



European Network of Masters on Children's Rights

**Conference Children's Rights in
Germany and Europe**
Politics, Science and Practice

CRnews 12

Children's Rights Newsletter
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Dear Network Members and Network Interested,

In this special edition of CR news you will read a report from the international public conference **Children's Rights in Politics, Science and Practice** which took place in Berlin on **Thursday, the 29th of September, 2005**. The conference was a great success. For those of you who were not able to come and participate here is a summary of the conference. As you can see, we have improved the layout for CRnews with the help of a hobby designer. So from now on, in this format. Even though a special edition: As usual, for feedback, criticism and comments as well as any information input, please use the e-mail address: info@enmcr.net. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter any longer, please send a message with the subject "unsubscribe crnews" to the above address.

Warm Regards,

Rebecca Budde, Günter Chodzinski,
Editors



In this special edition of CRnews you will read:

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General News - Internal

International Conference in Berlin:

Children's Rights in Germany and Europe: Politics, Science and Practice

On 29.09.2005 The European Network of Masters on Children's Rights (ENMCR) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft e.V. (www.deutsche-gesellschaft-ev.de) organised an international conference on : Children's Rights in Germany and Europe Politics, Science and Practice – Presentation, Expert Talk and Panel Discussion in the European Information Centre in Berlin with support from Save the Children, Sweden.

ENMCR was launched in September 2004 in Berlin with the main objective to promote children's rights and to establish specialised education on this subject. ENMCR has five European universities in five West European countries as core members. It cooperates with other associated universities from West and East Europe as well as with the Latin American Network of Masters on Children's Rights (www.redmaestriasinfancia.net). The network implements joint activities with the overall aim to promote children's and youth participation in societal processes and to implement and further develop the UN-Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The conference attracted about 50 participants from eight East and West European and one Latin American country (Peru). The variety of attendants contributed to the rich and fruitful discussion in which the different socio-cultural backgrounds, perspectives and approaches to children's rights brought a dynamic into the conference all participants could profit from. Learning in intercultural contexts and widening the view to the international stage of children's rights is a crucial aspect in the debate on the rights of the child. In the conference this aspect was especially highlighted.

I Presentation of the Network

One objective of the conference was to present ENMCR and the Masters Courses on children's rights already running at the core universities to different protagonists: social workers, NGO's, universities and foundations dealing with children's rights and children's participation, in order to make the network more known in the child rights scene in Germany and Europe. The Curriculum Development project (see also: [crnews9_05](#)) was briefly presented and the network used the opportunity to listen to suggestions from the "stakeholders" as to what needs are perceived concerning academic formation in children's rights, in order to consider and integrate them in the development of the joint MA programme over the next two years.

Dr. Jörg Maywald from the German League of the Child and Speaker of the National Coalition for the implementation of the Rights of the Child in Germany suggested that students should think critically on children's rights. Why is there a need for special children's rights? Are children not human beings, but develop to be human beings only later on and therefore special needs are required? Or are children to be seen as humans from the very beginning, which suggests that no special rights are needed. It is also crucial to understand function and limits of children's rights- to what extent does the legal framework really help children? It is of course very important to include the history of children's rights in a study programme and to keep in mind the cultural differences that exist in different parts of the world. Monitoring mechanisms need to be included in academic formation, in order to secure that children's get their rights and don't only have them on paper. Another very important aspect is the possibility of new professionals in the children and youth sector to have the possibility to acquire work experience through internships not only in NGO fighting for the rights of the child but also in practical work with children and youth (e.g. Kindergartens, youth clubs, etc.)

Dr. Claudia Lohrenscheit from the German institute for Human Rights emphasized the need to embed children's rights and the discussion on children's rights in the general human rights debate. The legal framework of the UNCRC is crucial to know by the students, and in order to not limit the view to the UNCRC, the UN convention on Human Rights as well as women's rights and socio-cultural rights have to be understood. It is important for students and future professionals in the field to understand how conventions are passed and by whom? What are the differences between the UN conventions and the European Convention? What mechanisms are utilized? Is the gender perspective included in the curricula- boy children are different from girl children.

A starting point for going about developing MA programmes close to practice could be to take the "concluding observations" on the situation of children of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva, and include the most pressing issues in the MA. The concluding observations for Germany for example lay a strong emphasis on the need to fight against child poverty that will yet increase in the near future. But also the rights to education, access to education, the quality of education and the possibility to adapt the educational system to the need of the learners is an important aspect which needs to be improved. Students need to learn about rights based approaches in projects and programmes.

