Galway School 2015
Child Rights in Practice and Research
Realising children’s rights through empowering parents and families

DATE: 1st December – 4th December 2015
VENUE: Institute for Lifecourse and Society, NUI Galway, Ireland

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 1st December 2015 – Welcome & introductions

18:00 Welcome reception

Wednesday, 2nd December 2015 – Workshops

Workshop 1 ‘Public investment’ – led by Maria Herczog

*How to make the economic case for child-centred family and parenting support?*

09.00-09.15 Focused intervention from Maria Herczog, Eurochild

09.15-10.00 Andy Bilson, University of Central Lancashire

10.00-10.15 Short response from country delegates

- France
- Estonia

10.15-10.45 Coffee break

10.45-11.30 Lynn McDonald, Professor of Social Work Research, Middlesex University London

11.30-11.45 Short response from country delegates
  - The Netherlands
  - Greece

11.45-12.00 Response from Georgette Muheir, Lumos

12.00-13.00 Exchange and learning

13.00-14.00 Lunch

Workshop 2 ‘Integrated practice’ – led by Jasmina Byrne

How to get the best outcomes for children through integrating transfers and services in family and parenting support?

14.00-14.15 Focused intervention from Jasmina Byrne, Unicef Office of Research - Innocenti

14.15-15.00 Armando Barrientos, Professor and Research Director, Brooks World Poverty Institute, School of Environment and Development, Arthur Lewis Building, University of Manchester

15.00-15.15 Short response from country delegates
  - Poland
  - Wales

15.15-15.45 Coffee break

15.45-16.30 Maria Gheorghiu, OvidiuRo & Wolfgang Stuppert, Consultant

16.30-16.45 Short response from country delegates
  - Serbia
  - Slovakia

16.45-18.00 Exchange and learning

Free evening
Thursday, 3rd December 2015 – Workshops

Workshop 3 ‘Evaluation methods’ – led by Pat Dolan

How to implement a pluralistic and rights-based approach in evaluating family and parenting support and make use of evaluations for advocacy purposes?

09.00-09.15 Focused intervention from Pat Dolan, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre

09.15-10.00 John Canavan, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, School of Political Science and Sociology, NUI Galway

10.00-10.15 Response from Julie Belanger, RAND Europe

10.15-10.45 Coffee break

10.45-11.30 Ninoslava Pećnic, Department of Social Work, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb

11.30-11.45 Short response from country delegates

- Finland
- Ireland

11.45-13.00 Exchange and learning

13.00-14.00 Lunch

Workshop 4 ‘Best interest of the child’ – led by Agnes Von Maravic

How to ensure respect for children’s rights in family and parenting interventions targeted at children and families at risk?

14.00-14.15 Focused intervention from Agnes von Maravic, Council of Europe

14.15-15.00 Lucia Gimenez García, University of Sevilla & David Astiz Calatayud, Kamira

15.00-15.15 Short response from country delegates

- Italy
- Bulgaria

15.15-15.45 Coffee break
15.45-16.30 Nevenka Zegarac, University of Belgrade

16.30-16.45 Short response from country delegates
  - Latvia
  - Lithuania

16.45-18.00 Exchange and learning

19.30 Dinner offered by organisers

Friday, 4th December 2015 – Lessons learnt & Policy round table

‘Lessons learnt’ from country delegations – co-led by Norah Gibbons, Chairperson of the Irish Child and Family Agency and Jana Hainsworth, Eurochild Secretary General

09.00-10.00 Sub-groups discussion on learning from country delegations & follow up actions

10.00-10.45 Feedback from sub-groups discussion and conclusions

10.45-11.15 Coffee break

‘Policy Round Table’ – co-led by Norah Gibbons, Chairperson of the Irish Child and Family Agency and Jana Hainsworth, Eurochild Secretary General

11.15-12.15 Panel debate with:
  - Daniel Molinuevo, Eurofound
  - Olivier Thevenon, OECD
  - Agnes von Maravic, Council of Europe
  - Dinesh Sethi, WHO European Region (*video address*)

