



SUMMARY OF THE REPORT OF THE THIRD SESSION IN BRUSSELS ON 6 MARCH 2007 OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE QUALITY OF CHILDHOOD IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT.

Chairman: Karin Resetarits, MEP for Alde

Third meeting: **‘The Quality of Child-Adult Relationships in Families and Schools’** with the famous Danish family therapist, author and speaker Jesper Juul.

2. PERSPECTIVES FROM THE ALLIANCE FOR CHILDHOOD

Mr Christopher Clouder brings forth the following:

- The world of the school and the world of the parents should be connected. Teachers live in their own world and don't enter into the world of the parents. However for children to thrive both these worlds should be connected. Presently there are developments to bring these two worlds closer together. So what is needed is a greater empowerment of parents' competencies by a deeper understanding of the child and their own role.
- At school: don't focus purely on the future career of the child, but instead look at the child as he or she is. This should be a common basis in the link between the home and the school.

THE QUALITY OF CHILD-ADULT RELATIONSHIPS IN FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS

Mr Jesper Juul mentions that all pedagogues ask themselves nowadays the same question:

What to do about the social / personal development of children?

In this connection he remarks that the young parents should reinvent marriage, because our society has changed in a fundamental way during the past 50 years.

Next Jesper Juul treats the various characteristics, that have an impact on the quality of the adult-child relationship:

- Migrate from an object-subject to an subject-subject relationship
- Start to think in terms of relationships
- What does the child bring?
- Be relationally competent
Relational competence is the ability to 'see' the child on its own terms and adjust behaviour in accordance therewith, without giving up the leadership.
- Ethics: with this Jesper Juul means the 'ability and willingness of the adult to take full responsibility for the quality of the relationship'.
- The values:
 - Equal dignity
 - Personal integrity

- Responsibility
- Authenticity
- Cooperation versus integrity (if there is a conflict between the two children will give up their integrity and cooperate, and damage themselves in the process);
- Self-confidence and self-esteem. The self-esteem is a basis for a healthy mental development and for self-confidence to grow.
- Social responsibility and personal responsibility. Mr. Juul: personal responsibility comes first. When acquired there is a good basis to attain social responsibility.

In the questions and answers session Jesper Juul raises the following issues:

- It is in the interest of the child when the parents first take care of their own marriage;
- Babies and young toddlers need at least twice 25 minutes per day one-to-one contact with the same adult for a healthy development of their brain;
- At one of the last shooting incidents in Germany the adolescent who had just killed a whole group of teachers and students stated, before he killed himself: ‘the message that this school ever gave me was that I am a loser’. Jesper Juul remarks, that we should take the last words of this adolescent very seriously, because it gives us a powerful message about our school system.
- He advocates the introduction of some guidance for all parents regarding their parenting role, and not to limit this to the 5% of the parents that do worst.

THE WORKING GROUP ON THE QUALITY OF CHILDHOOD IS INVITED TO TAKE ACTION

Next Karin Resetarits, the chairman of the meeting, remarks that as Working Group on the Quality of Childhood we can undertake some steps regarding the following:

- Keep an eye on what the European Commission is doing and give an input in this respect;
- The German Presidency is breathing new life into the Constitutional Treaty. Can we give an input to this regarding the Quality of Childhood and present it to the German Presidency?
- On November 20 2007 there will be an International Day of the Child. Can we draft a Charter for this event on the Quality of Childhood?
- various Committees of the European Parliament have been invited to give an input at a hearing on 17 April 2007 within the European Parliament on the subject of Children’s Rights. Mrs Resetarits invites the Working Group on the Quality of Childhood to prepare also an input in this respect.

WHAT CAN BE DONE AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

Michiel Matthes states that the European Parliament works on the basis of certain values. The subject ‘Quality of Childhood’ fits in very well into this context. If the European Parliament would decide to start to pay attention to the subject ‘Quality of Childhood’, this would already be a major step forward and it would set in motion a gradual process of improvement throughout the European Union and beyond.