

# **„Children Are Our Future – For a Europe Without Poverty!“**

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## **Address of welcome**

*Elisabeth Bußmann*

*Chairwoman Arbeitsgemeinschaft der deutschen Familienorganisationen (AGF) e.V., Berlin*

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Ladies and gentlemen, dear participants at this expert conference! First of all I wish to extend a warm welcome to you and to all of us in the name of the AGF, the Commission of German Associations for Family Affairs. We are delighted that you have come here from all over Europe to participate together with the AGF in this our European expert conference: „Children are our future – for a Europe without poverty!“ I want to welcome particularly at this expert conference our guests from Belgium, France, Spain, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

We - the Commission of German Associations for Family Affairs – have been dealing for quite some time with the urgent and widespread problem of child poverty. About 2,5 million which is more than 17 per cent of all the children in Germany, i. e. one of the richest countries in the world, are at risk of or already in poverty. Children from single parent families, families with many children and families with migrational background are particularly affected.

Child poverty is family poverty. There are no poor children without poor families. The causes, coherencies and consequences are well known. Increasing child poverty in Germany is based on a lack of general economic parameters, on discrimination and inequitable provisions of the German taxes and levies system. And the contribution that parents make through their efforts in education, care and parenting for their children and thereby at the same time for the future of the society remains largely unconsidered. In Germany, this poverty situation of children is a structural problem and we in the AGF consider this as a scandal. In its political work as a federation the Commission of German Associations for Family Affairs has so far always criticised the lack of general economic parameters, inadequate public transfer payments and inequitable provisions of the German taxes and levies system and we have referred to it, in press releases, statements, position papers, in hearings and in the course of expert conferences. Time and again we have presented the political and general public with this critical situation. The expert conference “Child poverty - a structural challenge” organized last November by our Commission, focussed on these unjust structures and worked out several proposals for solutions.

The present expert conference is a sequel to last year’s expert conference with the intent of placing the problem of child poverty in a European context.

According to the official data of the EU there are at present 78 million people in Europe near or below the poverty threshold. According to the definition of poverty they have less than 60 per cent of the respective national median income at their disposal.

The poverty risk is particularly high for children. In almost all the member states of the European Union children are noticeably more frequently affected by poverty than other groups. Whereas on the average about 16 per cent of all EU citizens are considered as poor there are throughout Europe about 19 per cent of the children living in poverty which amounts to 19 million children.

The real dimension of child poverty, however, varies greatly in the different member states. According to the „Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008“ of the European Union the risk rate in the worst affected countries approaches 30 per cent.

In spite of the general progress in the labour market the number of children affected by poverty even increases according to this report. In the light of the current worldwide financial and - increasingly - economical crises, the impact of which we feel now on the labour market and which according to expert opinion will even increase in the future one can already predict which repercussions this will entail for poverty in Europe and particularly for children.

Because poverty is always income poverty as well, a secure job and sufficient income from gainful employment as well as adequate family support are an indispensable protection against poverty.

Still according to the above-mentioned „Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008“ of the European Union, the rate of children at risk of poverty reaches 25 per cent if only one parent is employed as compared to only 7 per cent when both parents have a job. But there are other risk factors, connected with low work intensity, i. e. life with only one parent or life in a large family. In Germany you have to add that families with a migration background are among the social group which is most affected by poverty.

Therefore we are pleased as host of this expert conference to be able to profit in the speeches and in the work-shop groups from the accounts and experience of the experts from the member states and thus to expand our knowledge about the poverty situation of children and families in Europe.

Poverty means for children and their families not only a monthly income below average and being dependent on rather low public transfer payments. In addition, poverty means a lack of social inclusion. Poverty means that the access to adequate education and sufficient living space is rather limited. Moreover, poverty impairs increasingly the chances on the qualification and labour market and has naturally a great impact on the physical and mental well-being of the affected peer group. Thus, poverty makes it more difficult for children to shape their own independent future. They are deprived by these material and conceptual discriminations of crucial opportunities for their future. Thus a free development of their individual personality is often quite impossible under these circumstances..

This limited or to some extent even non existent access to elementary social service areas violates the fundamental rights of children as adopted, for example, in 1989 by the United

Nations and stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The European states, too, have ratified this convention and thus accepted the rights of children to health care, education, healthy balanced nutrition and adequate housing stipulated in the Convention. The living conditions of children in Europe affected by poverty are often in contradiction to these fundamental rights. Today, in the reports and discussion and workshop groups, we will broaden and complete our knowledge about the consequences of poverty, only sketchily outlined here.

Child poverty results from a complex interaction of various factors. The causes for child poverty are manifold and thus the measures and programmes to avoid and to fight it must be as variegated. It's all about combining different approaches, different strategies so that parents eventually have access to a job and that they are guaranteed to keep this gainful employment during the family phase or to recuperate it after the interruption. Success can only be guaranteed by implementing a well-balanced measure mix garnished with adequate financial means.

If children are poor then it is generally because they live in a poor household. In order to improve the material situation of these children their families must be assisted in their responsibilities and their family work must be adequately financially compensated. This involves furthermore an improved reconciliation of work and family life. In Germany we invoke another important explanation: we need more and, above all, qualitatively enhanced provisions for child care, this will considerably improve the reconciliation of work and family life.

Currently we notice that across Europe the policies to avoid and to fight poverty become more and more important. Therefore the European Commission has designated 2010 as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. This involves raising the awareness of the public for the problem of child poverty and of the poverty condition of families and to lower the poverty rate in Europe considerably.

The Commission of German Associations for Family Affairs plans to organize in 2009 another expert conference on this subject involving the participation of representatives of European institutions and organisations such as the European Parliament and the European Commission.

In preparation for this conference this year's expert conference is meant to create the basis for a more profound occupation with the poverty situation of children in the EU as well as for a controversial debate on the existing strategies to tackle the problem on a European level. We aim to develop a common strategy in order to fight child poverty in Europe effectively and durably and to eliminate it eventually in the long run. We as the Commission of German Associations for Family Affairs want to plead for a strategy to tackle this problem of child poverty together and thus to make sure that there will be fair and promising living conditions

and perspectives for children and families in Europe. Children and families are the social capital of our common house called Europe! Therefore we appeal solemnly to the present expert conference: Let us use this present expert conference to fortify the social structures of our common house of Europe, to create the basis so that children and families in Europe will enjoy a future worth living.

I want to express my gratitude that you have honoured this expert conference with your presence and that you are willing to invest your time and your competence in our endeavour to create a secure and fair future for children in Europe. My gratitude includes the interpreters. Thank you for your translations which will help us today to a better understanding in Europe, at least linguistically. Our special thanks go to Mr. Schäfer and to the team of the central office for the competent preparation of this expert conference enabling us today to deliberate on the right way to the social house of Europe and hopefully to come to conclusions. Thank you!

## **Child poverty and social exclusion in the EU**

*Dominic John Richardson*

*Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris*

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First of all, thank you very much for inviting me here to deliver a speech. My organisation, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, is very pleased about that. I have been granted a time limit of 45 minutes and I want to speak about child poverty in Europe.

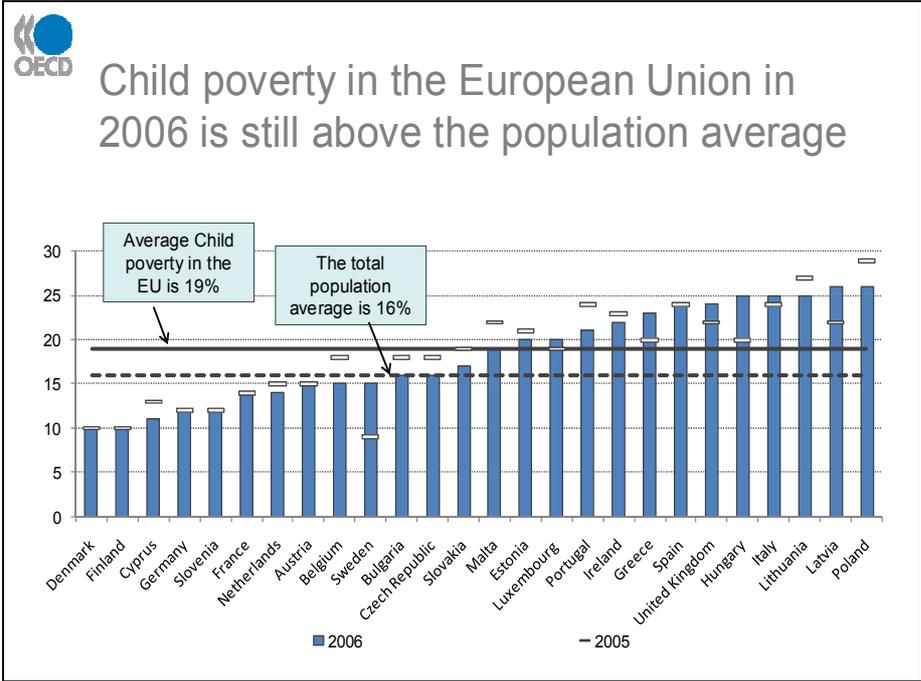
I have read the report of the European Commission on child poverty and child well-being in the EU and I must say that it is very interesting and informative, indeed. The report describes in detail the different forms of child poverty and several approaches for future lines of action. The report contains very useful information which, however, has also had a frightening aspect in some ways. This report states that the poverty rate for families having two children and two parents working full time is lower than 5 percent. If we take that into consideration can we then logically ask the following question: Can we solve the problem of child poverty by simply encouraging families to stay together and work and not having more than one or two children? Is the answer simply demographic and work-based? Of course not, that would be an infringement of choice. We have to think about different ways to lower child poverty. Five percent of child poverty, could that be principally acceptable? Can we tolerate child poverty at all...and if so, up to which rate? 5 percent, 10 percent? At the moment the poverty rate of children in Europe is much higher, as you know.

I would say that we must not tolerate child poverty at all. All children must have the same opportunities, they must be able to grow up without poverty. There are good political arguments we can invoke and hand on to our politicians: It is important to eliminate child poverty because this saves money in the long run. Lowering child poverty is a very sensible and important matter for the development of society.

Let me start with some central messages; first of all, a conclusion of sorts: As you know, child poverty in Europe is at 19 per cent. This was the case in 2005 and in 2006, and this is much too high. Moreover, this is not fair vis-à-vis the children. Secondly I would say that combating child poverty is important, to be sure, however, it is not the only factor in their lives to prevent them from a happy childhood and to limit their future prospects. Children must be enabled to perform. Later I will present to you a number of statistics and measurements in this context. The third thing is, I believe we should really deal here more profoundly with poverty, we should look in greater detail at both social exclusion and child well-being but we don't really have the data and the instruments to do that. There are a lot of different efforts to measure the poverty of children. However, I would say that speaking about the European-level we do not really possess the necessary empirical findings, to deduce from them a way

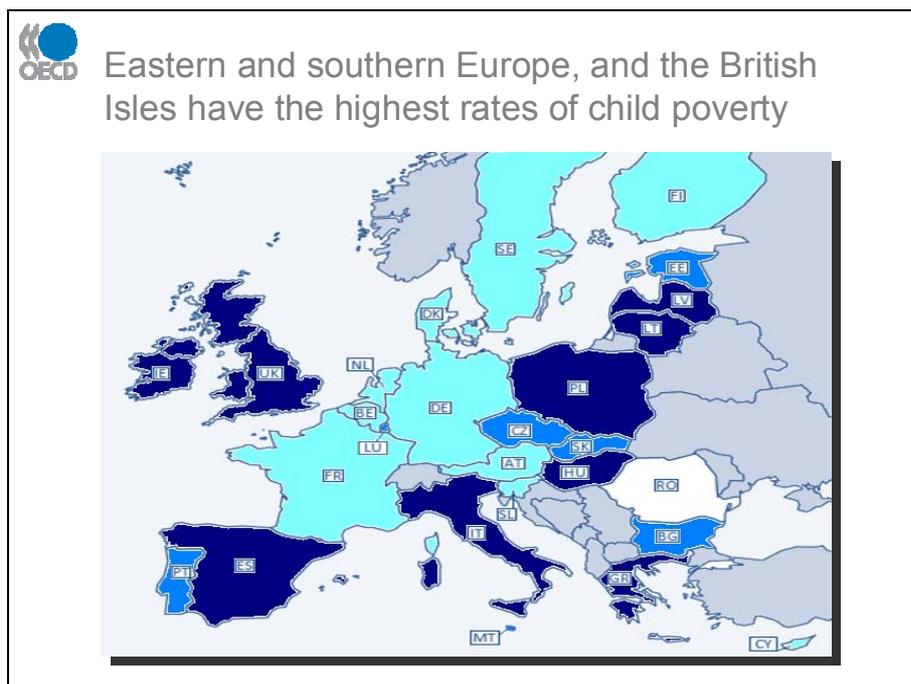
how to cope best with this poverty and social exclusion. This does not only apply to children in general. There are specific child-stage examples, no detailed cross-country data are available about the way how children are assisted by a range of public services in school age or how health care interventions are being handled for infants. We have to deal with these phases separately to learn why children actually do not receive the assistance to develop adequately. New data on the well-being of children are therefore indispensable in order to be able to reinforce the efforts to reduce child poverty and the social exclusion of children.

There is a whole range of very convincing arguments we should deal with. You know all about this but it is really important and worthwhile to be mentioned. The rate of child poverty varies greatly between the European states. It depends on the family structure and shows furthermore differences with regard to the age of the affected children. As illustrated in detail in the above stated European report, the child poverty rate is also dependant on the unemployment rate of parents, on the prevailing benefits system, on the fact that certain groups, who are paid lower wages, may suffer from in-work poverty. All this affects the level of child poverty.



Here you see the poverty rate in 2005; the blue columns are for 2006. What is remarkable here is that in most of the cases there is a downward movement. However, in Sweden, where there were good levels in the past, there is nevertheless a rise in child poverty. In Great Britain, too, the rate of child poverty has risen again. On this chart you can also see the average level of child poverty in Europe.

For my lecture I have assembled a certain number of maps because I think it could be quite interesting for us to look at some geographical patterns of child outcomes in Europe. What happens in regard to geography? Are there special poverty regions where children are particularly disadvantaged? I have colour-coded in each case the acuteness of the poverty situation. The countries with a great poverty problem are dark blue whereas the countries with a good development are light blue. The allocation was conducted on the bases of the average values.



As you can see the dividing line encompasses the British Islands runs south of Finland and south-west of France. Relative child poverty in the middle countries of continental Europe is comparatively low, whereas if you look at the Baltic States and at southern Europe you will find that child poverty there is high.

Before breaking down these results according to family structures we have to examine first of all the poverty of children according to age. In the literature and in many statistics children are seen as a uniform group. The OECD has introduced several other differentiations, as it is better to examine child poverty in certain well defined age groups.



## The youngest children in Europe are most likely to be the poorest children

0-5 years	6-14 years	15-17 years
Austria, <u>Belgium</u> , Bulgaria, Cyprus, <u>Denmark</u> , Estonia, <u>Finland</u> , France, Hungary, <u>Luxembourg</u> , Malta, Netherlands, Slovenia, <u>Sweden</u> , <u>United Kingdom</u>	Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain, Slovakia.	Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal.

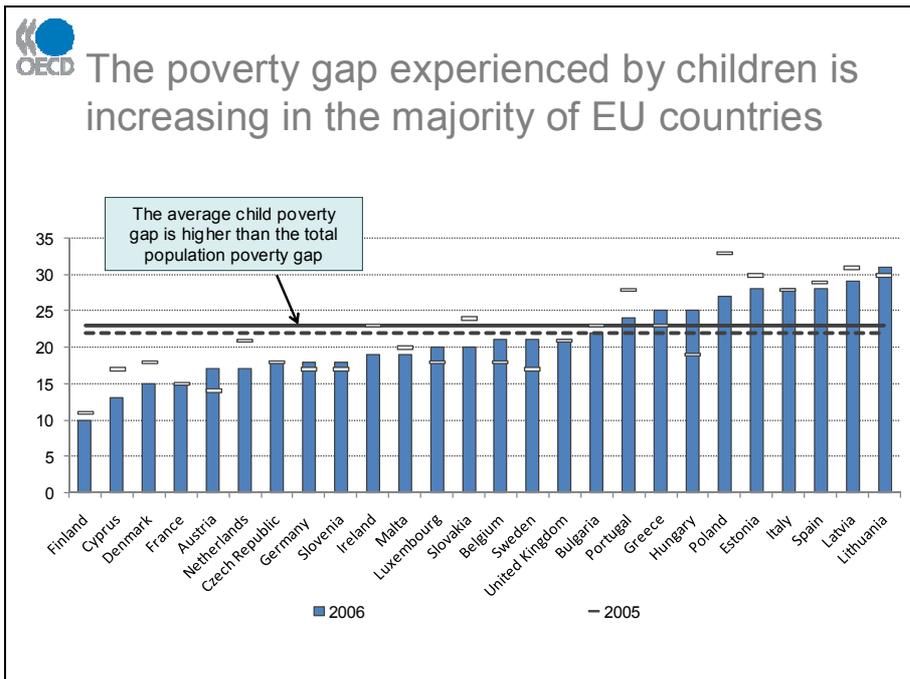
Calculations from EU SILC 2005 data.