12.15-12.30 Wrapping up & closing remarks
12.30-13.30 Lunch (an optional walking tour to Galway will follow)

* Programme subject to change

If you have any queries, please contact:

**Agata D’Addato**

Eurochild Senior Policy Coordinator – Policy, Practice and Research

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Maria Herczog is visiting lecturer at the ELTE Budapest University Doctoral School, and at the Law Faculty post graduate course, Chair of the Family Child Youth Association since 2005. She was elected as a member to the UN CRC Committee in 2007 and re-elected in 2010. She was a member of the EU Economic and Social Committee between 2004 and 2010 as a representative of Hungarian civil society.

Maria has been researching child welfare, child protection, child rights, and family matters over the last 30 years. She is the author of several books, book chapters and journal articles. She was one of the founding members of Family, Child, Youth Association in 1992. She was elected member of the Management Board of Eurochild in 2009 and as president in 2010, re-elected in 2013.
Andy is an independent consultant and emeritus professor of social work at the University of Central Lancashire. He is a specialist in systems approaches to organisational change and fellow of the UK Cybernetics Society. He was a senior manager in social work in Fife Social Work Department and Action for Children in Wales and chaired the Association of Directors of Social Work’s research committee. He was also Director of the Council of Europe’s and UNICEF’s observatory on European children’s rights. He was vice chair of the British Association of Social Workers, chair of the National Intermediate Treatment Federation and founder of the Association for Juvenile Justice. He is currently associate director of the Centre for Children’s Participation at UCLan, international consultant at the Know How Centre on Alternatives to Care in Bulgaria and an adjunct professor at the University of Western Australia.
Lynn McDonald
Middlesex University London

Professor of Social Work at Middlesex University, London, since 2008, Lynn McDonald was awarded her PhD in Psychology from the University of California-Irvine, School of Social Sciences, in 1976. Before that she obtained a Master's Degree in Social Work from the University of Maryland-Baltimore Campus in 1968. She did studies Philosophy for her Bachelor of Arts and Science, Oberlin College, 1966. She is a certified family therapist, AAMFT, and a mother of 2, grandmother of 4.

Lynn volunteered with the British Psychological Society for three years to produce a report on social inclusion and child mental health through value added consideration of evidence based parenting programmes. She is currently serving on the NHS National Council for Equity and Diversity. She is a consultant to the United Nations (UNODC) for training, supervision and delivering evidence-based family skills programmes in developing countries (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Iran and Brazil).

She developed a multi-family group programme called Families and Schools Together (FAST) in 1988. FAST has now been trained, had supervised implementations, and evaluated in 21 countries, for impact on over 350,000 families, under her direction. It has been positively recognized for 80% retention rates in low-income communities with socially marginalized families, to increase child well-being (SDQ) by building relationships and protective factors against toxic stress of poverty and racism. Experiential learning and coaching by trained team members FAST is recognized internationally for putting theory into practice to reduce child abuse and neglect (ACE), and increase family cohesion and positive parenting. Its unique model of co-production partners with parents and professionals requires the team to be cultural representative of the families. There is 60% flexibility for local teams to culturally adapt the processes, as well as programme integrity checklists and manuals to insure predictable child outcomes. Results show more robust relationships between parent and child, family unit, parent to parent, and strengthening relationships between families, schools and communities, called social capital. FAST is a social intervention with rigorous randomized controlled trials and with social justice values of parent empowerment through developing a collective voice.
Jasmina Byrne has been with the UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti, Florence since September 2010. She leads UNICEF’s Office of Research work on family and parenting support as well as children’s rights in the digital age. Prior to joining Innocenti, Jasmina was head of UNICEF child protection programme in Indonesia. She has close to 20 years of international experience in managing complex child rights and protection programmes, including research, policy development, programme design and evaluation in South East Asia, Europe and Southern Africa with UNICEF, Save the Children, International Committee of the Red Cross and UN Women. Jasmina’s academic background is in international relations and human rights.
Armando Barrientos is Professor and Research Director at the Brooks World Poverty Institute at the University of Manchester in the UK. His research interests focus on emerging welfare programmes, policies, and institutions in developing countries, with special reference to those addressing child poverty and vulnerability.
Maria Gheorghiu is a professional teacher with 15 years of experience. In 2001 at the age of 34 she co-founded the award-winning Gata, Dispus si Capabil (“Ready, Willing & Able”) programme for impoverished women and children with American Peace Corp volunteer Leslie Hawke. This two-fold anti-poverty strategy provided both free trainings for Roma mothers and education programmes for their children. Maria designed an innovative methodology to reintegrate children who have missed years of school back into mainstream education which was replicated in several areas thanks to its success. In January 2005, GDC was mentioned by USAID as a model programme "for the benefit of impoverished Roma children and families".

