

FINAL CONFERENCE of the WELLCHI NETWORK

**“How can the well-being of children in a knowledge-based society be ameliorated?
Convergence and divergence patterns in a European perspective”**

Barcelona, 8th – 10th February 2007

**“Children’s Citizenship and
Children’s Rights between Familialisation
and Individualisation”**

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**Why strengthen children’s rights and
children’s citizenship?**

- traditional understanding of children and childhood
- childhood is a developmental stage in life
- children are...
 - human becomings
 - part of the private world of the family
 - economically dependent on their fathers’ income
 - cared for by their mothers
 - incapable of staking claims and are not bearers of rights

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2

Why strengthen children's rights and children's citizenship?

The "new" understanding of children and childhood

At the structural level:

- children are considered a social category or permanent structure in society
- children constitute a population group of their own
- children are a minority group singled out from the rest of the society

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3

Why strengthen children's rights and children's citizenship?

The "new" understanding of children and childhood

At the individual level:

- emphasising children's competencies and contributions rather than their immaturity and incompetence
- children as social actors rather than victims

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4

Why strengthen children's rights and children's citizenship?

- *children are exposed to new social risks*
 - child poverty
 - living in an unstable family environment
 - living in a lone parent family
- *children are at the top of the political agenda in the context of social investment thinking*
 - children represent the maximum potential of productivity
 - children are the citizen workers of the future
 - investing in children means securing the future for the whole society

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5

Why strengthen children's rights and children's citizenship?

Relevance for social policy

- raising the issue of intergenerational distribution of resources and intergenerational justice
- strengthening social rights and entitlements of children
- making welfare institutions and procedures more child-oriented (recognising the rights and views of children, participation in decision making processes, etc.)
- treating children separately from their parents

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6

Children's citizenship and children's rights in the social security system

- tension between familialisation and individualisation of children's social rights in all modern welfare states
- securing the material welfare of children is still a primary responsibility of the parents
- the state intervenes in a subsidiary way
- there is great variety between familialistic and individualistic countries
- guaranteeing a basic income to children would strengthen their rights and their public visibility as claim makers

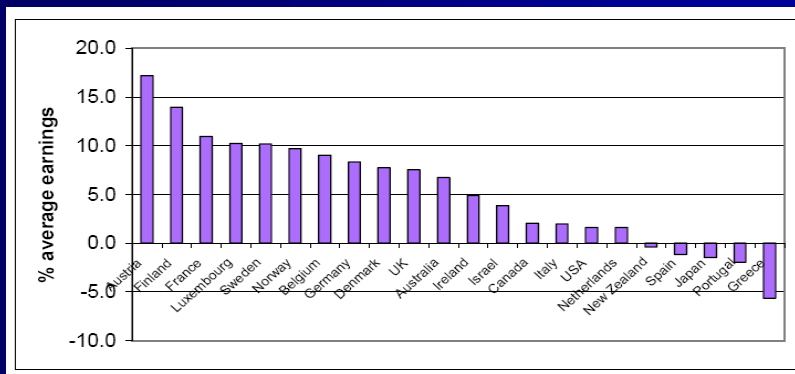
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7

Children's citizenship and children's rights in the social security system

Rankings of the child benefit package as % average earnings



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8

Children's citizenship and children's rights in the social security system

- countries with the most generous overall child benefit package revert the least to the element of targeting and deliver most of their value as a non-income related child benefit
- large variations in the value of child benefit packages depending on family type, number of children, amount of income and other characteristics which are not connected with the rights and needs of children
- countries with the most generous child benefit packages show the lowest child poverty levels

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9

Children's citizenship and children's rights in the social security system

Patterns of familialisation and individualisation through benefits

<i>Inclusive familialisation</i>	<i>Rationing familialisation</i>	<i>Inclusive individualisation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • splitting and family quotient in taxation • family supplements in social security benefits • additional income-tested child benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • solely income-tested child benefits • care allowances income-tested on the <u>basis</u> of carer's household income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • basic income for children • universal child benefits • minimum income for lone mothers of young children

Source: adopted from Saraceno 2004: 80

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10

Children's citizenship and children's rights in the social security system

Supporting lone mothers

- lone parent families are at a high risk of poverty
- social political strategies aim at integrating lone mothers into the labour market
- childcare as an obstacle
- regulations to guarantee maintenance payments by the absent parent are strengthening the 'cash-obligations' of the biological father

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11

Children's citizenship and children's rights in the social security system

Key criteria for a child-centred Child Support System

- Poverty – the degree to which the Child Support System is able to reduce the poverty of children in low income lone parent families
- Parental conflict – the degree to which the Child Support System minimises the conflict between the separated parents with regard to the concrete regulations of maintenance payments
- Equity – the degree to which the Child Support System is able to reduce inequalities and inequities between children

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12

Children's rights and the childcare system

- increased demand for extra-familial childcare
- driving forces:
 - increasing female employment
 - supporting children 'at risk'
 - preparing children for school as well as for the requirements of a knowledge-based economy
 - reconciling family and work
 - fighting child poverty

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13

Children's rights and the childcare system

Three groups of countries

1. Finland, Sweden, Denmark

- expansion of childcare since the 1960's
- providing a childcare guarantee for the whole spectrum of preschoolers
- heavily subsidised by the state
- after school childcare is guaranteed in Denmark and Finland

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14

Children's rights and the childcare system

2. Iceland, Norway

- no childcare guarantee, no legal right to a place in childcare
- *Iceland:*
 - primary aim has been the educational aspects of institutional childcare
 - the second highest enrollment in childcare
 - high level of female employment
 - labour market issues are becoming more and more important
- *Norway:*
 - no political goal to achieve universal childcare access for all children under 6
 - emphasis on needs, socialisation and the 'natural' development of children and childcare as a safe at stimulating place
 - has also a home childcare allowance

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15

Children's rights and the childcare system

3. The Netherlands, Germany, UK

- all have an early education guarantee for older preschoolers, but no guarantee for children under 2 years of age
- very unbalanced enrollment
- for Germany and UK: the labour market has recently become relevant as a driving force
- *UK:*
 - National Childcare Strategy
 - targeting children at risk
 - ultimate aim: to reduce child poverty

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16

Children's rights and the childcare system

- *Germany:*
 - tradition of childcare: providing a place to play
 - childcare is becoming more and more part of the labour market policy
 - increasing importance of the aspect of early childhood education
 - guaranteed childcare for 4-6 year old children is not free and only for 6 hours a day
- *The Netherlands:*
 - more the reconciliation of work and family life, rather than a contribution to children's development
 - limited guarantee for 4-year-olds to primary education
 - very limited supply and not free
 - favours private solutions

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17

Conclusion

- children are heavily affected by changes of work patterns and family life
- they are exposed to new social risks
- they are the main target group for the social investment state concentrating on children as human beings and citizen workers of the future
- policy measures for children are driven by many conflicting social interests, which are mainly the interests of adults
- strengthening the citizenship rights of children could be a solution to securing that their views are taken seriously and their rights are considered in the process of redistributing resources

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18

**Thank you very much for
your attention!**

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19