juul on 6 March 2007 in the Working Group on the Quality of Childhood within the European Parliament.

When addressing the question of the quality of childhood we address a fundamental question of how we look at human life and human society, also in relation to the earth on which we live.

In this context we can ask ourselves the following questions:

Is it the objective of our childhood and school system:

- To ensure that children get in the first place good grades and a good PISA-score, which will boost the reputation of the school in question and move it up in the national league table?
- Should we prepare our children to become competitive soldiers in the global competition?
- Should the aim of the school be to help the person in question to prepare for life in general and to enable him or her to earn a decent living?
- Should the aim be to help young people to be citizens and to be part of a democratic society?
- Should the aim be to help young people to live a sustainable life in harmony with the eco-systems of the earth?

An American author David Korten has written a very interesting book on this subject entitled 'From Empire to Earth Community'. In this book he argues that mankind has developed since about 3000 B.C. two models for human societies, and these models compete with each other:

- The Empire Model
- The Partnership Model²

Both models are in all of us, but each individual and each society has its own place in the range between the two of them.

Both models are based on stories that explain how the world functions. These stories give an answer to three basic questions:

- How do we prosper: the Prosperity Story
- How do we maintain order and keep ourselves secure: the Security Story
- How do we find a sense of meaning and purpose in life: the Meaning Story

The Empire Model is based on another set of stories and perceptions than the Partnership Model. David Korten furthermore argues, that both models have a self fulfilling prophecy element. When you treat people according to the Empire Model people tend to react within the same model. The same is true for the Partnership Model.

Please find below in a systematic way the comparison between the two sets of perceptions:

² David Korten uses the term Earth Community Model; in this paper is used instead the term Partnership Model.

Table 3: Comparison of Perceptions underlying the Empire Model and the Participation Model

Characteristic	Empire Perception of Humanity	Partnership Perception of Humanity
Life is	Hostile and competitive	Supportive and cooperative;
Humans are	Flawed and dangerous	Humans have many possibilities and are basically trustworthy
Order based on	Dominator hierarchy and fear	Order through partnership, dialogue and trust; respect for other human beings
Power	As a human being try to acquire as much power as possible	Love life
Competition / cooperation	Compete or die	Cooperate and live
Self-direction	Humans are incapable of self-direction; social order must be imposed by coercive means	Humans are capable of self-direction
Evolution	The survival of the fittest	A development of the whole of society / humanity based on cooperation and creativity
Success	Those who are rich and powerful are considered successful	Those who can take care of themselves and their families and who also contribute to the well-being of all are considered successful
Learning	Seen as a means to acquire power, wealth, status and success; based on competition, coercion, fear, and testing	Based on self-direction, relationships, dialogue and mutual learning
Participation	There are winners and losers	There is a place for everyone
Dominance	Men are dominant	Gender balanced
Rights	Defend the rights of the self	Defend the rights of all

Source: inspired by David Korten's book 'The Great Turning, From Empire to Earth Community', chapter 1 .

With regards to the above the following can be remarked:

- It is an important discovery, brought forth by David Korten, that policy statements are based on perceptions about human beings and society in general.
- David Korten urges the reader to examine closely the underlying stories and perceptions of both Models and to investigate whether these stories are correct and to expose false myths.
- In this context we may say that the founding fathers of the European Union were among the first people in history to act according to the Partnership Model: they were the first to define relationships between states on the basis of the interests of the whole of the six founding member states, instead of the narrow individual interest of each state separately.

- When we want to address the question of the quality of childhood we must be aware that the current educational systems and other elements in the system of childhood, are consciously or unconsciously based on the perceptions underlying the Empire Model.
- We will never be able to attain the fruits of the Partnership Model, when our perceptions are still those belonging to the Empire Model.

3.4 The Methodology of Intervention

Within the Alliance for Childhood European Network Group we cherish the well-known saying of Mahatma Gandhi as the First Law of Pedagogy (as mentioned by René Diekstra in his book *De Grondwet van de Opvoeding / The Constitution for Raising Children*)

You have to be yourself the change you want to see in the child.

The Alliance for Childhood European Network Group is of the opinion that this saying should be the philosophy for interventions for all Actors and Stakeholders in the whole system of childhood.