In 2004, Maria co-funded the Romanian NGO Asociatia OvidiuRo. She is currently director of the OvidiuRo’s Fiecare Copil in Gradinita ("Every Child in Preschool") programme involving 2400 children in 45 communities. This is the first programme in Romania to use food coupons to encourage parents to enroll disadvantaged children in pre-school education and support their regular attendance. Its success in reaching an average 80% daily attendance rate among the poorest children has increased the interest of government authorities to consider taking the methodology to a national scale.

Maria Gheorghiu holds a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology from the University of Bucharest and is currently working on a Master’s Degree in Cognitive Sciences. In 1997 she was selected as a trainer in the Start-Step by Step programme funded by the Soros Foundation. She was one of two Step-by-Step teachers chosen to receive further training in Washington DC in 1999.

In 2008 she participated in Harvard University’s Project Zero programme on Best practices in teaching led by Howard Gardner and David Perkins. In 2009 she received qualification to assess the impact of social programmes in developing and advanced countries at the Poverty Action Lab’s J-PAL Executive education course at EBRD “Evaluation of social programmes” in London. Most recently she attended the 2014 Stanford Graduate School executive programme in social entrepreneurship in Palo Alto, California.
Wolfgang Stuppert is an evaluation consultant and political scientist. He is currently based in Berlin working on a long-term process evaluation of a national civil society support programme against anti-democratic activism. His former clients include DFID, Oxfam, and the UN Trust Fund. He is also pursuing his PhD in political sciences at Humboldt University, Berlin.

Since his civil service in a day center for street children in Bucharest (Romania) in 2001, he has focused on international civic activism and civil society development. He has been designing and conducting impact evaluations of national and international civil society programmes in Africa and Europe, especially in the fields of youth work, education and gender-based violence. In his academic research he focuses on protest movements in Western Europe as well as civil society development and democratization processes in South-Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. Wolfgang has a strong interest in research methods and uses a wide range of social research tools in his work, including set-theoretic methods and surveys.

Together with Gabriel Kreindler (MIT Department of Economics), Wolfgang designed and implemented an impact evaluation of the national “Every child in pre-school” programme on behalf of the Romanian NGO OvidiuRo. In 2015, the evaluation team conducted more than 160 qualitative interviews with local education stakeholders and gathered information on kindergarten and primary school enrollment and attendance of close to 10,000 children. Data analysis is ongoing, but preliminary results indicate that the programme led to a 30% decrease in non-enrollment in kindergarten and primary school among three- to six-year old children in rural and semi-urban municipalities.
Pat Dolan
UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre

Pat Dolan is joint founder and Director of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre and an Academic Director of the M.A. in Family Support Studies. He also contributes to the wider undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes of the School of Political Science and Sociology as well as supervising Ph.D. candidates and Masters Dissertations in Family Support, Social Work and Community Development.

Professor Dolan holds the prestigious UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement, the first to be awarded in the Republic of Ireland. The UNESCO Chair delivers a comprehensive programme of work towards the objective of promoting civic engagement and leadership skills among children and youth. The programme is built around core strands of research, teaching, policy and good practice and is underpinned by a range of national and international collaborations.