Juan Enrique Bazán from Save the Sweden, regional office Latin America and Caribbean enforced the general need for specialized education in the field of children's rights in order to guarantee an adult attitude that allows children to actively and effectively participate in all societal processes, be it the family, school or the community.

II Afternoon Expert Talk

After this first, interactive and lively presentation, effective participation possibilities for children and youth in Germany and Europe were discussed in an afternoon expert talk.

Rüdiger Hansen from the Institute for Participation and Education in Kiel, Germany presented the child participation project he led as coordinator: "Kinderstube der Demokratie", (children's room of democracy). It was very interesting to hear about children and how they themselves find solutions to explain different phenomena. Main results of the project were the realisation that children's participation begins on the heads of the adults. I.E. adults have to change their mindset in order to give children the space they need to be able to effectively participate.

Sigrid Meinhold-Henschel from the Bertelsmann Foundation presented first findings of the 3 year project mitWirkung of which the first phase has just ended. In an extensive survey, the foundation asked over 14.000 young people and school teachers as well as community administrations on participation patterns. From this survey the project team extracted several factors that influence participatory behaviour. The project seeks to influence these factors directly in the now beginning second phase of the project in 4 model communities (2 in west and 2 in East Germany, 2 cities and 2 smaller communities) in order to promote stronger participation of young people in public as well as in school, associations and directly in the community. (for more information see: www.mitwirkung.net)

Kay Tisdall (University of Edinburgh) gave a "taster" children's and young people's participation in 'public' decision-making in the UK. Youth councils and fora have mushroomed throughout the UK in the past years. There are national youth parliaments that are consulted on major issues impacting on children and young people. (If they weren't, the government would face a media barrage of criticism). In this way, the participation of children and young people has become almost common place in national policy making in the UK. Kay Tisdall put it this way: "We have won the rhetorical war at a national level about involving children and young people. But as we seek to translate rhetoric into practice, we are facing particular tough questions about how meaningful and effective all these activities are". Especially for those involved in the issue of children's participation, there is yet a lot to do.

Christina Wahlund Nilsson from Save the Children Sweden gave an introduction to the instrument Child Rights Programming which means "using the Principle of Child Rights to Plan, Manage, Implement and Monitor Programmes with the Overall goal of strengthening the rights of the child as defined in International law." (source: SCS) A detailed documentation and a manual on CRP can be ordered from Save the Children or be directly downloaded from their webpage (www.rb.se)

III. Evening Panel Discussion

Dr. Bernd Overwien led the evening panel discussion on "neuralgic" and critical points in implementing the UNCRC. The discussion gave way to some questions to what extent the UNCRC can be universally applied in view of all countries having differing cultural, social and political contexts.

Lucy Borja, founder and director of the NGO Generación- Niños que Sembran Esperanza (Generation-Children that Sow Hope) presented the evacuation of a house project formerly led by ex- street children in Lima, Peru. These children had organized themselves and had managed to acquire a house to live in- the complete disrespect of their rights by the state authorities made even clearer, that the socio-cultural and political context is crucial for discussing the implementation of the UNCRC. Problems and critical points in the implementation are radically different in countries of the North and West compared to the East and South.

Mike Weimann, (KinderRÄchTsZÄnker) who is very prominent for fighting for children's rights in an uncompromising way argued for more democratic structures in schools that in his opinion are partly even unconstitutional. He also pledges for the right to vote from age 0, as in his eyes it does not seem to be just, that all you need to do to have the permission to vote is turn 18.

Prof. Dr. Manfred Liebel from the Technical University in Berlin pointed out formulations in the UNCRC that are compromising that would not be included in conventions for adult rights. E.g. that children's opinion is to be respected but only of those children who are capable of forming their own views, or the best interest of the child- who defines what is best for the child? Participation of children and young people is often enough lead by adults and arranged from above. Therefore he pledges to listen to children more closely as children do voice the longing for participation in decision-making processes in everyday life. It is also important to look at different, often unaccepted forms of participation of young people (e.g. graffiti spraying) as methods used by this part of society to make itself heard.

Dr. Jörg Maywald, Speaker of the National Coalition for the implementation of the UNCRC in Germany disagreed with Manfred Liebel and Mike Weimann on the question whether the UNCRC sets out Children's Rights as Power Rights of parents over their children due to the above mentioned "compromising" formulations in the convention. In his view children and parents cannot be separated, as they belong together. This does however not imply that children are parent's property.