Underlined countries have rates at least 3 points higher than for children overall.

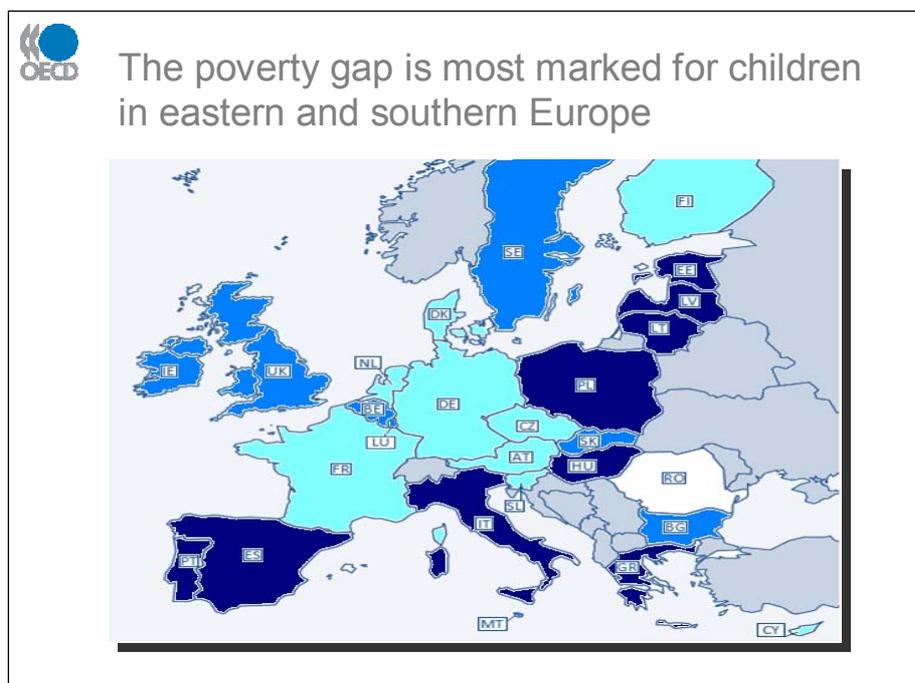
You can see that in most of the countries the poorest children are the youngest children. In the underlined countries child poverty in this age group is at least 3 % higher than for children as a whole, like e.g. in Great Britain. This is a problem that must be taken into consideration when thinking about developing measures against child poverty. It is important for their effectiveness, for their efficiency. As researchers and practitioners I consider it our responsibility not only to give a summary of these circumstances but also to talk about them to politicians and to tell them that they have the responsibility to provide for better opportunities for the future lives of these children, that it is their duty to take effective measures. And effectiveness means to keep the differences between the living conditions of children as small as possible. It also means to develop a certain quality of living conditions. There's no doubt that some families have less money than others. You see that in school, e.g., where children from poor families can't afford to buy the appropriate school books. That must be talked about. Poverty in early childhood is very, very demoralising for these children. But I don't want to focus on this point too much for the moment.

Now let's come to the poverty gap.\*

- The poverty gap indicates the difference between the actual income and the defined poverty line of 60 % of the national median income. This discrepancy is measured in percentage.

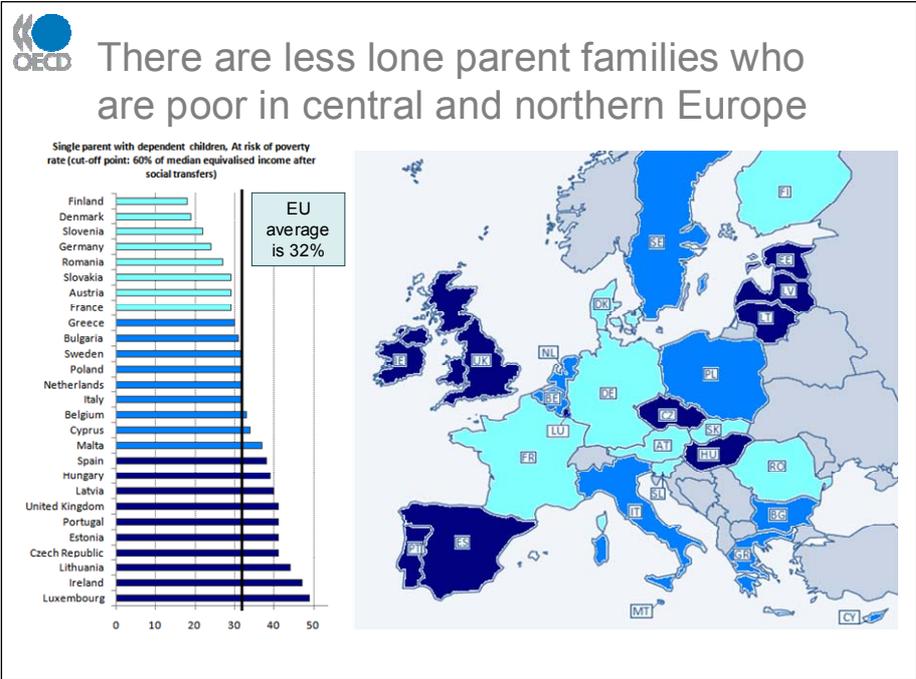


Here one can see that children in some European countries can be very poor, indeed. Here again, it is obvious that the average poverty gap for children is higher than the poverty gap in the overall population. Generally, the gap has decreased from 2005 to 2006; however, some of these states have gone through a very bad stretch. Another look at the geography reveals a similar picture as before.

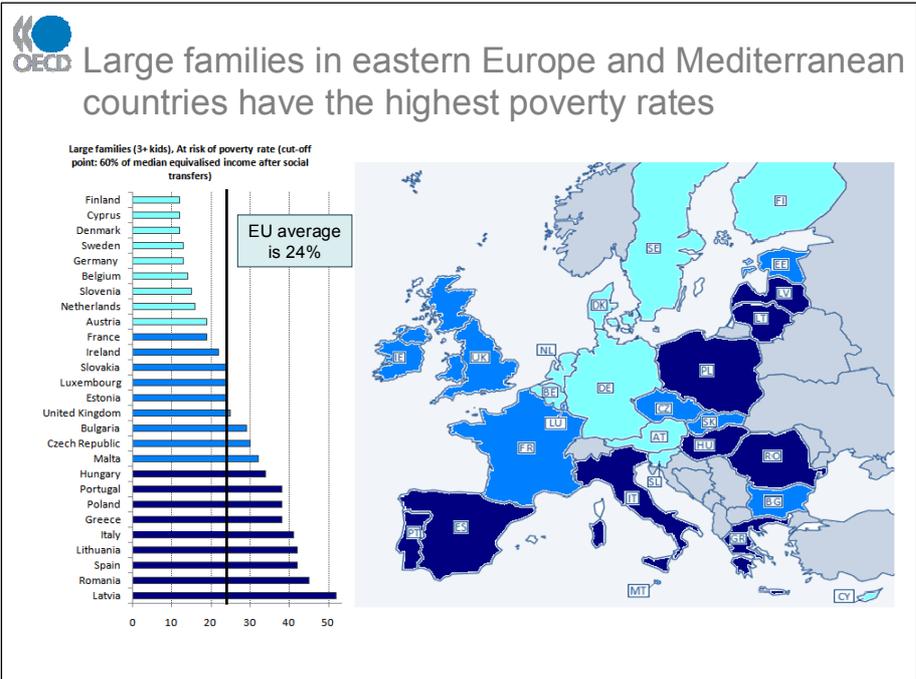


What about the child poverty rate in different types of families? In all European countries the child poverty rate in lone parent households is higher than the overall child poverty rate. In the EU average it is at 32 percent. Now let's take a look at the geographic situation for this

group, too. The number of poor children in lone parent households is particularly high in Spain and in Portugal, but also on the British Isles and in the Baltic States.



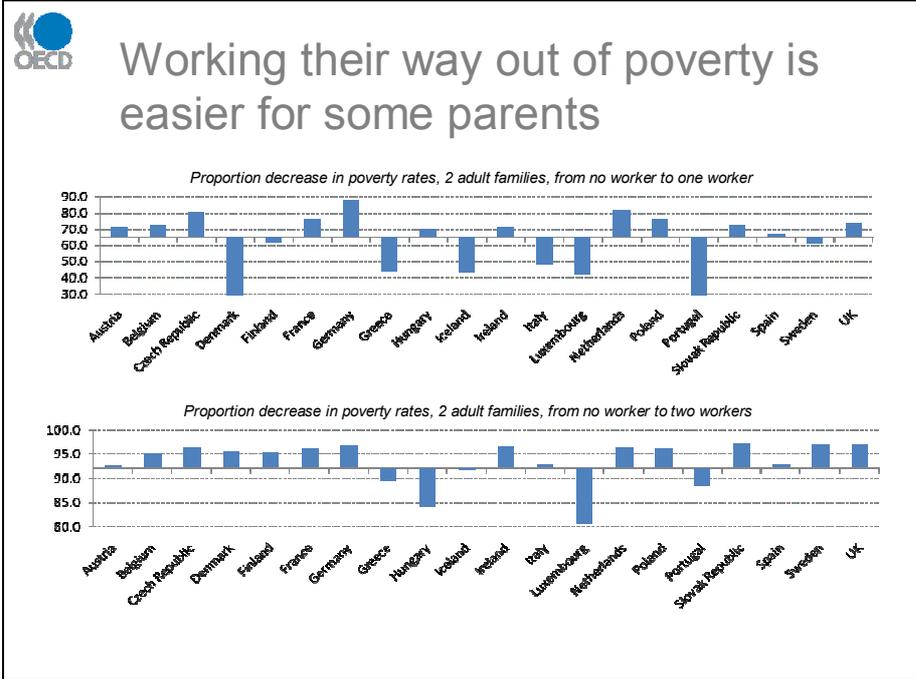
For large families the poverty risk is likewise above average. According to the above mentioned EU report about 25 percent of the European children living in such households are poor. Here again, the Baltic States and the southern European countries are among the countries with the worst statistics.



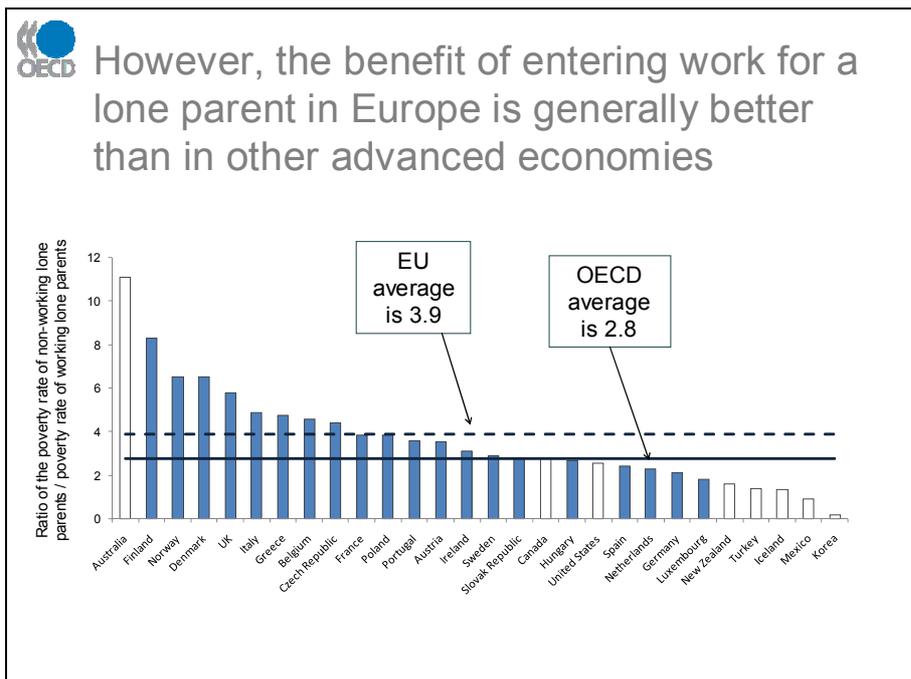
The poverty rate in large families and in lone parent families is considerably higher than in the overall population. Thus, these two groups are clearly underprivileged in Europe. With

respect to the distribution of poverty lone parent families as well as large families are disproportionately affected by poverty. In 2006 there was even an increase in these two groups.

I want to show you another chart. These are statistics from the OECD showing a decrease of poverty rates for increasing gainful employment in families with two adults. How does the employment of the parents affect the poverty rate?



It is not easy to interpret this chart, but it is clear that for families with two parents who both work the decreases in poverty rates often are nevertheless rather high. It is impossible to ascertain for all the countries that there is a correlation between the employment of parents and child poverty, as the effects are very different e.g. in Denmark and in Portugal. But for the entirety of the EU – with the OECD countries – and particularly if lone parent families are included it is a fact that employment of the parents leads definitely to a decrease in poverty rates.



There are a number of EU countries where this works well. But there are other countries where it doesn't really work. This also depends on the state of the economy. If you want to enable parents to work, there is still the question of whether there are enough jobs. The effectiveness of an employment depends on the job security, the quality of the work and the money the parents earn (are they paid adequately?). European employment policies are designed to provide jobs and to increasing the ratio of those available for work. However, overall the results of these efforts in the past seven years are small. There are countries where the ratio of children in families with no working adults remains relatively stable, all the same, and there are those countries where there are quite strong variations - in both directions. As a whole the ratio of children in unemployed families has not changed over the past years in the EU average.

I am sure there are a lot of problems I cannot go into detail with. But here I want to elaborate above all on the mechanisms which are used to tackle child poverty. Thereby I refer to work of the OECD. A first aspect is the amount and the nature of the expenses. Basically we differentiate between cash payments and in-kind payments. Secondly there is the definition of political guidelines which is very important. There are different approaches in the countries as to who is to assist, depending also on the respective degree of poverty. There is, e.g., the differentiation according to the child's age, but also according to specific target groups. In this context it is particularly important what is granted and how it is granted. As you know there are different approaches in the whole of the EU and of the OECD as to how to support families. Some increase cash payments, others change them according to the age of the children, and still others keep them at the same level. In Canada and Australia, for example,

child benefit diminishes the older the child gets. In time this reduces the tax burden of providing family benefits. It is interesting to see that countries that provide lone parent supplements in their child benefits are generally doing better in terms of combating poverty than those who do not. The results are found for comparisons of system structures, regardless of how much is being paid. This is really astonishing. The third aspect effecting child poverty is in-work benefits.

Concerning welfare benefits in Europe the real decision to be made is when to spend money for the children. But the strength of the impact on child poverty varies greatly depending on the exact time when children receive a certain kind of assistance. We must try to understand this correlation, this mutual dependency on when assistance is granted. Most of the countries prefer investing in late childhood. Primarily it's a matter of social spending and spending for education. Germany e.g. spends less in the early years and more in later childhood years. In other countries the differences are considerably more important. Take Mexico, for example – of course I do know that Mexico isn't in the EU – but I have inserted it because Mexico spends most of the money for children between 6 and 11 years. Why? We don't know. Perhaps they know the answer, perhaps it is because children in Mexico leave school earlier. Iceland, on the other hand, invests considerably more in early childhood years. If you are looking for Iceland you'll see that there children are assisted primarily at the beginning, in the very early childhood. In other countries, however, spending is highest for children in the age bracket from 11-12 years when they start secondary education, and then investments decrease again. Actually investing on children can be seen as a little bit like building a house. If you want to keep it in good condition you can, of course, look at the walls each year and repair them each year anew. You can, however, invest a lot of money from the start and build a stable and durable foundation. Then, presumably, you have to spend much less money keeping up the standards in the following years.