Pat has worked with and for families as a practitioner, service manager, and academic for over 20 years. He has completed an extensive body of research on family issues including longitudinal research on adolescents, their perceived mental health, resilience and social support networks and has published in a wide range of academic publications. His major research interests are Civic Engagement in Children and Youth, Family Support, Reflective Practice and Service Development, Youth Mentoring Models, Adolescents Resilience and Social Networks.
John Canavan

UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre

John Canavan is joint founder and Associate Director of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway, Ireland. He has extensive experience in researching and evaluating social intervention programmes in the areas of child and family care, educational disadvantage, and community and local development. He received his PhD from Queens University, Belfast in 2006 and holds an MA in Community Development from NUI, Galway.

As Associate Director, John is responsible for overseeing the work programme of the centre and acts as Principle Investigator on a number of the centre’s large-scale projects. He will be co-PI on a major incoming grant for a programme of research and evaluation on Prevention and Family Support in Ireland.

His ongoing areas of academic interest include Family Support, Children’s Policy and Service Delivery, connecting research and policy / practice and evaluation theory.

John is actively involved in the Diploma / MA in Family Support Studies, programme which he co-founded. He also contributes to the wider teaching programme of the School of Political Science and Sociology at NUI Galway, as well as supervising Ph.D. candidates and Masters Dissertations.
Julie Bélanger is a research leader at RAND Europe (www.rand.org). Prior to joining RAND Europe, she worked as an analyst at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) where she was responsible for the development and implementation of the second cycle of the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), a large scale teacher and school leader survey which was implemented in 34 countries. Before this, she was a senior researcher at the Canadian Council on Learning, an independent not-for-profit corporation with a mandate to provide evidence-based information about learning throughout all stages of life, where she worked with provincial governments on educational issues such as large-scale school reforms. She also taught several research methods and psychology undergraduate courses at the University of British Columbia. Julie holds a Ph.D. and M.A. in developmental psychology from the University of British Columbia (Canada) and a B.A. in psychology and linguistics from McGill University (Canada). Her main research interests include education research and policy in international and local contexts as well as issues surrounding early childhood education and care. She has led projects and written about topics that include early cognitive and language development, educational reform and improving school outcomes, educational programmes for students with special needs, education in minority language settings, experiential learning in secondary and tertiary education, language immersion in primary and secondary education, and knowledge mobilisation in education contexts.
Ninoslava Pećnik is Professor of Psychology at the Department of Social work at the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, Croatia where she teaches courses at undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels ('Social Psychology', 'Developmental Psychology', 'Child abuse and neglect', 'Family policy, Parenting, Children', 'Contemporary parenting and the rights of the child', 'Contemporary research in Social Work') and supervises graduate, MA and PHD thesis in the field of parenting and parenting support. She has led several national research projects on parenting attitudes, practices and parenting support services and has published several books and over 50 scientific and professional papers (http://www.pravo.unizg.hr/ninoslava.pecnik).

She was Vice-president of the Working Group on parenting skills, namely on the prevention of violence against children within the Council of Europe (2005 – 2006) and a consultant for the report underlying the CoE Recommendation 19 (2006) on the policy to support positive parenting. She was involved in national policy-making on parenting support and child protection, and in establishing programs of assistance to victims of violence. In 2011 she received the Annual Award for the promotion of the rights of the child by the Croatian Government, as well as the Award from a national NGO 'Parents in Action' for her distinguished professional contribution to supporting responsible parenting.

She has co-operated in the field of early child development, positive parenting and parenting support with the UNICEF Office for Croatia since 2006. She is a co-author of the parenting support program 'Growing Up Together' for parents of young children and the 'Growing Up Together Plus' for parents of young children with disabilities and was responsible for developing their evidence-base. She is the president of the Center for parenting support ‘Growing Up Together’ (http://www.rastimozajedno.hr/#english/c1iwo.)
Agnes von Maravic is a Programme Officer in the Council of Europe Children’s Rights Division. She studied Political Science and Public Administration in Potsdam and Lille. Before joining the Council of Europe in 2006, she worked for the German NGO “Action Reconciliation Services for Peace” in Kiev, Ukraine, and as a research assistant at Düsseldorf University, Germany. She is currently Secretary to an intergovernmental Committee that develops the next Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child for the period 2016-2019. Her main interests in the field of children’s rights at the moment are participation, the rights of children in alternative care and positive parenting. Agnes also works on issues related to children’s rights in the digital environment, positive parenting and children in alternative care.
Graduated in School psychology (Second extraordinary national award), Lucía Jiménez is Professor at the Department of developmental and educational psychology at Seville University (Spain) where she teaches Educational psychology related subjects. She is also former Vice-dean for academic affairs of the Faculty of psychology. She was awarded the Best thesis in social sciences extraordinary award by Seville University for her doctoral dissertation on the psychosocial adjustment of children and adolescents growing up in families at-risk.