Conclusion

One very important statement was made during the conference: the UN-Convention is a base in the discussion on children's rights but it cannot be forgotten that a child is a subject of rights. Attention has to be paid to the child and his or her needs in concrete social and cultural contexts and these are inevitably different in e.g. Peru than e.g. in Germany.

The conference showed how much the intercultural context and the exchange of experiences are important in the discussion on children's rights. It was also an important step in the direction of public awareness building. The participants and organisers wish to encourage more events and production of innovative knowledge in the children's rights field. Concluding from the very positive participants reactions, another event in the near future can be expected: „It was really a great conference and I am very happy that I had a chance to take part in this event and I am looking forward to an eventual future cooperation between the German Institute for Human Rights and ENMCR.“ – Dr. Claudia Lohrenscheit, German Institute for Human Rights.

ENMCR Meeting

On Friday, September 30th, an "internal" ENMCR meeting was held with:

- Elisabeta Stanciulescu and Maria Roth-Szamoskozi, Social Work Department, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca, Romania
- Doina Balahur, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Cuza University in Iasi, Romania,
- Emöke Banyai, Social Work and Social Policy Department of Eötvös Lorand University (ELTE), Budapest, Hungary
- Barbara Smolinska-Theiss, Academy of Special Education, Warsaw, Poland
- Katarzyna Gawlicz, Institute of Sociology, Wroclaw University, Poland
- Marta Martinez Muñoz, University Complutense Madrid, Spain
- Manfred Liebel, Christa Preissing and Bernd Overwien: International Academy for Innovative Pedagogy, Psychology and Economy at the Free University Berlin, Germany
- Kay Tisdall, University of Edinburgh, Great Britain
- Coby de Graaf, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- Christina Wahlund Nilsson, Save the Children Sweden, Stockholm. Sweden
- Juan Enrique Bazan, Save the Children Sweden, Regional Office Latin America and Caribbean, Lima, Peru
- Lucy Borja, NGO Generación, Lima, Peru
- Katarzyna Loj, European University Viadrina, Frankfurt(Oder), Germany
- Rebecca Budde and Günter Chodzinski, eufund/CR Coordination, Berlin, Germany

Main points of discussion:

- The newly interested universities from East and Central Europe introduced themselves
- Possible ways of cooperation with the network and proposals for future development of MA on Children's Rights were discussed.

3. The new universities:

3.1. Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca, Romania

Elisabeta Stanciulescu, Maria Roth-Szamoskozi

As a social department having also PhD courses in psychology Babes-Bolyai University offers among other courses related to the subject children's rights departing from issues such as: protection of children, school violence prevention and child development.

An MA programme in Romanian language about childcare policy/ children and family has been running already 6 years. Its focus lies in Child Welfare and Family and it aims at offering policies and services. This year a new BA programme focused on general social issues and children rights has been launched. There are PhD students working on child rights issues: e.g. working children and violence in schools.

There is also a draft of a MA programme more concentrated on children rights issues and ethics of working with children. The focus lies in children's needs and children at risk. To be able to introduce it into the teaching base Babes-Bolyai university needs more support from the university governors side and cooperation with an international network (such as ENMCR) could have a positive influence on the decision making within the university and the ministry.

The suggestion came to include more vehemently students of **journalism** in the course.

The ideas of cooperation:

- 1) Matching of students from different countries who are working on the same subject and with the same methodology. Goal: comparative academic paper.
- 2) Exchange between teachers. Romanian professors are well educated and experienced but access to technology and working materials (literature) is limited. "Western" professors could benefit from their experience in implementing children's rights laws, because in Romania a law about children rights and above all about children rights promotion was created only a few years ago.

The Romanian representatives present at our meeting (from Iasi and Cluj) were involved in the elaboration of the law.

Babes Bolyai University established the EURO Child Centre (Co-financed by LEONARDO, a Socrates sub-programme, supported by Save the Children Bucharest), where vocational training for kindergarten teachers are offered. Within this project 6 manuals have been published. Please contact Maria Roth for further information: rothmari@cluj.astral.ro

3.2. A1.I. Cuza University in Iasi, Romania, Department of Sociology and Social Work

Doina Balahur: Trained in Human Rights, Degrees in Psychology/Law/Sociology

Children topic is largely present in study programmes, above all in courses on the new children rights law in Romania. Workshops and practical courses are also offered (e.g. for judges and social workers).