An important dimension is lacking in this chart, namely health expenditure. There is an "expensive" period during childbirth and shortly after. Two reasons why we haven't taken health expenditure into consideration. First of all we don't have the relevant data and secondly, perhaps it wouldn't be so sensible, after all, because we don't really know whether the expenditures are to be imputed to the mother or to the child. That's always difficult to say with health expenditures. That is why in this chart we have only taken into account expenditures which are definitely imputable to the child, i.e. for education and social policy. Alas, we are not able to define precisely which social services are included as we ourselves dispose only of aggregate data.

The basic idea of this chart is, however, that Iceland starts in the early years with spending and the ensuing expenditures are then more effective for the child. In principle that means that it is more sensible to invest more in the beginning and to reduce expenditures later. But that doesn't happen in most of the countries. And there we ask ourselves: why not? I want to give you some more information especially about investments in the early years of childhood. It concerns mainly spending for education, in-kind transfers, child care, cash transfers and, last but not least, tax reductions for parents with children. Especially these tax incentives play an increasing role in redistribution systems in Europe. Besides cash transfers very often a big part is being spent for child care. It is a fact, that countries spending more early on actually have lower poverty rates.

What are we just trying to do here? We are looking at different types of families, the role of public expenditure for child specific transfer payments – this is a sort of micro simulation in order to clarify which methods are really effective in combating child poverty in the target groups that are mostly affected and how they work. Lone parent families and large families run a much greater risk of being affected by poverty or of staying poor. The transfer systems differ greatly in efficiency and are being implemented very differently in different countries. There are many things you have to consider when talking about the causes for child poverty and about sensible measures of its elimination. It is not only about family size and about the amount and the pattern of expenditure of social transfer payments. It is also about the possibilities of child care, for example, and of granting the parents access to training and retraining courses. It is particularly important that we take the pan-European situation into consideration, on a macro level, that we see how this result is to be evaluated on the whole. There is no use studying only one isolated approach because that doesn't give us an overall view as it constitutes only a limited set of data for one single country.

And then, finally, how is poverty correlated with social exclusion? What are the indicators showing that a child is really doing well? And what does social exclusion mean? Is there a difference between child poverty and the well-being of a child? What other criteria besides the material poverty must be taken into account in order to assess the situation of children throughout Europe? We have primarily looked at the health of children. Surveys were conducted among children in 2005 and 2006 where children were asked to evaluate their own state of health. The ratio of children who rated their state of health as not really good or mediocre was particularly high in southern Europe and in Slovakia. However, as a whole, there are no great discrepancies in the results in Europe. On the other hand, whereas in southern Europe the poverty rate and the poverty gap are particularly high, there are nevertheless children in these countries saying that their health is very good. Thus, the state

of health as seen by the children themselves is not directly linked to the poverty rate at the aggregate level. However, in countries with a high poverty rate the life satisfaction of children is considerably lower.

But not only the state of health provides information on the situation of children in Europe but also the educational level as measured by the reading literacy in one of the tests in the PISA study. Naturally, here again, there are methodical questions to be scrutinized. The reading literacy, can it really be an indication for the actual educational level of a child? How many children are again not incorporated in the data collections? And, as always, there is the problem of statistical accuracy. Where reading is concerned the results show that Finland leads in Europe. Finnish children look really good in this context. But there is no direct correlation, no similar overall pattern corresponding to the poverty rate. Thus again, the educational effort seems to follow a completely different law. However, the poverty rate in large families correlates with the reading capability of the children, whereas this is not the case for lone parent families. This means, there is a clear correlation between poverty for large families and the educational performances of children as a whole.

Now about accommodation, housing, living quarters. Poverty and housing conditions are definitely correlated. Poverty is instantly reflected in housing conditions. It is the first and foremost element to show poverty; overcrowded living quarters and bad housing conditions. The poverty gap, as well, correlates with housing conditions. Adolescent parenthood is yet another indicator for poverty. It is difficult to say why that is so. Perhaps the girls want to be mothers because they don't want to be children anymore. There is, however, no clearly defined correlation between poverty, social exclusion and teenage pregnancies.

All things considered we can say: It is not only the income that determines poverty and bad living conditions for children. Therefore, besides income poverty, we have to take other criteria concerning the life situation of children into consideration, such as health, education and the social environment of children. These factors complete the image of child poverty in Europe and they provide important indicators for effective measures against poverty and social exclusion in childhood. That is what we have to work on now and in the future, for poverty and social exclusion of children are economically counterproductive and totally unfair vis-à-vis the child. Thank you!



## **Methods of Reporting Poverty in Europe**

*Irena Topińska*

*Centre for Social and Economic Research, Warsaw*

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First of all I want to express my gratitude for the invitation to this conference. I am very pleased to be able to enter with you on this occasion into an exchange of ideas and experience. I am not really an expert on child poverty; however, there are correlations with my previous research activities. Therefore I am really looking forward to the following debates.

My lecture will be about how poverty is measured and reported in Europe. I see there a lot of experts present who already know all about poverty statistics. That's why I want to give you my personal assessment concerning the methodology used until now.

Accordingly I'd like to divide my presentation into two parts. First I will talk about the reporting of poverty in the EU. I'll try to show how this reporting works. What can we learn from statistics, from Eurostat and other official sources about poverty in the EU? I've tested it myself. I went on-line and looked up the notion of "poverty" to find out what results I would get and how clearly arranged they were. I put myself in the situation of someone who is interested in poverty in Europe but who isn't an expert himself. The second part will deal directly with methods of poverty measurement. I will compare the methods that we use in the European Union with those of another international institution, namely the World Bank. It is appropriate to contrast the World Bank approach against the EU method. Some say that the approach of the World Bank is better, others, however, state that it is an approach which is not really appropriate for a realistic reporting of poverty. The approach of the World Bank is, however, very important as the new member states which were admitted only a few years ago to the EU have been influenced up until now by the methodology of the World Bank. These methods for the measurement of poverty were adopted by the majority of these countries and therefore the poverty statistics of the new member states are fundamentally based on the World Bank methodology. I will present the resulting conclusions at the end of my lecture.

So I'll start with the reporting. What about the keyword "poverty"? "Poverty in Europe", that is the title of this expert conference. So I googled: "poverty in Europe". At first go I found no EU statistics. There were links to certain newspapers, to networks, to a myriad of non-governmental-organisations and eventually I found direct information. But it is not really easy for someone who is not an expert to find these statistics. So I accessed the official sites of the EU and searched again for "poverty". The first links showing up were about world poverty, about global poverty, about Africa. Of course there are also programmes of the EU,

support programmes and relief programmes which are launched in other countries, but nothing about poverty in Europe.

What have I tried next? I went directly to the website of the EU Commission “Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities”. There I found a number of links: employment, gender issues and then, actually, poverty. However, not poverty directly but “social inclusion”. Thus again, no direct hit for my search. It is really difficult to get direct information on the issue of poverty in Europe. When, finally, I googled “poverty in Europe” there appeared national strategy reports and actually the term “child poverty”. I opened the links to the national strategy reports and what did I find? Many, many reports from 27 countries and many, many statistics. Needless to say that the national strategy reports don’t speak about poverty, they speak about social protection and social inclusion. In addition there is also a common social report of the EU. But here, as well, the title is not “poverty”. If, however, you open this common report, you find of course also information on poverty. There is even a special chapter on this topic. But if you don’t really know beforehand what this report is about, then you will not necessarily deduce that it is about poverty.

What am I trying to say? There is, within the EU, no clear way how to publish the topic of poverty. The latest Eurostat publication dates back to the year 2003. Of course it is nevertheless possible to find information on the poverty situation in Europe on the internet, rounded off with comments, recordings and studies. But up to now there is no clear comprehensive and plausible manner how to make this information publicly available to the interested citizen.

This impression is also confirmed with respect to statistical data. Again there is no direct finding for “poverty”. There is a link to common indicators on which the above-mentioned national strategy reports are based and to the so-called “Open Method of Coordination”. That is where I finally took a closer look to find what I was looking for. There was a link to Eurostat and an overview of the comprehensive social indicators, i.e. social inclusion, pensions, health, care. Again, the term “poverty” doesn’t show up. Of course, when I open each individual work sheet then I’ll find information on poverty. But this information is not directly visible but embedded in a tangled mass of other factors, e.g. old age pensions, social benefits, the social security system. “Poverty” as such is not listed. On the site of Eurostat, as well, clear topics show up immediately, “poverty” however, is not among them. It’s all about social cohesion, sustained development, social inclusion and social integration. There are indicators for population, standard of living – but again no poverty. Why don’t they speak about poverty as such? Not about social exclusion or social protection, about poverty and child poverty as such!

But well, back to statistics. I opened them all, I looked at all the indicators, opened all the sites. And there, finally, I found information on the poverty situation in the EU and in the

member states. There are listings of the poverty risks before and after social transfers, of the poverty rate at a certain point in time, of the rate of persistent poverty as well as of the relative median at-risk-of-poverty-rate. So what is the logical conclusion for me? The whole procedure is not user-friendly, which applies also to the terminology. Just look at the English term “at-risk-of-poverty-rate”, long-winded and incomprehensible. It is obvious that poverty as a topic is shunned to a certain extent. This is probably due to the fact that in the EU they do not speak of extreme poverty, but of a kind of relative poverty. However, if you search for child poverty they suddenly don't talk anymore about that term “at-risk-of-poverty-rate“. Here there is really a lack of clarity in the use of the terminology.

What else is there to see? There are two essential indicators. First the poverty rate, i.e. the extent of poverty, the ratio of poor people in relation to the total population. And then there is also the so-called “poverty gap”. What is measured by the poverty gap? The term “poverty gap” is only used by some experts. You, for example, Mr. Richardson, used this term. But all those who are not really statistic experts actually avoid using this term. We all know what the poverty rate is; we feel it in a certain way. But what is the “poverty gap”? What does it mean? What is a small gap? What is a big gap? What is a medium gap? And a poverty gap of 30 per cent... is that small or big? There is really one question here: What does the term imply? You cannot really grasp it. All statistical experts and also the politicians would really like to use this term but it definitely needs to be transformed into a term which is much more user-friendly. I, personally, don't like this term, it is awkward. Perhaps we should speak of “poverty depth” instead?

But let's come to the poverty rate first. Which indicators determine the poverty rate? Gender, age groups – there are several age groups; up to and including 17 years of age, then working age and several adult groups – type of household, state of employment, education as well, though the correlation was not too easy to find. If I remember correctly this correlation even was only itemized in just one single statistic. Surprisingly the type of accommodation is also itemized, meaning whether you are the owner of your living quarters or renting. This may be important, I have to admit, but I think there is a problem of measuring.

What is missing here? I can tell you what I miss in this itemization. Obviously these statistics don't include the location, so to speak, the social environment. Poverty, is it a phenomenon found primarily in cities or rather in a rural environment? What about life in the metropolises? It is not being taken into consideration. We know that it is important and that the place where you live has a great influence on the poverty situation. In many countries the social environment is included when measuring poverty, but not in the EU.

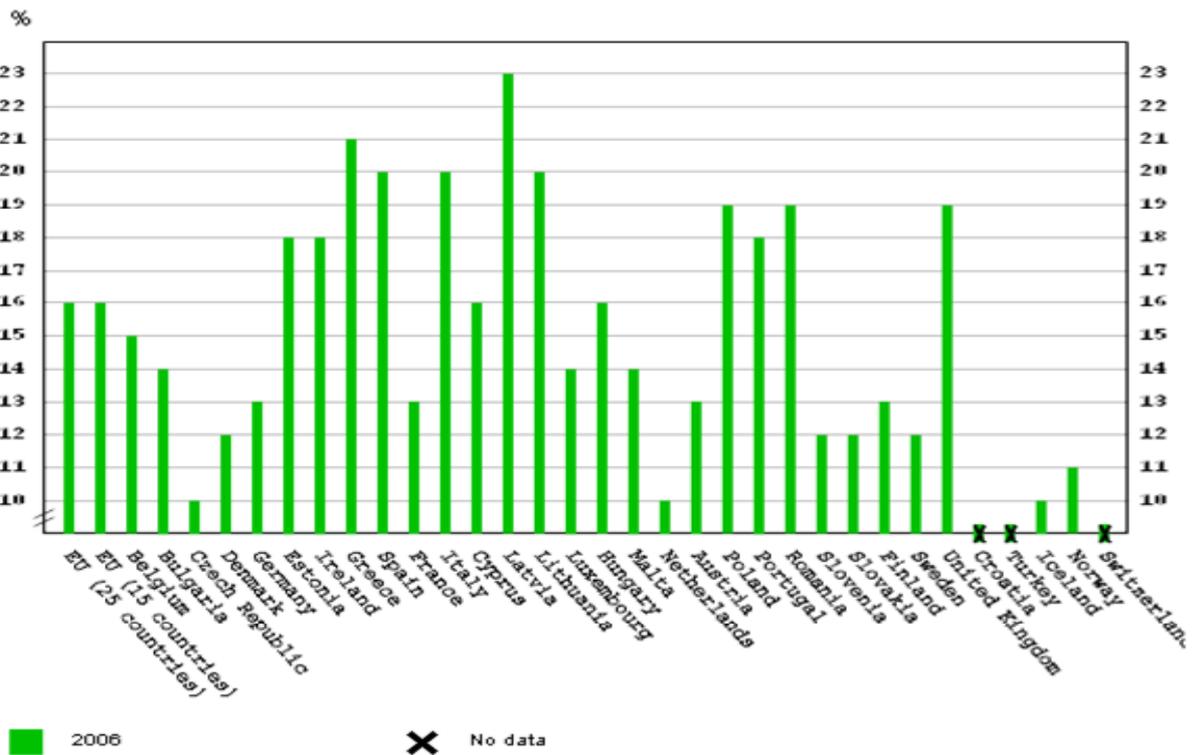
Migration, too, which we have already mentioned earlier, is not accounted for in these statistics. In some countries this might not seem such an important issue, in some others,

however, it is of utmost importance, including for the poverty statistics. I, for one, haven't found this criterion; it was not included in the itemizations. This might be due to the fact that it can be very difficult to collect the appropriate data. But this is not the case for the state of health for instance. Poverty among handicapped people or among people suffering from chronic health problems can play a great role in some countries. The state of health can have considerable repercussions on the poverty situation. I think the correlation between poverty and state of health is not so hard to survey. The three age-groups of children already mentioned by Mr. Richardson do not show up either. Of course, we could search for them ourselves, but that's not really our job. It would be very simple to incorporate the corresponding age groups directly into the statistics, but that hasn't happened until now.

Something else: whatever is accessible in form of information, it is always the poverty rate with various itemizations, the poverty gap and in some areas of interest it goes further, dealing with the so-called monetary poverty and thus with the wage gap or income disparity. As a whole the statistics are fundamentally focussed on income, i.e. they are dominated by a money-related perception of poverty. Some Eurostat indicators also include aspects of non-monetary poverty and of social exclusion but there is really not very much to be found. A very good coverage is to be found for living conditions, there is a lot of information, even access to the job market is taken into account. But measuring of financial poverty is clearly dominant. All the other indicators are treated more or less casually. They surely exist, and we are pleased about that, but the focus is on money-related poverty measurement. Considering the chosen methods for data collection, however, Eurostat is not so reserved. There is a load of information and data origin; after all, this is something very official.

But what does the recording look like now? This chart, e.g., is to be found very easily when accessing the above mentioned websites.

### At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers



What do we see? Some very interesting aspects concerning poverty measurement and its coverage in Europe become apparent. For one, the chart not only includes data on member states of the EU, but Iceland, Norway and Switzerland are also listed, whereas Ukraine, Belarus and some of the Caucasians are not incorporated. We could debate here why certain countries are not listed in this chart whereas others which are not members of the EU are incorporated. I would say that there are many in the Ukraine who would like their country to enter the EU. Whether they will succeed or not remains to be seen. But it would have been understandable to incorporate them into the statistics. However, they were not. What else does the statistic tell us? Eurostat lists the results according to the alphabetic order of the countries, not according to the level of the poverty rate. But that could be changed very easily, that's not really a problem. But what else catches the eye immediately when looking at the chart? We see 30 countries listed here, but there are only aggregate data for 25 EU countries, that means that 2 member states are missing in this compilation: Bulgaria and Rumania. Because these two countries are not yet using the methods of collecting data currently applicable throughout Europe. Thus there are no comparable statistics available. I ask myself: Why is that still so? And why are there still readings for EU-15 in this chart? The statistics agency is obviously lagging behind the new conditions in the EU. My last comment on this chart: The report dates from 2006 but the data are from 2005! Of course, this is only a small problem because Eurostat often chooses the year of recording and not the year of data

collection as reference value but, still, you have to be aware of that. So if you read here 2006, the results are also relevant for 2006 but the data normally are originally from 2005. I just wanted to mention that as it might be a little bit misleading.