Other parameters regarding interventions are listed below. They are inspired by a.o. the various books of Jesper Juul, a Danish author in this area:

- The child is respected as a fellow human being with his or her own aspirations to develop his/her inner potential. The child is treated as a subject and not as an object.
- The quality of the relationships of the child with important adults and others is a key element of the quality of his/her childhood and for his/her growth as a human being. The adult should be able and willing to take the full responsibility for the quality of the relationship with the child. Children have social skills and can take personal responsibility, but they don't have the ability to take responsibility for the quality of the relationship between himself or herself and the adult. If parents or educators don't take this responsibility the children cannot take over. They will choose to cooperate and this is harmful for them. Example: when a parent is an alcoholic, the child will often take more responsibility than is good for him or her.
- The following values are considered fundamental for the quality of adult-child relationships:
 - Equal dignity. This has not to do with equality or democracy. It means that the adult respects the child to the same degree as he or she would respect another adult regarding his/her actions, thoughts, ideas etc.
 - Personal integrity (taking care of our personal needs and boundaries and respecting those of the child)
 - Authenticity. Parents try to be perfect parents. In that case the parent tries to be 'the role', but the child is looking for the real person inside, not the role that the parent is playing.

3.5 Address the mission of organisations working with and for children

Many organisations were established in the 19th and 20th century to address a certain shortcoming in society. Because of this history their mission is to repair the things that went wrong. However, meanwhile society has evolved enormously and at this stage it looks more beneficial when these organisations start to reconsider their role and start to work on a good quality of childhood in the first place. Early prevention is often much more beneficial and cheaper than to repair things 20 years later in the life of a child.

Examples:

- There are many organisations that have as mission to help people psychologically or otherwise when things go wrong. Often it can be very effective when these organisations would also include in their mission to work on prevention / improvement of the quality of childhood.
- Schools;
OECD's PISA Study is inciting many schools to focus on the PISA score instead of helping children to develop in accordance with the objectives mentioned in paragraph 2. The Alliance for Childhood European Network Group is of the opinion that the dominant testing culture in our schools is harmful for the quality of the culture in the school and the quality of the relationship between the teachers and the students. As a consequence of this it is considered harmful for the educational process and the practice of learning and for the growth of the human beings in question.
- Youth organisations often play a very good role in the lives of children and young people, but they are run by volunteers and get very little financial support. When children fail all sorts of professional support is available (psychologists, police, prisons etc), but with a fraction of those costs a child could have been helped to find his / her way in life in the first place.
- This is also true for sports organisations that focus very much on acquiring 'gold medals', but they forget the quality of childhood aspects with regards to their members. In this context we can ask the question regarding a talented sports person: 'Is it in the long term beneficial for a young person to be selected to be trained to gain gold medals in the future?' How do we reply to this question with regards to society as a whole? What price do we want to pay for x gold medals.

3.6 Work on Coalitions of Actors and Stakeholders

On the local level:

As mentioned in paragraph 3.2 not one organisation can bring about an improvement in the quality of childhood in the whole system. Cooperation between various actors and stakeholders is necessary.

In this context it has been brought forward by René Diekstra that it is beneficial for schools to involve the parents in the schools. It has been proved that the level of attuning between the parents and the school and the involvement of the parents in the school and vice versa have a positive influence on:

- the social-emotional development
 - school achievement
 - educational and vocational development
- of the child in question.

It has also been found that the success of parents in raising children is (also) depending on the behaviour of other parents in the neighbourhood. The more parents that are involved in the school the bigger the effect on the children (learning / behaviour/development).

The more the parents are involved in the school the more the children are involved.

René Diekstra furthermore advocates that the local government is given the assignment to establish an organisation that has the following task:

- To make sure there is a linkage between the parents, the school and the neighbourhood
- That there is consistency in the approach of the three actors
- To ensure that minimum quality levels are attained.

However in many other areas linkages should be made between actors and stakeholders. In the city of Rotterdam it was discovered that certain youth were receiving support from up to 26 different professional organisations, and these organisations followed all the same trajectory, i.e.:

- diagnosis
- deciding which measures to take
- execution of the plan,

but they were not aware that other organisations were doing the same thing. It does not require much imagination to conclude that this approach is not very effective and that the actions taken by one organisation may conflict with those of another organisation. Meanwhile the city of Rotterdam has installed a computer system, which enables the various organisations to cooperate and attune their actions to each other.

On the national level:

What is true on the local level, is also true on the national level. Within a central government we typically find various ministries working with children, young people, schools, families etc., such as:

- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Families and Youth
- Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Ministry of Social Affairs
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry for Sports
- Ministry for Culture
- Ministry of Health

Often they have a different perception of the child, different objectives and activities that may go against the objectives of another ministry. Also in this case it is good to build coalitions and work out combined programs.

On the European Level:

Basically what is said for central government is true for the European Commission itself. Some modest steps to coordinate things regarding children have been taken by appointing a coordinator for Children's Rights in DG JFS. This is still very much at the surface.