There is a special course on social work/ social policies/ public administration/ HR and CR/juvenile justice.

The Cuza University wants to extend its teaching programmes (extended MA: Child Rights protection) and also gain new experiences. Therefore they think it is a good idea to enter an international network, to "get connected".

The new family law in Romania (Doina Balahur was part of the group of experts who drafted it) seeks to protect children's rights through empowerment of the family.

3.3. Barbara Smolinska-Theiss, Academy of Special Education, Warsaw, Poland

Since the political change in 1990, child protection and child development issues are more and more present at universities in Poland as a part of study programmes. Besides the courses, students have a chance to get practical experiences in the child rights field through internships in one of the schools taking part in the Korczak programme.

(Barbara Smolinska-Theiss is a member of the Korczak association)

The professors and student groups are very often for innovative programmes and interested in wider cooperation with other universities but the creation of new MA program as such seems to be unrealistic at the moment because of new regulation at the Polish universities. The establishment of additional interdisciplinary course would be possible but the problem would arise concerning the gaining of certificate after the course.

3.4. Social Work and Social Policy Department of Eötvös Lorand University (ELTE), Budapest, Hungary

Emöke Banyai, sociologist/family preservation services

ELTE University has over 30.000 students

Situation in Hungary: 1991 ratification of UNCRC, since then various national laws for implementation UNICEF-study from 2000 rates Hungary to level 22 of 23 developed countries.

Many poor children, especially Roma children, who have a second disadvantage, that their cultural rights are not respected and they are literally segregated from the rest of the population. Hungary has a 6% Roma Population.

The Children's Ombudsman led a research on the living situation of children separated from their parents (growing up in residential homes). Findings: the rights are violated, i.e. treatment as if rights didn't exist.

Courses at ELTE:

The 2 cycle education system (Bologna process) has only been included into Hungarian law recently, MA study programmes still need to be developed.

There is a strong interest in CR, however there are no clear plans yet.

The question of inclusion/exclusion of minorities, especially the Roma is a large subject also in Romania.

Conclusions on future cooperation possibilities

The introduction of the newly interested CEE universities stood in the foreground of the meeting.

There were a few ideas on future cooperation possibilities:

- Matching students working on the same subject with the same methodology in differing national contexts
- Exchange of teaching staff in the frame of the study programmes
- Establish transnational research teams on children's rights
- Inclusion of CEE countries in the network, as a transnational cooperation is beneficial for fundraising, admissions, profile
- Cooperation in CD-Project (Funding needs to be found)
- Organisation of workshops on specialized children's rights themes with participants from the member universities (student exchange)

Upcoming Dates

Next Directive Committee Meeting:

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday and Saturday, 2nd and 3rd of December 2005. It will take place in Berlin.

Subject: CD-Project and new members

We would like to refer you to CRnews 11_05 for all other upcoming dates, in the next edition of CRnews we will provide all dates as usual.

Photo Gallery- Conference 29.09 and Internal Meeting 30.09.05

In the Europa-Saal in the Jean-Monnet-Haus:



From left to right: Prof. Dr. Manfred Liebel, Dr. Jörg Maywald, Annika Sutzer, Dr. Claudia Lohrenscheid, Dr. Bernd Overwien, Dr. Christa Preissing, Dr.-Ing. Karl-Heinz Franke, Barbara Smolinska-Theiss, Mike Weimann

Front bottom: Rüdiger Hansen, Sigrid Meinhold-Henschel



Afternoon Expert Talk:



Kay Tisdall, University of Edinburgh: children's and young people's participation in the UK.

Panel Discussion:



On the panel (from left to right):
Mike Weiman (KinderRÄchTsZÄnker), Prof. Dr. Manfred Liebel (TU/INA, Berlin);
Dr. Bernd Overwien (moderation); Lucy Borja, Generación, Peru; Dr. Jörg Maywald (NC Germany)

Group picture Friday, 30.09.:



From left to right:

Günter Chodzinski, Juan Enrique Bazán, Lucy Borja, Kay Tisdall, Elisabeta Stanciulescu, Emöke Bányai, Katarzyna Gawlicz, Rebecca Budde, Maria Roth- Szamoskozi, Doina Balahur, Christa Preissing, Marta Martinez Muñoz, Barbara Smolinska-Theiss