To sum up, what are the strong points of the European poverty statistics for me? And what are the weak points which I would like to mention here once more. Very positive for me is the broad territorial coverage and also the timeframe of the statistical publication. Basically it is a clear display and an appropriate explanation of the methods used. I am just not happy with some points. The terminology is awkward and in parts misleading. The indicators are differently wide-spread; there is no clear poverty term to be directly found and which could be used accordingly. There are delays in the supply of information. Probably these delays may not be avoided in the international context, this is a fundamental problem but it is, of course, a weak point in the statistics. After all, that's why we can work in 2009 only with data from 2005 or 2006. Altogether there is no regular and comprehensive analysis of the poverty situation in Europe and thus there is no real poverty recording on a European level.

Now I come to the second part of my lecture. It will be about the choice of methods. You should know that the methods I'm going to illustrate in the following are particularly appropriate for international comparisons. The national methods for the measuring of poverty might be different, and rightly so, because on a national level you have to take specific local conditions into consideration. But for international analyses which we are dealing with here it is all about comparability. Comparability is the main criteria for the choice of appropriate methods. Let me say it like this, the methods used throughout Europe were developed many years ago for a relatively small number of member states. Now we have many new member states and the diversity between the countries has yet increased which entailed an accrual of local specificities. The economic situation in these countries is also very different. What was appropriate as methodology in the past should be reviewed against this background and possibly be revised to adapt it to present-day conditions in the EU. One should try and find a broad consent. What are the methods appropriate for the European comparison? It is, however, difficult to change this for the European Union; it will certainly be a long and tedious process.

Now we come to procedural aspects. I have already mentioned some of them. As a rule in the European Union they refer to the data of "EU-SILC". This statistic records the income and the living conditions of citizens in Europe. For the comparability of the countries with one another it is important that we use the same methods of data recording, for all the countries we want to analyse. The "EU-SILC", the "Statistics on Income and Living Conditions" guarantee the comparability and accuracy of the data much better than the methods of the World Bank. At any rate, it sets a kind of framework and even the questionnaires are similar. By unified statistical categories, such as consumer spending, the collected data are being

homogenised. It would be best, of course, if we had the same data sources for all the countries. There are many recommendations how to proceed in this context.

The concept of poverty is, of course, another important aspect. What is poverty? How do I identify poverty? Everything else follows: How to develop indicators, how to organize them, all that plays a certain role and affects the result. But, in the end, everything is determined by the concept of poverty. Which approach to take, one time you take the subsistence approach, which is an old approach, the traditional approach, so to say; it concentrates on material poverty. According to this a man is poor if he cannot satisfy the basic needs adequately. Wherever this old, traditional approach is used we really speak about extreme poverty. And in some countries we actually find this kind of poverty, even in several European countries there is extreme poverty. The World Bank has defined poverty as follows. According to the development reports from 1990 poverty is the inability to reach a minimum standard of living and this is not just about material aspects. The term "standard of living" includes much more, for example consumer goods or clothing. In the year 2000 the World Bank redefined poverty once more; it states that poverty is an unacceptable human condition and discrimination. What sort of discrimination is this about? There is, for example, the exclusion from social life or a largely reduced participation in social life. Thus this poverty concept is even significantly more comprehensive. Now what about the understanding of poverty in the European Union? The EU defines as poor those individuals or families whose capacities are so meagre that they are excluded from an acceptable way of life. So there is clearly a social aspect. The approach of the EU is therefore a multidimensional approach which we support. It deals not only with income poverty but also with health, education, social inclusion. If we make this perspective our own then we must use multidimensional methods, too. But the reality looks much different. The measurements are largely dominated by the concentration on money-related income poverty. Of course, there are attempts at multidimensional approaches, but these are only very limited. There is no unified consistent index of multidimensional poverty. In a way there are just indicators for monetary poverty and a few auxiliary aspects. And whether the social context is really incorporated in the meantime? In the European Union, I would say yes, but not in the methods of the World Bank.

Let's take another step ahead in the analysis. We also need in principle a definition of well-being in order to know what poverty is and to be able to define the poverty line. What is standard of living? In the European Union they take the income, at the World Bank they take consumption. What about the poverty line? For the European Union it is relative, but for the World Bank it is absolute. Why for one it is income and for the other it is consumption? The income is more important for developed economies and it is easier to record. Why does the World Bank avoid the income perspective? Because there the poorest countries are also

measured and they can't really talk about income because it is very often unknown, and that is why there you have to go by the consumption. But within the EU income measuring is possible. And why the relative poverty line? Incorporating the social context in the EU method naturally makes the poverty line relative. And accordingly the World Bank's poverty line is absolute. The absolute poverty line may be advisable in international comparisons; however, it should be used very cautiously. If anything is wrong there, then we get results which don't reflect reality. So there are many good reasons for using the relative poverty line. Now about measuring the standard of living. Here again, there is the differentiation between income and consumption. In the EU, only the disposable monetary income counts as income, no other income sources. The World Bank, however, measures the per capita consumption, i.e. real expenditures and the resulting consumption process. Moreover some non-monetary components of the standard of living are also incorporated. However, the collection of relevant data in the European Union is carried out very cautiously but, at least, there is a debate about it. On the other hand these non-monetary components are already incorporated into the methods of the World Bank. Then we come to demographic scaling. In the European Union everyone is held to use clearly and severely defined equivalent scales for the illustration of the different household sizes and household types with their different needs, basically implementing the "OECD-modified equivalence scale". This scale assigns a value of 1 to the household head, of 0.5 to each additional adult member and of 0.3 to each child under the age of 14. In the World Bank this is treated more or less optionally. There they prefer the per capita consumption. Although there is an understanding that such a scaling is important, in practice it is only optional for the World Bank.

Now I'll come to the non-monetary components in income and consumption measuring. If I have a house then I have a certain additional income. So we should incorporate it to have a more adequate picture. Because it makes a difference if somebody owns a house or if he doesn't own property. So it should be taken into account as imputed rent. This is also recommended by the World Bank. This is similar for the consumption progression of consumer goods. Here, every single one should be included and measured. This is recommended by the World Bank as well as by the European Union, with the EU being considerably more reserved. As far as I know there is at present a debate in the EU as to how company cars should be included. But self-produced nutrition plays also a certain role in the collection of poverty data for the World Bank who takes measurements even in the poorest countries. This is evident, because otherwise there would be no measurable income. You just have to take the production of natural goods and the trade with foodstuffs into account. Therefore, self-produced nutrition is also entered. Not so in the EU. But this is a problem; particularly if you think of southern Europe. In that region there are more farmers and they consume more goods from their gardens, fields etc. It is not so important for the

median income; but particularly when it's about the lowest income groups it plays a certain role to what extent people still produce their own nutrition.

But is it justified to assign these above mentioned goods to the income, or not? The imputation procedures are not simple, there are some problems there. If, for example, you consider the rent then you need certain information on the housing market. How to compare owner-occupiers with people who are renting? This is very difficult. Of course, you have to verify the value of the property and how good the living conditions really are. And there are also subjective aspects to be considered. But how to rate the rent or lease or what else is paid for the accommodation? If we include it we have to consider that this changes the poverty picture. The poverty estimations will also change. So, if we incorporate the imputed rent for owned accommodation the poverty statistics in the group of people will certainly decrease with age. For many older people own an apartment or a house which is rather rare for younger people. What about the rural food production and self-supply? The poverty statistics for rural areas would change considerably. If you introduce it now you should pay attention to the changes that will entail. And you have to ask yourselves how relevant these factors are to obtain a more adequate picture of the actual poverty situation.

Now let's speak again about equivalence scales. What does it imply? This scaling tries to take the economic conditions into consideration, all the different needs for different households. Let's take, for example, a monthly household income of 4,000 EUR for a family with two adults and two children. This would be a per capita available income of 1,000 EUR. With a weighting of the household members according to the old OECD scale which assigns a value of 0.7 for each additional adult and a value of 0.5 for each child under 14 the available per capita income would already be higher than 1,400 EUR. If we apply the "OECD-modified equivalence scale" the available income is arithmetically yet even considerably higher. Then you arrive at a higher estimation of the standard of living. With the change of scales the calculated poverty rates decreased in many cases. The demographic composition of the poverty population, too, changes with the new scale. As a rule there is a decrease in the poverty rates for families with children and an increase of poverty for elder singles. This is due to the fact that with the new, or "OECD-modified equivalence scale", children have a comparatively low weight. So there is a big difference which of the methods you apply. But which one would be more appropriate to use? The European Union and Eurostat have moved to the "OECD-modified equivalence scale". Many experts had reservations fearing that the new scale would feign a decrease in the poverty risk. Many new member states say that the "OECD-modified equivalence scale" should be revised to show where the actual values are at present. You have to admit, however, that despite its above-mentioned weaknesses the "OECD-modified equivalence scale" seems rather adequate particularly with regard to future poverty studies.

I want to mention another important difference between the EU and the World Bank. The World Bank works with an absolute poverty line. It sets an absolute line, for instance one or two Dollar per day to determine the threshold for a life in poverty. This is very limited. Whereas the European Union regards poverty as a relative concept; each country has its own poverty line with a threshold set at 60 per cent of the national median income, respectively. This determines a clearly relative poverty. But why 60 per cent of the median income? Well, median is convenient to use it and we are used to apply it. However, some researchers fix the threshold at 70 per cent and others at 50 % of the median income. A national poverty line reflects, after all, the national conditions. But this approach of fixing national thresholds can also cause problems. Let us try a comparison beyond borders. The threshold values are different. As a result, people who are, for example, below the poverty line in Belgium might be considered in the Czech Republic as of relatively high income. Or the other way round. If we do not have to compare the countries really narrowly then it is not really dramatic. But we want to measure all the people in the same manner. That is the problem. We observed that after the accession of new member states, the overall EU poverty rate actually declined. And now people ask, why has the poverty rate gone down after the EU entry? It is the result of the application of the relative poverty thresholds.

But there are also some other problems, for example if we look at the progress of time. Poverty can change in the course of time and it is difficult in this context to define a durable and binding definition of poverty. For a comparison of poverty over several years it would be better if there was a poverty threshold fixed in advance and to keep it constant over several years. No doubt, there is inflation and, of course, there are difficulties also for the research as poverty, as stated above, changes in the course of time as social and fiscal policies certainly have their impact on the development of the poverty situation. Nevertheless it would be easier to work with a fixed, absolute poverty value. If you can look at the poverty statistics on the same level over the course of ten years then it is easier to detect deviations. So the question is: should we change the threshold value or not? Or another important question: should we even change from a relative to an absolute threshold? But is it possible, at all, to introduce a unique common threshold within the European Union? The problems this would entail are already much talked about. But there are definitely a lot of experts of either sex who think that something should be done in this context.

Please allow me to recapitulate briefly my conclusions on poverty measuring and the recording of poverty data in the EU. It is important to introduce a common poverty threshold on the EU level to change the measuring of the standard of living and to go beyond the present monetary approach. Alas, we know at present only very few indicators regarding the non-monetary approach. It is difficult to find such indicators because, in a certain way, they are hidden and the European Union at present concentrates on the monetary aspects of

poverty. Altogether it is very problematic that in the European Union up to now clear reports on the poverty situation in the EU and on their political assessment are missing. Thank you

## **Suggestions for a European Position Paper**

*Jana Hainsworth  
Eurochild AISBL, Brussels*

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A warm welcome to you all and my thanks goes to the Commission of German Associations for Family Affairs for inviting Eurochild to this expert conference. I was asked to make a few suggestions for a European position paper. Perhaps I will not be able to meet all your expectations. Nevertheless will I try to give you an insight into the work of Eurochild and to describe the ideas we follow in order to tackle the very important topic of child poverty in Europe. With this expert conference you have hit the mark of our work.

First of all I would like to explain briefly what Eurochild is about. Then I will deal with child poverty in the European Union, without, however, going too much into detail, as we have already been given lots of information on the topic. Afterwards I will talk about the policies of the EU and give you an outline about the key topics for combating child poverty from our perspective.

Eurochild is a member organisation based in Brussels. At present we have 72 full members and associated members, including individuals from 27 European countries. All these organisations are operating in order to assist children and young people in their endeavour to assert their right and to achieve well-being. Our members are very different, they work on a local, on a national but also on a European level. Amongst our members there are also national federations, e.g. from Great Britain, as well as transnational networks. In Germany we have a member organisation, the AGJ (Child Welfare Alliance, with office in Berlin) which is also a parent organisation. But our members include also smaller organisations on a local and regional level. On the European level we are quite unique. We are not only focussed on NGOs or welfare organisations, we are open to everyone, to local agencies just as to professional associations. When Eurochild was founded in 2004 the open character of this organisational structure was developed intentionally in order to support and advance the rights of children by establishing a link between the different organisations. We are committed to make children's rights more visible on a European level and therefore we cooperate with the EU institutions. Our work is aimed at advancing the exchange on "best practice" as well as at increasing the competences between members. We are focussed on key topics and on bringing our members into contact with one another. This happens mainly through transnational theme-related work groups. Eurochild aims at developing practice-related background papers designed to advance political decision-finding.

What do we know about child poverty in Europe? I don't want to go too much into detail. You have already heard quite a lot about income poverty earlier on. We know that in the

European Union there are 19 million children living below the poverty line. There are, however, great differences in regard to the poverty rates in the European countries, varying from 9 – 10 % in the northern countries up to 27 to 29 % in Lithuania and Poland. We have already talked about lone parent households and large family households. But what about those households effected by unemployment? They are one of the greatest poverty risks for children. There are many more risk groups, but that is not the topic I want to talk about today. The indicators for income poverty are important, it is true, but much more important is the question: What do we want to accomplish for Europe in the future? There must be more than just providing sufficiently trained human capital in order to be able to develop the full economic potential in Europe. We also have to look at the circumstances in which these children grow up. Are they loved? Do they have the feeling of getting support within the families? Are they able to take advantage of the familial and social opportunities and to take an active part in it? Do families and children get the necessary support by the state? This considerably larger concept is the concept of Eurochild. Of course it is also about the chances these children have on the future job market but we are focussed particularly on the present well-being of children. That is to say that we deal with children as they are now and not as they will be as future adults.

Let me talk briefly about the policy of the European Union. In the course over the past 6 – 10 years and within the framework of “open method of coordination” the awareness and the knowledge about child poverty and social protection in Europe has considerably increased, in my opinion. Though it is a soft instrument it has resulted in the creation of national action plans which are so important in the combat strategy against child poverty. There is the Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion worked out by the European Council and the EU-Commission and there are action programmes for combating poverty and social exclusion. This development was seconded by a multitude of studies involving cooperation and controversies of various expert networks. Our network participated as well, and I think it is very important to follow an approach where all the relevant entities cooperate. We have been in a partnership agreement with the European Commission since the beginning of this year under the framework of PROGRESS – the Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity. This is a very progressive approach in the context of network creation. This process certainly is not perfect but it has gained a broad official and political recognition. This is evident, for example, in the context of the declaration of the European Council stating that child poverty should be pushed more in the foreground, that all children must have equal chances regardless of their social origin. In 2007 a study group was created where experts for child poverty and child well-being were brought together and who then approached the relevant public institutions in the European member countries with questionnaires on child poverty. In 2006 Eurochild generated a report analysing the strategies regarding the fight

against poverty in each member state and highlighting the potentials existent in each country. So there are already recommendations and Dominic Richardson has already pointed out earlier on that a strategy report on the well-being of children in Europe was published this year. This is a very important European document which is suited to support and advance policy reforms on the level of the member states. By these processes on a European level it can be guaranteed that the member states take this topic seriously. And we have actually made some progress: there is evidence for a much more multidimensional approach, we are more ambitious in regard to our targets, monitoring has much improved. And with regard to statistics, child poverty in Europe has remained more or less stable.

Nevertheless it is unacceptable for us that the well-being of children is only considered as important because they are meant to grow up into profitable members of the future European job market. It is certainly important that they receive good education and training. But we feel likewise committed to see to it that the children tap their full potential, that they are granted individual development and that they are allowed to fully enjoy their childhood.

Another key topic for us is the circumstance that up to now there is no acceptance for children as lobbyists for their own interests. There are no consultations with children and young people. And there are practically no plans to include children in this process. Within the Social OMC there is an annual meeting of people experiencing poverty organised by the EU-presidency in the first half of each year and I think this is a very good approach. Nevertheless, the idea of involving children and young people themselves was not realised. Eurochild has participated in this process, we are a partner in the OMC and we work on an adequate refinement of this method. In July 2006 an EU strategy on the rights of children was brought into being which dealt with the observance of the fundamental rights of children and young people in the context of EU policy. This strategy commits the European Union to provide data on the social exclusion of children. There are also plans to publish a consultation document. On December 9 there will be an EU-forum on the rights of children.