3.7 Monitor the Quality of Childhood

The quality of childhood and the well-being of children is a new policy area. In this context it is useful to gather statistics and to compare one situation with another and draw lessons from it.

The Alliance for Childhood European Network Group is therefore happy with the work done by:

- the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre which published the report 'An overview of child well-being in rich countries', Report Card No 7 .
- the Verweij-Jonker Instituut in the Netherlands that published the report 'Kinderen in Tel' (Kids Count).

- Children's Defence Fund's statistical work in the USA.

The advantage of providing this data is that advocacy workers, politicians and policy makers are given a tool to discuss in a more grounded way their own work area. Differences become visible and counties and cities can learn from each other.

This area of statistics regarding the quality of childhood and the well-being of children is in rapid development. In these circumstances it would be good to develop on a EU level a methodology how data are gathered and which type of data, so that statistics become more comparable.

3.8 Bring the various Communities working with and for children in contact with each other on the basis of the Quality of Childhood

Bring the Scientific Communities together

At this moment the following scientific disciplines work on the topic of children, education etc:

- educational sciences
- pedagogy
- psychology
- psychiatry
- paediatrics and health
- criminology
- physical environment of children
- local government administration

We assess, that there is little exchange between these disciplines and a scientific breakthrough in one area is not known in another area.

It would be beneficial when these research communities would start to work together on the basis of the objective to improve the quality of childhood.

Bring the Scientific Communities and the 'Organisations in the Field' closer together

There are many organisations and individuals working for and with children who are challenged every day how to cope with all sorts of problems with regards to children and young people. Often they are not aware of all the research outcomes that could be used in their daily work.

Also in this case more contact between the research community and the practical people will be very fruitful. It will also be beneficial for the research people.

Bring the various Communities working with and for Children in the EU Member States closer together

What is happening in one EU member state is often not known in another member state. The various member states can learn a lot from each other. One country has found a successful approach for a certain challenge and another member state for another problem. By establishing networks learning processes can be accelerated strongly and people will have more pleasure in their work to share things with colleagues in other countries.

Apply the Open Method of Consultation in the policy area of children and childhood

The Open Method of Consultation works well in various policy areas and it is considered useful to do it also in the area of children.

4. THE ROLE THAT THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION COULD PLAY

Many challenges in the field of children and childhood are common for the various EU member states. We can mention a.o. the following:

- Globalization and the challenges in that respect in the educational area;
- The business sector have found children as a new target group of consumers, which is sometimes harmful for the children concerned.
- The global electronic village (television, mobile phones, internet, computer games) is in some ways harmful for children and the quality of childhood
- Trafficking into the EU of minors to work in the sex industry
- Integration of the 28 million persons, who, or their parents and / or grandparents, were born outside the EU
- Migration
- Demographical developments

In the paper it is therefore recommended that the European Commission will play a role in this respect and help the member states to face the challenges in this area. The following fields of work for the Commission are identified:

- Statistics: monitor the Quality of Childhood in the EU Member States
To help to define a common approach in this area so that data become comparable;
- Create a European Research Institute regarding Children, Childhood and Children's Rights, which should become a platform for the various research disciplines working on the topic of children on the one hand and for the various national research communities in the same fields on the other hand. On top of that it could be a exchange platform between the scientific community and the organisations working directly with children.
- Coordinate the own activities of the various DG's in the Commission with regards to children, childhood and the rights of children; this should include influencing the Stoiber process in order to reduce the legislative obstacles to the creation of safe spaces for children.
- Create an ongoing dialogue between the member states on the subject, including benchmark meeting on various subjects like the difficulties in the banlieus, which is not only a French problem.
- Strengthen the European Forum for the Rights of the Child.
- Stimulate the creation of coalitions of actors and stakeholders regarding childhood issues.
- Create a budget line for children, young people, quality of childhood and Children's Rights.
- Apply the Open Method of Coordination in the policy area of children and childhood.

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Janusz Korczak: various publications.

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ON 4 MARCH 2008**

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Annex 2**MEMBERS OF THE ALLIANCE FOR CHILDHOOD EUROPEAN NETWORK GROUP**

ARGE-Erziehungsberatung, Austria	Marina Leibovici-Mühlberger
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International Association for Steiner / Waldorf	
Early Childhood Education (Sweden)	Geseke Lundren
	Oliver Langscheid (Germany)
European Council for Steiner	
Waldorf Education, Brussels	Christopher Clouder
Secretariat, Brussels	Michiel Matthes
Boris Cyrulnik of the Université de Toulon, France has expressed his interest in gradually getting involved with the Alliance for Childhood European Network Group.	
Cooperation with:	
Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Training (DECET)	Anke van Keulen
Thomas Coram Research Unit	
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