The EU has promised to involve children and to develop a good strategy. If we look into the future then we must strengthen our work within the OMC and pursue our combat against poverty and social exclusion until 2010. The European Union must concentrate on fighting poverty and on making European poverty more visible. When I spoke with people about poverty they always thought that poverty wasn't a problem within the EU; that it occurred only beyond the borders of the EU. Therefore we have to heighten public awareness for the poverty situation within the EU.

Now I'll come to the central messages of my lecture. We are in the process of preparing a position paper with four key areas: a child centred approach, political leadership and visibility, the coordination of all policy areas and the direct inclusion of children and young people. This is important because it changes our understanding of child poverty and about the way how it

is being processed and implemented in politics. In the context of political leadership and visibility it is very important that there is a commitment for clearly defined goals on a national level but also on an EU level. These must be backed by clear procedures and they must be continuously controlled to ensure real progress. Despite all the knowledge we have gained poverty statistics haven't changed over the years. We need a broad political debate in order to draw attention to the problem. We must hold the member states accountable. They must assume responsibility as there is no obligation to implement the recommendations on a European level. Although they agree to the resolutions there is no impact on national policy. That means we have to force them to stick by the goals and to control closely what is really being done. For that we also need better indicators.

Moreover we would like to have a Commissioner for children's rights on an EU level. At the moment there is a Commissioner for Justice and Freedom but it would be advisable to deal on a European level specifically with the protection of children. Therefore we really need someone to stand up for children on an EU level. This must happen, definitely! If we reach this political visibility we'll probably see that it will entail a broader coordination of policies and political areas as a whole with regard to the well-being of children and it will lead to a screening in order to find out which influence EU policies have on children and young people. About the inclusion of children: There is a lot that has already been done and very successfully so. However, we must make sure that mechanisms be developed which will enable children to participate even more in the decision-making processes concerning themselves. Some of the goals are already included in the above-mentioned communication paper on children's rights in the EU.

As to our organisation Eurochild: We and our members are presently analysing national strategy reports on social inclusion and developing our own position. We have about 17 member organisations who are involved in this analysis, in Germany it is the AGJ. Moreover we are talking with concerned children thus implementing the child-centred approach. These talks will lead to recommendations which we will present in February 2009 at the European Parliament. This will be done by one of our representatives who specialises particularly in poverty and social exclusion on a European level. In November 2009 we will organise a conference where we want to have another close look at the indicators and also at the goals of the combat against poverty in order to analyse which impact they really have on the situation of children and young people. Naturally one of the focal points of our work will be the "2010 - European Year for combating poverty and social exclusion" with the goal of giving child poverty a face and of exposing the poverty situation in Europe.

I want to conclude now. Of course I know that there is so much more information to give and to be talked about here. But if you have any questions I will be at your disposal during the afternoon. Thank you!

## Impulses and Debates from the Workshops

### Workshop I: Education

*Moderation:* Peggj Liebisch  
Verband Alleinerziehender Mütter und Väter (VAMV) e.V., AGF, Berlin  
(Single Parents Association)

*Participants:* Geert Jørgensen (Børnesagens Fællesråd), Copenhagen  
Jana Hainsworth (Eurochild), Brussels  
Irena Topinska (CASE), Warsaw  
Jochen Schäfer (AGF), Berlin

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*Statement:* Marion MacLeod  
Children in Scotland, Edinburgh

Our workshop focussed on the following issues: What does poverty mean with regard to education? What are the resulting problems? What are the differences between the member states in this context? How do you evaluate your own measures and the measures of others? Are there any common aspects from which to deduce European demands? Do demands on a European level make sense?

At first Marion MacLeod introduced the working structures and the major fields of work of her organisation and gave a substantiated insight into the poverty situation of children and young people in Scotland. *Children in Scotland* is an umbrella organisation embracing about 400 different facilities, including voluntary agencies, local authorities, schools, universities and individuals. *Children of Scotland* is destined to improve the living conditions of children and young people as well as to see to it that their interests are taken more seriously into account on a political level. Its work is mainly focussed on the rights and the inclusion of children as well as on the request for a good universal preschool education. For this purpose the organisation carried out its own studies and organised advanced trainings and conferences. Moreover *Children of Scotland* tries to influence national policy accordingly. In this context they also act as a national consultant.

In a Europe-wide comparison of child poverty Scotland is in a very bad position. Over the past years the situation has yet increasingly deteriorated. In 1969 Scotland was, according to Marion MacLeod's specifications, the sixth worst country in Europe with regard to child poverty; today Scotland is already the fourth worst country. Currently there are about 250,000 children living in poverty in Scotland; this is the equivalent of 25 % of all children. Material poverty definitely has its effects on the development in other areas of life. Children from poor families generally have fewer opportunities in life. Negative consequences often include bad graduations or no school-leaving qualification at all, a high criminality rate, unemployment, health problems, reduced life expectancy and increased drug consumption. In Scotland

material poverty is strongly correlated with other risk factors. This includes particularly life as single parents, teenage pregnancies, difficult housing conditions and malnutrition. As there are two governments one in Scotland and one in London and as Scotland does not have total power of decision because the approval of London is necessary for some amendments it is a long and difficult process to implement measures for combating poverty and for reducing its effects. For example, although the Scottish government is responsible for the areas of health and education, the area of social security is the responsibility of the London government. Current measures of the London government are predominantly destined to increase employment. They include, for example, the introduction of a minimum wage, the modification of the fiscal system as well as the launching of a national child care initiative. The Scottish government is currently developing its own strategy for combating child poverty. It is destined to improve the access to the employment market but is also particularly aimed at improving the educational opportunities of disadvantaged children, at eliminating the inequalities in the state of health, at guaranteeing an early intervention on behalf of disadvantaged children and to facilitate free access to school meals. The educational sector is considered as an essential aspect in combating poverty. Up until now various measures have already been introduced, like for example, the *Sure Start* programme or the right of all 3-4 year old children to free preschool education. There are currently various plans to change the educational system. The government has made it its goal to reduce child poverty by half until 2010 and to eliminate it entirely until 2020. A common European action plan would strengthen and support this project.

Following this introduction the workshop participants described the situation in their respective countries. Irena Topińska reported that in Poland preschool education was very expensive and not compulsory and that therefore children from poor families just didn't attend preschool education. At the same time there are not enough facilities so that, in principle, not all the children could go to preschool. Currently the Polish government is planning to lower the school age, however, there is strong opposition against this attempt as the opinion prevails that children are still too small at that age. Particularly in rural areas children often don't regularly attend school and this is also true for children with migration background. The Polish government tried, however, to start programmes for school integration. Basically there is a sort of educational discrimination against poor children. Irena Topińska, however, also pointed out that not only the education of children must be improved but also the education of adults.

The situation in Denmark by contrast is completely different from that in Scotland, according to Geert Jørgensen. There nearly all the children attend kindergarten, 85 % of the schools are public and even for private schools the state pays a large part of the fees. However,

there are the same risk factors for an insufficient education. Altogether only 85 % of the pupils manage to get high school qualifications. There are, in Denmark, programmes for the improvement of preschool attendance as well as for the augmentation of the number of pupils with good school leaving qualifications and for the improvement of parent support. In Denmark, too, there is a correlation between the income level and the number of books in the household on one side and the educational level of the child. In combating child poverty, the focus of the government is also on education. There is talk, for example, of reducing class sizes, however, it would be much more important to introduce, for example, breakfast in school.

Peggi Liebisch reported on the three tier school system in Germany which, even by its structure, excludes children attending the lower, "bad" school types. Moreover, education is not really free as, for example, textbooks and other teaching material must be bought. Preschool attendance, as well, is expensive. Basically, in Germany there are different educational structures in the individual federal states as they are, first and foremost, responsible for area of education. Up until now, governments don't see the correlation that by investing into education you are investing into the future.

According to Jana Hainsworth, Eurochild's key aspects of activity in the field of educational policy are on the promotion in early childhood. In this age group you not only have to provide care, but already education, as well. According to European objectives 33 % of the children in the EU are scheduled to attend preschool education and 90 % of the three to six year olds shall be entitled to a place in kindergarten. However, this objective should always emphasise the wellbeing of the child not solely the improved access of women to the labour market. Therefore the quality of preschool education must be enhanced.

In the subsequent discussion education was declared the key element to escape poverty. The problem being, however, that real transformations are not immediately visible whereas governments need to see immediate progress.

Education was qualified as a very complex, multidimensional issue with correlations to health, care as well as nutrition. This always involves the inclusion, the support respectively the continuing training of parents. The prevention of risk factors, as well, was seen as very important; for example there should be prevention measures regarding child and juvenile delinquency. It was noted that teacher-training was very often inadequate and that, for example, teachers often cannot deal with the specific problems of pupils with migration background. But this is important in view of their acceptance and support. There was, however, consensus with respect to the assumption that relevant measures and the redistribution of means, as a rule, are not immediately enforceable and that, therefore, it is difficult to transform these theoretical findings into governmental measures. Regarding the improvement of education the EU could, however, also bring its influence to bear, for

example, through financial support. Principally the population must be informed much better about the poverty situation in Europe. It was critically noted that even in Europe there are children who are not included in the European educational system, as, for example, the children of refugees. Furthermore there are children who attend school only very sporadically as they have to work at home or to attend to their siblings. Therefore we need a system which could really include all the children.

It is also important to devise the measures from the perspective of children, and not only to “fit them in” so that they can function later on as fully operative manpower for the employment market. There must be different forms of education, adapted to different children. When improving educational opportunities the gender aspect must also be taken into consideration. Often women graduate from school with lower qualifications, therefore they earn less and are thus at a higher risk of falling below the poverty threshold. The debate dealt also with the questions, whether it is generally more difficult for poor children in the free national educational system and whether the age when beginning with the education is more important than other aspects, as for example, parental support.

The workshop participants agreed that with respect to boosting education the priority is on the **intervention in early childhood**. There must be **extensive prevention**, and not makeshift “repair work” for already existing problems. Moreover it is important to **improve the formation and continuing education of teachers** while **supporting the parents** at the same time. One of the possibilities mentioned was the Danish model of family centres, where parental inclusion and interexchange are encouraged. The **gender aspect in education** must also be taken into consideration.

Moreover children’s rights should be strictly observed. Particularly the **status of the child within the educational system must be improved**; the child must be the keystone of the system which should be adjusted to the needs of children and **all children must be included in the educational system**.

Results

## **Workshop II: Participation**

*Moderation: Cornelia Spohn  
Verband binationaler Familien und Partnerschaften (iaf) e.V., AGF, Frankfurt/Main  
(Binational Families and Partnerships Association)*

*Participants: Luk de Smet (Gezinsbond), Brussels  
Kajsa Dahlström (Globeträdet), Stockholm  
Mari Cruz de la Torre (Isadora Duncan), León  
Maria Garcia Alvarez (Isadora Duncan), León  
Cristina Prieto Puente (Isadora Duncan), León  
Edith Schwab (VAMV, AGF), Berlin*

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*Statement: Jeanne Dietrich  
UNIOPSS, Paris*

At the beginning of her statement Jeanne Dietrich pointed out that the participation of people affected by poverty in the process of political decision making is particularly important for a plausible and effectual social policy, with the goal of listening to the experience and problems of poor people and of giving them the opportunity to work actively for the improvement of their situation and to develop in a dialogue effective solutions together with politics and social interest groups. A successful participation in this sense is possible if you grant those affected by poverty the opportunity to have their say on all decision levels - local, national and international.

In France there are already several instances for the participation of people in poverty situations. The regional association URIOPSS Nord-Pas-de-Calais, for example, who deals particularly with the topic of unemployment regularly organises events where low-income earners and unemployed persons talk about their experience and are given the possibility to ask questions of local politicians and social scientists.

On a national level there are also regular meetings of the National Council for the Combat of Poverty who convenes once a month. Besides official delegates and local NGOs invitations are also extended to persons directly affected by poverty. Even the French government has carried out a consultation with the participation of socially disadvantaged persons with the objective of redefining special contractual conditions for permanently unemployed persons. In the context of this hearing the affected persons had the same status as the delegates from unions, chambers of commerce or political institutions.

The yearly European meeting of persons experiencing poverty is just one example as to how the participation on a local and national level can also be transformed onto a European level. In the course of regional meetings with the inclusion of persons affected by poverty a delegate for the respective region is elected. Assisted by social workers these delegates work out their position papers which are then presented to the representatives of the European Commission.

The direct participation of persons affected by poverty is advantageous to all parties concerned. The affected persons get the opportunity to speak on their own behalf; the assisting social workers can directly see the success of their work and the politicians get a “first-hand” feedback. However, a successful participation also needs meticulous preparation: Clearly defined objectives, the involvement of affected persons over a long period of time and providing them with the necessary “tools” for their arguments are important conditions for a successful inclusion.

After this contribution by Ms. Dietrich the participants expressed great approval for the fact that particularly in the daily combat against poverty the needs of the affected persons are to be considered. The objective should always be to connect persons of different social origins and to make poverty as a problem transparent. But very quickly the question emerged how to interest people in engaging in this kind of participation. For persons affected by poverty the recognition of their personal experience might already be considered to be a sort of appreciation and motivation. But how to give persons affected by poverty a political voice? Kajsa Dahlström declared that this was best achieved through activities such as theatre, music or something similar. She told of her experience with the “touring theatre” of her NGO “Globetree” who campaigns on a worldwide level for a better future prospect of children by involving them directly. Ultimately these performances where children talk directly about their lives and their thoughts were also organised for ministries and better-off circles. She insisted that it really makes a difference whether children talk themselves or whether adults do it on their behalf because children are given much more attention.

It was doubtful whether it is really possible to motivate politicians to an increased participation of persons affected by poverty, particularly because the political world is more and more evading its social responsibility and because social risks are increasingly privatised. Possibly it would be advisable to create additional incentives for politicians, for example, by inviting well-known guests, respectively high-quality sponsors. But it is of utmost importance that politicians get the opportunity to listen to the affected persons. Luk de Smet from Belgium mentioned one positive example how to involve the political level. In Belgium each region has a Public Service Centre which receives money from the state in order to encourage the inclusion of people in these regions.

Finally the panellists agreed that politics should provide a **regular definite budget for the support of affected persons** to enable them to participate in the policy-finding process. This should **be implemented primarily through artistic events** in order to open the hearts and to motivate and to **follow the principles of empowerment and active listening**.

Results

### **Workshop III: Employment and Income**

*Moderation: Dr. Insa Schöningh  
Evangelische Aktionsgemeinschaft für Familienfragen (eaf), AGF, Berlin  
(Protestant Action Group for Family Issues)*

*Participants: Siegfried Stresing (DFV, AGF), Berlin  
Sabine Mundolf (eaf, AGF), Berlin  
Markus Faßhauer (FDK, AGF), Berlin  
Ivonne Famula (AGF), Berlin*

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*Statement: Prof. Dr. Elżbieta Tarkowska  
Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN), Warsaw*

At the beginning Dr. Tarkowska briefly described the poverty situation in Poland. She pointed out that poverty has diminished since Poland's entry into the EU, due particularly to the ensuing economic boom in Poland. However, there are an increasing number of people working in low wage sectors who do not dispose of a sufficient income despite their work. In Poland poverty is primarily a rural phenomenon affecting particularly two groups: small and marginal self-sufficient farmers with small incomes who live in concealed poverty as well as the population living in areas of former state-owned agricultural production cooperatives as these are very often situated in isolated areas with no adequate infrastructure. For these children, for example, access to education is often almost impossible as the facilities were either closed or are difficult to be reached. And jobs are very rare. In these areas poverty affects nearly all the families, that is, why Dr. Tarkowska called them "enclaves of poverty". In this context there is a high probability of permanent poverty. Poverty is closely linked to unemployment. To escape poverty or work in low wage sectors labour migration is a widely spread phenomenon in Poland. As a consequence, up until now, about 100,000 children were left behind which, in turn, frequently leads to their social exclusion. Although now material security may be guaranteed by their employment abroad, this does not replace urgently needed emotional parental care. Large families are particularly affected by poverty. Generally, poverty of children and young people in Poland is a permanent problem, as poverty gets passed down through the generations and as steady employment and income conditions for young people in Poland are hardly within reach. Real childhood in poor families is considerably shorter as these children have to assume responsibility at an early age. There are also forms of child labour, like the sale of mushrooms and berries, to be found when families are in particularly difficult economic conditions. Generally the gap between the poor and the rich in Poland is increasing. The tendency points to the following direction: Although poverty and unemployment are decreasing, poverty is, nevertheless, rapidly spreading among children and young people. This development, however, is not adequately recognised in Polish policies nor by the public, and therefore poverty is hardly noticed in

Poland, it is very often “invisible”. In Poland there are primarily traditional role models where families are concerned. This means the man is the provider, earning money, whereas women deal with the organisation of the “remaining life”. Therefore responsibility for the fight against poverty is often burdened on women and mothers. Among the traditional tasks of women in Poland are: to guarantee the daily provisioning of the family, to deal with the upbringing and education of their children as well as to attend dealings with authorities. At the same time women constitute a separate poverty risk group as they earn, on average, 20 % less than men with their old-age pensions being even 30 % lower. This has to be considered, particularly when dealing with child poverty among lone mothers, because their number is increasing. Whereas poor people, not so long ago, were considered in Poland as unfortunate “victims” the public image of the poor has changed into that of “lazybones”.

In the ensuing discussion there was, first of all, carried out a comparison between German and Polish poverty conditions. In both countries there is basically a distinct correlation between unemployment and poverty whereas, however, in spite of decreasing unemployment the number of children affected by poverty is stagnant or even increasing. Like Poland, Germany registers increasing employment in the low-wage labour market with insecure working conditions as well as difficult labour market conditions for junior jobseekers and women who, in addition, are often paid less. In Poland, the largely non-existent infrastructure regarding child care constitutes another difficulty for women to begin employment. Child poverty in Germany presents itself primarily as an urban problem. One of the most important risk groups are children and young people with a migration background who are – in conjunction with a low educational level – affected above average by poverty. Such an “ethnic dimension” of poverty does not exist in Poland according to Ms. Tarkowska. In spite of the predominantly urban poverty problem it was pointed out that there are also great difficulties in the regions of former agricultural production cooperatives in eastern Germany which have similar structures as rural state-owned enterprises. Unlike the situation in Poland child poverty and the growing gap between poor and rich are a much discussed issue in Germany. Poverty also increasingly affects the middle classes limiting their inclusion in public life.

Following these general descriptions of the situation the participants tried to find possible solutions for securing income and employment and for the prevention of poverty. In order to eliminate the problem of the “working poor” existing in both states the participants considered the **introduction of long-term employment contracts and minimum wages**. But it seemed evident to everyone that they would possibly have to be subsidized by complementary state grants, as, for example, in Poland the current minimum wage is not

Results

sufficient to secure one's livelihood. In order to facilitate **reconciliation of family and work** this aspect should increasingly be brought to the awareness of employers. How this was to be done remained unanswered.

Because the time for the workshop was limited, the following questions couldn't be dealt with:

- How much care, inclusion and education must be guaranteed to allow for the children to grow up in suitable conditions?
- How can we tackle the phenomenon of youth unemployment effectively?
- How can regional working situations and conditions be improved?

## **Workshop IV: Social Security and Transfer Benefits**

*Moderation: Carolin Bösing  
Familienbund der Katholiken (FdK), AGF, Berlin*

*Participants: Dr. Albin Nees (DFV, AGF), Berlin  
Françoise Knaack-Hitti (VAMV, AGF), Berlin  
Dominic Richardson (OECD), Paris  
Eric Marlier (CEPS/INSTEAD Institut), Differdange, Luxembourg  
Iris Emmelmann (DFV, AGF), Berlin*

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*Statement: Dr. Bea Cantillon  
Universität Antwerp, Belgium*

There are multiple sources of data available for child poverty statistics, and though the child poverty issue in general is at the forefront of policies, we are unfortunately seeing very little progress in hindering its existence. Part of the problem with implementation is the rapidity with which conditions can change such as economic, demographic, etc. With the possibility of such a relatively quick shift in conditions, many lawmakers are hesitant to enact policies that may soon be rendered ineffective.

For this discussion, financial poverty measurements were used to determine poverty levels of children around the world with a focus on social security and transfer benefits. The general idea Bea Cantillon put forth to the group was that more needs to be invested in social security, but with an added addendum: also have it available to families in need of social protection. Countries implementing this type of strategy have lower reports of child poverty, while countries such as Italy that use the pension system have very little to offer children in the way of benefits, so their reports of child poverty are much higher. There is the option of a benefit strategy, but this only works if it can be implemented in equal market distribution since countries which have high employment rates but low wages will find this strategy much too expensive. The problem is, when national action plans are made for social inclusion, people tend to forget how costly they are and, therefore, render the plans un-enactable by default.

With current fears of a global recession swirling around, fears were expressed during the discussion as to what impact that would have on action plans for child poverty. Bea Cantillon suggested implementing Sweden's social security and transfer benefits system since their model was used as a general standard in several reports, but Dominic Richardson from the OECD brought up the point that, in order to achieve the same results as Sweden, spending would have to be allotted accordingly, otherwise the whole system falls apart. He also felt that to be more like Sweden, we would effectively have to *be* Sweden with the same

demographic. There are multiple countries in the EU, and comparing them all to one country seemed to be a stretch for many of the group's participants.

Unfortunately, not many ideas were expressed by the end of the discussion as to how to remedy the current problem. First and foremost was the obvious **suggestion to recommend that governments begin again with social inclusion**. Disappointment was expressed around the table as many were hoping that the member countries would do more with the information they had at their disposal, as well as the belief that all the **information needed to be looked at individually** and see what seemed to be working for each country and if a **combination was possible**.

Results

## **Panel discussion:**

### **A common Anti-Poverty-Policy for Europe – Utopia or real Chance?**

*Moderator: Eric Marlier,  
CEPS/INSTEAD Institute, Luxembourg*

*Participants: Dr. Bea Cantillon, University of Antwerp  
Jeanne Dietrich, UNIOPSS, Paris  
Marion MacLeod, Children in Scotland, Edinburgh  
Dr. Albin Nees, Deutscher Familienverband, AGF, Berlin  
Prof. Dr. Elzbieta Tarkowska, PAN, Warsaw*

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#### *Eric Marlier*

Originally there were 90 minutes scheduled for this discussion, however, Bea Cantillon and I must leave at five otherwise we would miss our plane. Let's try, nevertheless, to make note of all the ideas and opinions at this panel. First and foremost I would like to present the speakers: On the far right you find Mr. Albin Nees, Doctor of Laws, politician and State Secretary at the ministry of social affairs of the Federal State of Saxony, Germany. He is the president of the German Family Association and co-author of a textbook on social services.

On the other side there is Bea Cantillon, she comes from Belgium, just like me. Bea is a professor at the Centre for Social Policy at the University of Antwerp. She teaches in the areas such as social policy and welfare states and has published a number of papers on the issues of poverty, social security and welfare states. Moreover she works as a consultant for the OECD and the European Commission.

Let's look to Poland, to Elzbieta Tarkowska. She is a professor for sociology and head of the research group on poverty at the Polish Academy of Science in Warsaw, Poland. Her research is focussed on poverty in history and present in Poland, on life patterns of poor families as well as on child poverty and on the issues of education and poverty as well as women and poverty.

Let's come to France: Jeanne Dietrich is consultant on employment and housing in the department "Combating Social Exclusion" of the organisation UNIOPSS in Paris, France. UNIOPSS stands for: "National Union of institutions and associations in public health and social services". This organisation campaigns for the interests of disadvantaged persons during the future elaboration of social policy striving to represent these persons adequately.

Finally, I come to Great Britain. I said Great Britain, not England. Marion Mac Leod works for the organisation "Children in Scotland", based in Edinburgh, Scotland. Her main activities are focussed on political consulting and information of the members of the Scottish

Parliament as well as other political decision makers, with the objective of influencing governmental policy and law-making to the advantage of children and their families.

I'm awfully sorry that we have less time than originally scheduled. However, what I would like to do is ask three crucial questions first. I've already talked about that with the persons on this panel.

1. What were the key aspects of child poverty and child welfare discussed at your workshop?
2. In the different EU states you know what are the most promising political approaches for combating child poverty, in your opinion, and why?
3. Do you think that these approaches could be transferred to the EU or at least to a number of other EU states? If not, why not? If so: what are the institutions and methods that should be involved? And do we possibly need other tools?

For the third question I would like to inform you briefly on some of the existing tools. One element of the so-called "tool kit" which already exists on the European level are the NGOs already mentioned by Jana Hainsworth early this afternoon. They are very active; they have carried out thorough analyses in their fields; and in 2006 they have compiled national reports on social exclusion and on the observance of children's rights. Therefore the NGOs are a tool available within the EU.

Another tool are the small meetings where a few countries, about six to nine countries, debate a certain policy; only one definite issue, as for example homelessness or a specific question like: How can you boost day care centres? This is then being discussed by the countries and the participating experts on these meetings with the objective of learning from one another and of possibly returning home with new ideas and suggestions. In Hungary, for example, after one of these meetings, a political reform was implemented which had been inspired by the discussions during this meeting. So this is another tool.

There are, moreover, different networks of independent experts in different fields, amongst others also for social exclusion. I, for example, am at the head of a network dealing particularly with social exclusion. In these networks there is at least one expert from each member state plus Croatia, Macedonia and Turkey. Each expert compiles an independent report based on the guidelines which we as a group have worked out and based on its expertise. Based on these individual reports we finally compile an analytic aggregate report which is then sent to the Commission. The report we are currently working on is an independent evaluation of the national reports on social exclusion handed in by each country last September.

Another example for the tools available on a European level are the so-called “task forces”. These are work groups composed of national representatives and independent experts. This is also how the EU-report on child poverty was generated. It is the aim of these work groups to analyse as profoundly as possible, to expose together certain problems and to advance very precise recommendation which then will be adopted by all 27 member states. The report on child poverty, for example, was adopted by all EU member states. Thus it is an official document of sorts, available to you should you want to do lobby work.

Now that I have mentioned different tools and possibilities, I want to ask Bea to start first of all with these three questions.

*Bea Cantillon:*

The aspects we debated on in my workshop dealt primarily with “good practices” and with potential strategies how to combat child poverty in Europe. I gather there were two main conclusions. The first is: To implement successful strategies against child poverty the efforts must be profound and significant. The efforts must be focussed on social security, on social protection and, needless to say, on employment strategies.

The second conclusion – it is somewhat disappointing as you ask about “best practices” – is: What does work and what doesn’t work depends on the context, on the architecture of the respective national social system. It depends on the history, the employment market, the country’s policy etc. Therefore it is difficult to define “best practices” or to identify recommendable political measures. What is successful in one country must not necessarily be so in another.

Moreover I want to point out another circumstance we have debated on during the workshop and follow up on something that was said this afternoon. It is a fact that we have a lot of data and analyses but nevertheless we don’t really know very much about what has happened in the past 10, 20 or 30 years. All our European governments have devoted themselves to combat child poverty on a European level. Almost every year, for decades, the working population has increased, there was an increase in social spending – more or less, not like in the fifties and sixties – but still there was a considerable increase in social spending, in public spending. Nevertheless we have not seen any progress in regard to diminishing child poverty. In many countries there is instead a tendency that child poverty even increases. This means that we have ignored many options in the past decades, that we have lost sight of many important approaches.

Considering the economic context the future will offer less advantageous conditions for strategies to combat child poverty. Possibly it will be very difficult in the coming years; the demographic situation will be very unfavourable and the opportunities for governments to continue to raise social benefits for children will be much more difficult than in the past. That

was the question we debated on in our work group. What could be done in the future to be more successful, but in a much more difficult context than in the past? The question remained unanswered.

*Eric Marlier:*

Very briefly with regard to a possible policy transfer in the EU: do you believe we should think of new tools or is the existing “tool-kit” adequate on a European level?

*Dr. Bea Cantillon:*

Regarding the instruments we have at our disposal, I think this „tool-kit” is okay. However, what we don’t have is a real political commitment to advance. We are talking about anti-poverty strategies but there is no real serious commitment to do something about it.

*Eric Marlier:*

Thank you. Jeanne?

*Jeanne Dietrich:*

Our workshop dealt with the issue of „inclusion“. We have tried to collect some “good practices” which would be applicable in all countries. First we considered the instances for inclusion in France and debated which of them could be applicable in other countries. As inclusion we understood the involvement of persons living in poverty in the political decision-finding processes. Amongst other strategies this means in France that non-governmental organisations provide opportunities for persons affected by poverty to swap ideas and also to increase their knowledge. So much for the first point. Secondly, these non-governmental organisations promote this exchange on all levels, local, national and throughout the EU. These examples of experience in France could be transferred to other countries.

Another example came from Belgium. In some provinces in Belgium there is a certain budget for small cities. This way the local authorities have funds at their disposal which they can hand on to certain persons so that they can be included socially and culturally, so that they can be active. And it works.

These measures contain, however, a certain danger. Persons affected by poverty might feel humiliated. They have an outward appearance of poverty and are first and foremost seen as poor persons and not as “normal” individuals who would like to belong to society, who would like to be active, socially and culturally. This stigmatisation would be dangerous. But generally, I would say, this is a good system which could well be transferred to other countries.

We have debated in our workshop on these examples from France and Belgium and we had to concede that such a system would never work in Spain, for example, because in

Spain solidarity is based on family cohesion. And there it would be an unacceptable humiliation to admit to official authorities: we are poor. In Spain it is traditional that the family must assume responsibility to identify and to combat poverty within the family.

*Eric Marlier:*

Just a brief request. If you want to learn from the examples from France and from Belgium, that means if you want to transpose them to other countries, there is a question: How can you spread the system? Is it the responsibility of the states to spread it, or will it be on the EU or should it emanate directly from the NGOs; Belgium has a good idea with those funds; France has a good system with the meetings of poverty affected persons on different levels. Okay, but how can we spread these measures?

*Jeanne Dietrich:*

To be honest; I don't know who should carry out this task. Possibly some peer groups could propagate these ideas; perhaps it could be done by international NGO-cooperation where it would be debated and propagated.

*Eric Marlier:*

Thank you. Ms. Tarkowska?

*Prof. Dr. Elzbieta Tarkowska:*

Our group was a German-Polish workgroup. Our main issue was: repercussions of the job market on child poverty. There are different ways to look at the job market, for example, problems like unemployment play a big role or missing jobs. In Poland, for instance, labour migration of parents has various effects on child poverty; it definitely leads, amongst others, to social exclusion and social discrimination of the left-behind children. You speak in Poland of "European orphan children"; about 100,000 children have been abandoned by their parents in this way. This is an example of the repercussions of job market conditions on poverty and on exclusion.

In Poland the repercussions of unemployment on child poverty are clearly visible, on clearly defined levels. First of all: unemployment in families leads to a reduced income and thus, naturally, to an increase in the poverty risk also for children. On a second level the repercussions of unemployment entail the unemployment of young people in the age bracket of 16 to 19 or to 20 years. Unemployment in this age bracket is very high. The problem of youth unemployment is that this situation complicates the start into adult life considerably. In Poland there is, however, no ethic dimension to child poverty, or at least this aspect is not worth mentioning.

We have discussed these problems in our workshop. The difficult access to the job market in some regions in Poland is quite definitely a problem you can find in Germany as well. The conditions for women on the job market are possibly also an issue in Germany as they have an impact on child poverty, after all. But there is another problem that is getting more and more important in Germany as well as in Poland, and that is: poverty in spite of work, the minimum wage problem, the often very low wages, flexible part-time jobs and temporary work contracts. The integration of young people into the job market is another important issue, in Poland as well as in Germany.

How can you tackle these problems, how can you reduce them? The Polish example shows the following: over 15 – 20 years we had high unemployment and there were many projects how to tackle it. There were many initiatives, many organisations who made it their job to provide work for young people to open the job market to them. The most diverse target groups were assisted to get access to the job market. But only the improvement of the economic situation and the entry of Poland into the European Union have really brought about a change. Notwithstanding all the initiatives, the real change came only about with the economic upsurge and Poland's EU-membership. Only that reduced the unemployment level. Of course the endeavours of the organisations generated, nevertheless, very positive impulses.

Another example from Poland draws our attention to yet another problem: We need a public social debate on poverty, so that it doesn't remain a taboo issue, so that the integration and inclusion of children will be possible, so that the children themselves can have their say when decisions are being made. But this public debate doesn't really exist up to now, it has to be launched. Child poverty is an "invisible" social problem, at least in Poland. Thank you.

*Eric Marlier:*

Marion?

*Marion MacLeod:*

I think, I'll start with the end of our debate because that is really the fundamental question, namely the of the children's rights: a child has the right and is entitled not to grow up in poverty.

On a European level we should make our position clear. Which are the children's rights and how can they be enforced? Only then can we tackle the relevant issues. What methods and strategies do we need for that? That's where the debate grew very lively and we have focussed more or less on educational aspects. We agreed that early intervention in a pre-school age is necessary because that is the most effective strategy for the

development of the child. This is the easiest way to avoid social exclusion. However, childcare is indispensable but by no means sufficient; what we really need is preschool education.

In Scotland preschool education starts for children at the age of three, in other countries perhaps a little later. Educational support for children should, however, start very early and parents should be involved, so that they can help their children accordingly. The involvement of parents is an immensely important point because they have, after all, the potential to put their children on the right track. For that they must get the adequate appreciation from society.

We also dealt with the gender issue. It is a fact that women are still very often discriminated against on the job market and that despite the fact that girls on the occasion of educational comparisons in schools tend to perform better in all types of schools from very early childhood up until university education. This morning we have heard from Dominic Richardson that so far we have all not been very successful in implementing the theory that employment would solve the problem of child poverty. But exactly this is not really correct; it is only part of the solution. It is not particularly effective with regard to a reduction of child poverty or the prevention of social exclusion of children. But it is all about encouragement, about motivating people to change from social benefit to paid employment.

We came to the conclusion that the EU could determine the direction and exert a certain influence. Moreover, the EU should determine specific educational objectives and do their best for children to regain access to certain areas of life through education. One should set clear goals and by way of a financial support from the EU-level certain appropriate measures could be set in motion in each member state. For example with the objective of terminating poverty by the year 2020. It's up to the EU to motivate correspondingly.

Information is also very important. There are so many statistics and data pools but what have these figures got to do with one another? What about material poverty, what about housing conditions? In this context it is important that we work out precise definitions, throughout Europe: where are the real problems we have to fight? Of course you can give people just more money against material poverty but, above all, we have to hand on the information that we have gathered. We have to join forces and we have to come together on a regular basis to exchange relevant information and to provide purposeful elucidation.

*Eric Marlier:*

Dr. Nees, do you want to add something? Actually I'd rather you start with question number four. Or would you really like to add something to what was said?

*Dr. Albin Nees:*

I'd like to say something to the problem of transferring exemplary measures to other countries.

*Eric Marlier:*

Okay. Very briefly, in two minutes, please.

*Dr. Albin Nees:*

I have to admit, I have problems with this definition. What is poverty? Generally we assume by now that someone is poor if he has less than 60 per cent of the median income in a specific country. Now, imagine if the government would pick out everyone belonging to this group and, in a fantastic show of strength, heave all these persons up to the 60 per cent threshold so that, by definition, they wouldn't be considered as poor anymore, would there still be poverty in the country, or not?

In Germany, where I come from, the discussion is different; as we have heard several times today, they say that two million children live from social benefit, meaning the "zweite Sozialgesetzbuch" (second social security act), also called Hartz IV. These persons are considered as poor. However, with these payments we do exactly what I have described before. We raise their income to 60 per cent, then, by definition, they shouldn't be poor, because they have the money. However we still characterize them as persons belonging to the group of poor persons.

I just wanted to point out that the German social security provisions seem adequate to come to a solution, because it stipulates: it is the first duty of social benefits to cover the demand; that means to give the relevant persons what they need. Secondly we have to give them the means to help themselves. And that is what we have been hearing time and again. It just isn't enough to hand out money, we have to make sure that the poor can help themselves. Thirdly: they have to be enabled to participate in social life, that they are not isolated and do not feel excluded etc. Fourthly, that they can lead a life in dignity. Human dignity claims from the outset that in a rich country a person must not be poor, that he or she must be enabled to partake in all things common to the people in this country.

And I think, this is a much better definition than the 60 per cent theory. However, after or even before accepting this definition we should agree that those who benefit from these payments must not be characterised as poor. The benefits should cover the needs, enable to partake in social life and ensure a humane life in dignity. Thank you.

*Eric Marlier:*

Thank you for keeping the time limit. Let's not start debating on terminology and calculations. I think it would be very interesting, but we just don't have the time.

Now, could we just come to the next question as I would like to get your opinion on that one as well? As to the fourth question, I'd like just a minute in order to stimulate the discussion. It is about the common challenges in the context of our combat against child poverty. What are these common challenges? Must the EU play a key role in this fight against child poverty? And who should give the political stimulus, the member states or the European Parliament? One minute for common challenges.

*Bea Cantillon:*

There are many common challenges, however, as I have only one minute I'll just talk about one, and that is education. I think education is the most important common challenge. There are not yet necessarily the same educational opportunities in all the member states that are doing well. There are countries who are doing much better than others. We, in Belgium, Flanders for example, like to look to Finland. The PISA study shows that Finland is doing fairly well, better than all the other countries. However, it is not clear why Finland is doing so much better. The only reason is possibly that Finland has specific geographic conditions and that therefore the educational system in countries like Finland works differently from educational systems such as in Berlin, for example. I think that in this field there are enormous challenges. We must find out how to organise educational systems providing equal opportunities to all children.

*Jeanne Dietrich:*

We concentrated on „good practice“. That was the Belgian course of action. A state hands out money to finance inclusion. That could be a role the member states must assume: To give money in order to guarantee social inclusion to all. But I also think that education is the most important issue.

*Prof. Dr. Elżbieta Tarkowska:*

Equal opportunities for children. We in Poland haven't solved the problem. I think that is very important. The second issue: children's rights. I think this is closely connected with the fact whether children are taken seriously. What is the role the EU should play in this context? I think that in certain states there are children's rights, in theory, but you have to look behind the scenes to see how it is handled in practice.

*Eric Marlier:*

I don't know. Should we start a debate, or not? I don't know. Marion, what do you think?

*Marion MacLeod:*

Children's rights and education are fundamental issues and they are intrinsically interconnected. I think it is important how we spend money in this context and also how we impart education and knowledge effectively. We can take a look at other EU countries and how they cope with the problem. Let's take Denmark, for example. There they have preschool education free of charge. We have ten years of compulsory school attendance, free of charge. This doesn't necessarily solve the problem of child poverty.

We must tackle the problem before they are 3 years old, i.e. before they enter this system at the age of three. They must be able to participate actively and must be able to benefit from the education they are offered. That means specific objectives must be introduced in order to really assist families not just high aims with no consequence. This has to do with quality and with experience.

*Dr. Albin Nees:*

I second what we just heard about the support of families because that is the best solution in order to obtain that children are enabled to help themselves. The most important of children's rights is, by the way, the right to academic and social education. Children should be enabled to develop into self-dependant and solidary personalities. For this objective we have to invest a lot of energy and a lot of money; and I think it is the right way.

*Eric Marlier:*

I have a fifth question. But we have only till five o'clock and perhaps somebody from the audience would like to say something. What is your answer to these common challenges? Would anybody like to say something?

Perhaps somebody would like to know something about the fifth question. It is about the financial crisis and its impact on children. Should we come to this question or do you want to say something? Or would you like to add something to complete the discussion at your workshop? Nobody? Then what has been said up until now is a perfect reflection of what you think? That's excellent.

I think then we can come to the fifth and last question. This issue deals, as I just said, with the financial crisis. I don't expect you to find a solution. I just want to ask some questions: How do you assess the impact of the present developments on children and families? How can we measure the impact of the financial crisis on children? What are the

short-term indicators available to determine the changes or should we create such indicators? In your opinion, what are the specific measures the member states should take in order to counter these impacts?

*Dr. Bea Cantillon:*

I really don't know how the financial crisis will impact the situation of children. I can only make some reflections based on what we know. Firstly, one should concentrate on poor families. Secondly, poor families with children are not so much affected by the first round of the financial crisis. What could happen, however, is that families and children, as a consequence of the financial crisis, will be affected by increasing unemployment. This is something that could happen and possibly will happen.

To come to your second question regarding the indicators: I don't believe we need new indicators. Unemployment is the most important indicator we have for something like that. And we should concentrate on it and scrutinise this indicator in the coming months and years. That's all I have to say on this issue. Everything else is speculation.

*Eric Marlier:*

I've asked the question concerning short-term indicators because it was already mentioned earlier on. We have rather good indicators for measuring the income but the problem is they refer to periods of time two or three years in the past. What we need now is a prompt monitoring of the situation. And I know that the commission and the member states have begun to tackle the problem. It is extremely important that we have registered data, available on a local, national or international level and these data have to be more up-to-date and thoroughly monitored to be able to determine the impact of the crisis. All this is easier with data which are only one or two months old.

*Jeanne Dietrich:*

We all agree that we don't really have an idea what impact the financial crisis will have on the situation of children. But I can think of two measures or measured data apt to determine this impact. NGOs have been providing in the past two months more and more food. These are confirmed data. Secondly, there are more and more people who have to leave their house or accommodation. These also are easily available data.

*Prof. Dr. Elzbieta Tarkowska:*

I also see the impact of the financial crisis to the effect that it will increase unemployment, and thus have an indirect impact on the situation of child poverty. In Poland,

for instance, we collect month data on unemployment. We have extremely precise data on unemployment and that is a good indicator for this situation.

*Marion MacLeod:*

I think welfare policy and social benefit policy should deal with employment and we should also deal with the future. In many countries they follow the theory that people can be drawn out of poverty by giving them access to the job market. However, there are many potential influences, not only the current financial crisis. You also have to consider secondary effects. Some companies will transfer their head office to other parts of the world, but that is another problem. But we must also consider other approaches.

You just said that people have to leave their accommodation. We must deal with the short-term consequences, for example with criminality resulting from poverty. Only this morning I've read a study on criminality in Great Britain. They spend 1.4 Million Pound a year on the combat against criminality. This so has, of course, an effect on child poverty. Of course, we have to deal also with the economical cost of the crisis. This leads to further argumentation and to be more efficient in other fields although there are only limited means.

*Dr. Albin Nees:*

In the context of the financial crisis there are three thoughts coming to my mind. The first thought: The crisis was triggered by the subprime mortgage crisis in the United States of America. European banks also invested heavily in order to make huge profits. The family associations have been saying for a long time that the best investment is the investment in families, in social and academic education and vocational training of children. A brilliant future is guaranteed and there is no risk of losing everything.

The second thought: And this is very alarming, indeed. In Germany the public authorities have amassed a national debt of 1,500 Billion Euros. Now, the banking crisis adds another 100 billion Euros possibly even 500 billion. There has never been anything like it. And the children and grandchildren will have to pay for that, they will even have to pay it back.

And my third thought is more positive again. If it is possible to make 500 billion Euros available to cope with the crisis - again, I am speaking about Germany - then why shouldn't it be possible to make part of this money available to cope with the demographic crisis we are facing and which might lead us into demographic catastrophe? That was my third thought which is, I think, positive. The politicians should be aware of this.

*Eric Marlier:*

Good, thank you. Now it's time for our audience.

*Peggi Liebisch:*

*(Single Parent Association, VAMV, AGF, Berlin)*

The crisis that really affected families in Germany was set off one year ago with a considerable increase of the VAT leading to a reduction of the consuming power of families. This means, in reality, that we don't need new indicators for measuring but, as a rule, each crisis and each new tax increase will curtail the purchasing power or the sphere of action of families and thus automatically also of children. I just wanted to point out briefly that, at the moment, we are waging a campaign, even on a European level, against too high VAT rates.

If you look at the reaction of governments to the financial crisis; what is being done? There are tax reductions for people buying cars. Thus the automobile industry is being subsidised, again with billions, expensive consumer goods are being exempted from tax. The VAT on goods for children, on the other hand, is raised. This shows that the priorities are completely wrong. In our campaign we fight against the tendency to increase taxes for families time and again whereas, on the other side, the economy is being supported by assisting those who already have the money to partake in this economy by boosting their purchasing power.

We really want to draw your attention to our VAT-campaign once again so that the VAT imposed on children's goods and clothes is being reduced to the minimum rate currently effective for essential consumable articles and foodstuffs. In some countries this is already the case. I just wanted to draw your attention to that, once again.

*Eric Marlier:*

Thank you. Irena?

*Irena Topinska:*

*(Centre for Economic and Social Research, CASE, Warsaw)*

I don't want to answer this question right now, because I am not very sure. But what about the indicators? What about the short-term monitoring system? I think one criterion is unemployment. Then you can also consider welfare recipients or those who are applying for supplementary benefit. That also shows you the repercussions of the financial crisis. Because that was the idea: to identify the criteria indicating that the financial crisis has an impact. Another item that can be measured, at least for some children, is the number of children reducing certain activities. For example, that they stop going to holiday camps or that they reduce certain leisure activities which they can't afford anymore. These data are easily collectable. That would be my suggestion.

*Eric Marlier:*

Any further comments or questions? Dominic?

*Dominic Richardson:*

*(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, Paris)*

I'd like to comment on what Mrs. Topinska just said. At the outset of the financial crisis we noticed primarily that certain things and activities were reduced, for example, there was less travelling, also for children. These are definitely short-term indicators. Apart from that you could use the same models as for predicting different family types. Specific demographic surveys show already how the poverty rate changes if employment conditions change for the better. Why shouldn't we at least be able to predict what happens to the poverty rate if now there is only one employed family member or if nobody in the family at all is in gainful employment. In a way, the opposite direction.

But back to another issue: I want to support explicitly our colleague from Scotland in her campaign for preschool education. This really is a common challenge for us all. However, I don't like to speak of objectives. Objectives are so often manipulated. And governments nearly always prefer measures which serve to achieve these objectives in the fastest possible way. You have to be attentive there. The real challenge for the EU are indicators which can be used to find out how to improve life for those who are really at the bottom of the social ladder. If we do one thing for one child it might not be so good for another. However, the focus is clearly on preschool education.

*Geert Jørgensen:*

*(Børnesagens Fællesråd - Joint Council for Child Issues, Copenhagen)*

I don't want to name any more indicators but when we talk about a possibility for improvement of the situation of children then I agree that education is the most important factor. But it is essential that even if we find a way, for example, to include parents it is, nevertheless, necessary to take a number of totally different steps. While including parents how can we make sure at the same time that preschool education and education are improved? Essentially we have a very good educational system; however, we are doing very poorly in PISA. Thus we cannot simply say: Okay pour more money in it. We have to keep monitoring all these different measures and to coordinate them otherwise it will just be another money problem or a matter of concentrating money on one definite issue.

If children are exposed to a risk you really have to consider a great variety of measures so that in the end there will be a flexible tool-kit that can do justice to each child.

*Eric Marlier:*

Are there any more comments or do you have any questions?

*Kajsa Dahlström*

*(Globeträdet – Globetree, Stockholm):*

I think one of the repercussions of the financial crisis on the situation of children in Sweden is, for example, that many people who own houses find that raising a credit or repaying a loan has become increasingly difficult. Of course, people are really upset when they become poor, when they are menaced, when they can't raise any more credits. Then they suddenly feel like poor people. Of course, they could learn from those who were already in this situation before and perhaps there could be a sort of fraternisation between this group of poor people and the class of paupers. Perhaps this might also open a chance. Because each crisis also has positive effects. It could lead to a dialogue with the real poor, they could learn from one another.

*Eric Marlier:*

This is a very positive conclusion of our debate. I'd like to sincerely thank you for your comments and questions and for the suggestions from our distinguished panel experts. I am really looking forward to meeting you all again on the next occasion.

## **Closing Statement: Our Children – the Future of Europe!**

*Kajsa Dahlström,  
Globetree, Stockholm*

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I'd rather speak without a microphone but that wouldn't do because of the translation. I've taken the microphone down here with me so that you can all understand me. I just don't like standing up there at the lectern. I'm an actress and if you put an actress behind a lectern she gets nervous. I want you to see my whole body even if it is not so beautiful; I just want you to see all of me. That's the whole reason.

I'm very happy to be invited here to deliver the closing reflections. My notes are seemingly endless. If I'd say it all we would still be here tomorrow. I'm very honoured to be invited to this important conference and I have really enjoyed listening to all interesting presentations and debates; I have learned so much this day. When I come home I'll have so much information to pass on. It's almost as if I'd been here for several days.

I'd like to tell you very briefly about my background. Even when I was very young I knew that I wanted to be an actress. I decided on my life when I was 16. At the back of my mind there were always two questions I wanted to ask myself before dying. The first question: - Did you do what you were supposed to do? - Yes. Second question: - Did you do the best you could? - Yes? Okay, then I can die. That was, more or less, my intention in life. When I had finished I wanted to see the world and I started walking to North and South America, to West Africa and Asia. The budget was strict: One dollar a day to live on. When you walk you come close to people and their reality of life and many of the people we met lived on even less than a dollar a day. Thanks to our meeting with people on the road we learnt how to keep our budget. We also learnt about generosity. However little they had they shared with us. They plucked coconuts, they went fishing and we got opportunities to reflect on traditions and habits in our own country Sweden. We have a much higher standard but have not the same tradition of sharing what we have.

When we came back to Sweden we made theatre performances from our experiences in other countries for children and adults. We also interacted with children and adults who have come to Sweden from other countries. Our theatre group would stay for a week in the municipality and perform for children and adults in the schools and outside the schools. The performances were based on our meeting children all over the world and we invited children with different cultural background to participate. We had a lot of fun together and the Swedish children would often say: - Hey you, from Turkey and Bolivia do you do the same things we do in this performance where you come from? In many schools there were tensions between the Swedish children and the children who had arrived from other countries. Lots of stories went around like: - They don't smell good and they look strange.

But suddenly the focus was on positive interaction and learning from one another and so much happened in those communities. The Swedish International Development Authority conducted a survey on the influence our theatre had in these communities. The influence was enormous, but when the results were presented to the Government the response was without emotions and enthusiasm. In theatre that is important but in governmental institutions it's not. So, we had to learn a different language – the language of bureaucracy. We submitted papers and presented statistics; however, you don't change people by showing documents, facts and figures. Why do people pay a lot of money to see Bruce Springsteen, Madonna and other artists? Because artists touch people's hearts and the shared experience remain long after. We have to link facts and figures with emotions so that at least some of the concerns we want to impart will remain in the minds and hearts of people. We came back to visit schools a few months after the performance and the children had time to reflect about the experiences we had together. When we came the children asked many questions. One question from a little 8 year old girl really touched us deeply and the question in a way changed my whole life.

The girl asked: - Do you really believe we have a future?

Only after a very long pause I said: - I don't think we would have made the play if we didn't believe in the future. After the lesson she ran past me saying: - I thought you adults had stopped believing in the future.

As you certainly realised I like being on stage. But after meeting the little girl I felt it was time to step down from the stage and instead invite the children to take the stage and for us to become the audience. When I listened to what the children wanted to share with us I realized how much had changed since I was a small girl. When I was a child the future was just something I took for granted, it was just there. I never thought about it. But what happens to the children if they don't have the feeling that the future is there? If you don't believe in the future why should you study for maths, why should you learn anything at all?

That's our highest priority today, to really listen to what a child has to say. The Globe Theatre is now the Globetree and a meeting place for artists, scientists, politicians and others to listen and learn from children and the children are invited to share their concerns in any way they choose. We have seen that society talk a lot about children but only rarely do we invite them as equal partners. In this room there are no children – apart from those still residing deeply within ourselves. We don't have children here but we talk about them. Based on my experience I know for certain if you had children here and bade them to go up on stage and tell what it is like to live in poverty then this conference would have taken another turn completely. If we had listened to their experiences then a lot would be different, the way we speak, the way we interact. - Do you remember what that man or that woman has said? - Isn't there a way that we can solve problems together because? In this room there is so

much cumulative knowledge. We have a lot of statistics and we have many people in this room who are working directly with children. We have so many different perspectives to look at this diamond. Children would inspire us to ask: - What can we do? How can we solve the problem? And we would get the energy and desire to act. The children would give us the certainty that we have to do something. The questions also would be much livelier. The mind and the hearts in cooperation – the inner and outer environment united.

In Nairobi we were invited to the United Nations. Globetree was asked to present an Opening Ceremony for an International Minister's Meeting. We worked together with children with different background and life experiences; children from the slums, street kids, AIDS victims but also middle class children. Each group of these children was invited to convey a message to the United Nations. Globetree assisted to compose all parts to a common performance. There were tears everywhere. I cried as well. I am really used to see children's performances and I've seen a lot. But even I cried. I approached Mr. Töpfer, the patron of the UN in Nairobi - Look, everyone cries. He answered: - Yes, me too. - You don't see that very often at the United Nations. - No, that is very uncommon. I asked: - How can we benefit from this moment? We are all moved by these children, how can we hold on to this so that it doesn't get lost? - Come up with a suggestion, Mr. Toepfer said. A few weeks later we suggested a meeting place under a big tree where children and decision makers can dialogue. The inauguration took place in September 2001 and it's a beautiful acacia tree near the water. Since then many meetings have taken place between children and decision makers of the world under the tree. This idea of meeting under a tree has spread to other nations and many mayors have a Children's Meeting Place close to their City Hall where they meet and dialogue with children. In Soweto in Johannesburg, South Africa there is a Children's Tree. Ms Margot Wallström, now the Vice President of the European Commission, came for a dialogue with the children. She was very moved to sit on the ground together with the children. She said: - This meeting with you has changed my life. You have touched my heart. I do understand the life you live here in Soweto. After the meeting Ms Wallström said: - I want a Tree – a Children's Meeting Place at the European Commission! In March this year we set up this place at Berlaymont and Ms Wallström said at the inauguration ceremony: - Please, use this place now. And that's what I want all of us to do. Use this place! At the Children's Meeting Place European decision-makers can meet with children face to face and learn from their experiences. Every one of us can support the children so they dare express themselves and share their concerns. Let us combine the children's experiences with our actions! This is something we can do together. None of us, no matter how skilled we are, is able to solve the problem of poverty alone. We must cooperate. That is the reasoning behind the international Future Meetings which Globetree started 1986. Now the children say: - What we are doing here is like a world championship in cooperation. Yes it is and that is

really a wonderful reflection. Many children have in mind that the idea of a World Championship in Cooperation will be as big and as famous as the Olympic Games 2020! And why not! If we want it to happen it will happen! The World Championship in Cooperation starts with the concerns and the thoughts of the children. What they think is important. They cooperate and find solutions together. We invite politicians to join the children in their building activities. It's nice to see politicians take off their coats and ties and take a hammer and find practical solutions to an idea and a dream of a child. This cooperation between children and politicians is a huge success. In Sweden we had this meeting in 2006, and in 2008 the World Championship in Cooperation was held in Kampala, Uganda. In 2010 it will be in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia and in 2012 we want to organise this meeting in Brussels and unite Europe with the rest of the world. In 2014 it will be in Ecuador. In 2020, we want the event to be at the United Nations.

So, it's important to find mechanisms for cooperation between children and adults with different skills and professions. When we want to tackle big problems like poverty we need to really work together.

I also miss the media here. The media is extremely important; they must be part of this group. Whatever we say here and whatever we do and achieve here, it must reach and be taken up by the media, otherwise everything will stay here in this room.

So for the next conference I hope you will invite the children as well as the media.

I also hope that all of us will succeed to create a forum where we can support one another - where we can help each other to transform all the good ideas and all our knowledge into "best practices". A little while ago I read in the papers of Dominic Richardson what Gordon Brown, the British Prime Minister has said: - Children are 20 % of the population but they are 100 % of our future. I like that. That is another reason for us to invite them in the future and not only to talk about them.

Once a boy living in the streets told me: - You talk too much. You ask so many questions. Why don't you just come with me and look for yourself? He took me by the hand and for three or four hours we just strolled across his shanty town neighbourhood. And there I experienced things I never forget.

We're dealing with totally different problems here. I'll give you a comparison with Kenya, with the boys with whom I work there. I started working with five boys; two of them were shot dead. The police just solved the problem by killing them. One is currently in prison and another I have tried to find a school in Uganda. When a child is gunned down in Sweden the papers are full of that tragedy for months. In Kenya no one bothers.

On a national level we are quite advanced, comparatively. And we have reached a standard that gives me hope and inspiration that something can be done.

Let's reach out and hold hands to seize all the possibilities we have – together!

## **Conclusion and Prospects of the 2009 Symposium**

*Peggi Liebisch*

*Managing Director Single Parent Association (VAMV) e.V., AGF, Berlin*

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Ladies and gentlemen, as parents and as delegates representing associations, institutes and lobby organisations our point of view is generally very clear: "For children only the best".

That's what we are campaigning and fighting for in various contexts and organisations, nationally and internationally. In view of the high quota of poor children in the member states we have challenged today the claim that our governments or the EU really want only the best for our children.

The introductory reports as well as the exchange of experience in the workshops have shown anew quite plainly that by no means it can be taken for granted that children get the best possible opportunities for development in Europe. Everywhere in the European member states children from poor families are discriminated against, with regard to access to education and childcare, organisation of leisure and living environments, social contacts and inclusion and last but not least very often in their health. The extent of the discrimination and the areas where it is brought to bear may vary from country to country; however, the problem of child poverty and its effects are nevertheless everywhere evident.

It is the aim of this conference to compile from your discussions and recommendations a position paper which can be submitted with clear demands to political decision makers. In this context we are confronted with the difficult task of considering the different situations in the member states and to formulate nevertheless sustainable demands effective throughout Europe. During this conference you have laid the foundations for this position paper with your contributions and your experience. We really want to thank you for all your endeavours. We will work very attentively on this paper and I am sure that we will consult one or the other expert of this conference in doing so.

Notwithstanding the huge quantity of information and the lively discussions in the course of this conference an indispensable protagonist in the fight against European child poverty has played only a very insignificant role during the debate so far – the EU itself.

On a European level the issue of child poverty is quite definitely on the political agenda as we have heard several times today. In the European Commission, as well, they have recognised the importance of 19 million children at risk of poverty. The EU makes an effort to demonstrate its ability to act. Thus in the context of the Social Protection Committee – a communal institution of national governments and the EU Commission - has installed a work shop on child poverty and earmarked the issue for a European Year which is supposed to highlight each time specific political aspects. According to the EU the year 2010 will be the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The kick-off for the campaign

was some weeks ago, on October 16, 2008 on the occasion of a meeting of the European ministers of social affairs in Marseille.

We appreciate this interest in the issue of child poverty. But what can be the real contribution of the European level? What are the political principals guiding the combat of the EU against poverty and social exclusion? How assess the goals and methods of the fight against poverty until now? And what are the organs where to find experts qualified for child and poverty related political demands?

This question and many more will be sorted out during our follow-up conference next year and we will scrutinize very thoroughly the past and future role of the EU in the combat against poverty – particularly child poverty. On the one hand it will be about a critical reflection of EU policy concerning the combat against poverty and social exclusion but also about the strengthening of the cooperation between NGOs working on a European level in the areas of social and family policies as well as about developing together effective solutions.

The controversy about the measures for combating child poverty will be carried on from the perspective of the United Nations “Convention on the Rights of the Child” adopted by all European member states. Today we have dealt thoroughly with the structural disadvantages normally involved with income poverty. And these exclusion mechanisms particularly are very often in blatant contradiction to the rights of children guaranteed by the UN-Charter.

Thus our conference next year – in contrast to the current conference - will be focussed much more on the EU as acting agent including scientific experts, NGOs but also the political level. The EU member states will also have their say. Thus in the context of a “European Café” several initiatives and projects will introduce themselves which cooperate directly with children, young people and their families and give an account of their concepts and strategies. Based i.a. on these “best-practice”-models there will be a critical evaluation of political measures within the EU as well as their effectiveness.

Until then we will have completed the position paper on child poverty in Europe so that we will be able to deliver it directly into the hands of the participating decision makers of the EU-organs.

Your contributions in the context of today’s conference will form the basis for it. You as participants at this preparatory expert conference are cordially invited to our 2009 symposium. We would be pleased to welcome you again and to continue working together with you for our common goal.

## European Expert Conference

14 November 2008, Berlin

### „Children Are Our Future – For a Europe Without Poverty!“

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#### List of Speakers

(in order of their presentations)

##### **Ms. Elisabeth Bußmann**

Graduate Educationalist,

Chairwoman of the Commission of German Associations for Family Affairs (AGF).

Head of the education centre „Gottfried Könzgen“ and of the affiliated Institute for Family Education of the catholic employee-society KAB in Haltern am See, near Dortmund, Germany.

Her key activities are, among others, the family education and her political engagement for family issues.

Ms. Bußmann is president of the Catholic Family Society (FDK) and of the Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe (FAFCE) as well as a member in the German Central Committee of the Catholics (ZdK).

*Elisabeth Bußmann*

*Heimvolkshochschule „Gottfried Könzgen“*

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##### **Dr. Dominic John Richardson**

PhD in Social Policy,

Policy Analyst for Child well-being at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris, France.

He worked on different reports about child well-being and child poverty for the OECD as well as the UNICEF. Right now, he is coordinator of the OECD-led wikichild project and joint coordinator of the UNICEF IRC-OECD data sharing initiative.

*Dominic John Richardson*

*Social Policy Division, OECD*

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##### **Dr. Irena Topińska**

PhD in Economics,

Senior Researcher on social policy issues at the Centre for Social and Economic Research CASE in Warsaw, Poland.

Her key activities are the research and consultations in the area of poverty measurement, designing poverty reduction strategies as well as drafting and monitoring social benefit schemes in CEE, CIS and EU countries.

*Dr. Irena Topińska*

*Centre for Social and Economic Research CASE*

*Sienkiewicza 12*

**Ms. Jana Hainsworth**

BSc in Natural Sciences,

Secretary General at Eurochild AISBL in Brussels, Belgium.

She runs the Eurochild network of 70 members from 27 countries in Europe, promoting the rights and the welfare of children and young people. One of Ms. Hainsworth's key activities is to monitor and to give inputs into the EU's Open Method of Coordination (OMC) on social inclusion and social protection from a child rights' perspective. Besides, she was in charge of this year's annual conference on a child rights approach to child well-being in Budapest with 180 participants.

*Jana Hainsworth  
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**Mr. Eric Marlier**

Scientific Advisor at the CEPS/INSTEAD Research Institute in Differdange, Luxembourg.

He is regularly called upon as an international policy advisor, particularly on the EU cooperation in social protection and social inclusion. His main research activities include, among others, comparative socio-economic analysis especially on income, poverty and social exclusion, the EU Social Protection and Social Inclusion Process as well as the implementation of international social surveys. Mr. Marlier chaired the EU *Task Force on Child poverty and Child well-being*, whose report was endorsed in January 2008 by the European Commission and all 27 EU countries.

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**Ms. Marion MacLeod**

M.A. in Modern History,

Senior Policy and Parliamentary Officer for Children in Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Her key activities lie on the provision of policy advice and information to members of the Scottish Parliament and other decision and policy makers as well as influencing government policy and legislation in favour of children and their families.

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**Ms. Jeanne Dietrich**

Consultant on Employment and Housing in the unit of Fight against Social Exclusion at UNIOPSS in Paris, France.

UNIOPSS (National Union of Facilities and Associations in the Health and Social Sector) acts for the interests of disadvantaged people in the development of social policies as well as to organise a representation for them.

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**Prof. Dr. Elżbieta Tarkowska**

M.A. in Sociology,  
Professor of Sociology and head of the research group on poverty at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, Poland.

Her studies concentrate on past and present in Poland, concerning the life styles of poor families, child poverty, education and poverty, feminization of poverty as well as qualitative methodology in studying poverty. For her work on poverty and social exclusion, Ms. Tarkowska was awarded a grant from the State Committee for Scientific Research.

Besides, she works as editor in chief of the polish magazine "Culture and Society".

*Elżbieta Tarkowska  
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**Dr. Bea Cantillon**

PhD in Political and Social Sciences,  
Professor at the Centre for Social Policy at the University of Antwerp, Belgium.  
She teaches on social policy and the welfare state and has published widely and internationally on a wide range of issues relating to poverty, social security and the welfare state. Ms. Cantillon has acted as a consultant to, among other organisations, the OECD and the European Commission. She serves on the Research Committee of the International Social Security Association.

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**Dr. Albin Nees**

Dr in Law,  
Retired Politician and Secretary of State in the Ministry for Social Affairs of Saxony in Dresden, Germany.

He is the President of the German Family Association (DFV) and Co-author of a textbook on social assistance.

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Deutscher Familienverband (DFV) e.V.  
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**Ms. Kajsa Dahlström**

Theatre and dramatic art school,

President of Globetree, an organisation focussing on children, using creativity as key tool to mobilize and support them in their efforts to improve life and the living environment.

Ms. Dahlström organises several programmes for children worldwide, illustrating positive ways to promote children's rights and participation. She was the founder of Globetree in 1982.

*Kajsa Dahlström  
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**Ms. Peggi Liebisch**

Management Sciences

Secretary General of the Single Parents Association (VAMV)

Her key activities are taxes, women and association policy

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