Lucía has participated in more than twenty granted projects on designing and evaluating family education and support programmes, namely those aimed at children and families in at-risk situations. She has experience in advising professionals and public institutions on programmes implementation and evaluation. She is also national representative of the Early Researchers Union at the European association for developmental psychology in Spain.
David Astiz is an elementary school teacher certified by University of Begoña (Bilbao) and a graduate of the University of Navarra with a degree in Psychopedagogy. He holds a diploma of advanced studies on teenage cannabis abuse and its relationship to family dynamics. He has experience in family intervention programmes, parental skills and support, and has developed courses on early childhood stimulation addressed to parents in the pre-school phase. David is the representative of Kamira, a member of the International Federation of Educatice Communities (FICE) that supports families where children at risk of poverty live through community care resources and by improving the quality of residential placements. He is currently member of the management team at Kamira.S.Coop and coordinates European projects on social exclusion. In particular, he is involved in a Kamira programme on family intervention run for Pamplona’s local government.
Nevenka Zegarac (BSW, MPH, PhD) is Full Professor of Social Work (Social Case Work, Case Management, Children and Families) at the Department of Social Work and Social Policy, Faculty of Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, Serbia. She is also a qualified social worker, researcher and child protection policy, service and programme design and evaluation consultant with UNICEF, UNDP, Save the Children and DFID in South West Europe. She has acted as an advisor for the government of the Republic of Serbia and for Montenegro. Nevenka's primary research interests are in Child Abuse and Neglect, Child Trafficking, Children in Alternative Care, Family Support as well as Social Service Standards and Provision. Together with her research team, she is currently working on evaluation of newly established family support services for families of children with disabilities.
Norah Gibbons
Irish Child & Family Agency

Norah worked for many years in social work in both the State and NGO sectors in England and Ireland. She was appointed as a member of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse 2000-2009 and while there she chaired the Confidential Committee of the Commission from 2000 to 2005. She was the Director of Advocacy of Barnardos from 2005 to 2012. She was a member of the Task-force on the establishment of the Irish Child and Family Agency which reported in June 2012. Norah was appointed first Chairperson of the Child and Family agency in January 2014. She is currently a member of Acknowledgement Forum of Historical Abuse Inquiry in Northern Ireland.
Jana Hainsworth joined Eurochild as Secretary General in January 2006. She is responsible for the day-to-day running of the network. Jana previously worked in a Brussels-based communications consultancy where she managed communications on the EU’s Community Action Programme to combat discrimination. Jana also managed a network of organisations promoting long-term voluntary service in the youth field and has worked for several years in research and consultancy. She has a Master degree in environment, development and policy from Sussex University and an Honours degree in Natural Sciences from Durham University in the UK.
Daniel Molinuevo,  
Eurofound

Daniel is a research officer in the Living Conditions and Quality of Life unit at Eurofound (the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions) since June 2010. Eurofound, a tripartite European Union Agency, provides knowledge to assist in the development of social and work-related policies. Further information on the work of Eurofound is available on www.eurofound.europa.eu.

Prior to his appointment, Daniel worked in a European network of social services, where he focused on polices for children and families as well as on mental health. He has also collaborated with the Spanish Open University (UNED) in the area of mental health policy. Daniel is Spanish and studied sociology in Salamanca (Spain) and at the Humboldt University in Berlin. He has a MA in European Political and Administrative Studies from the College of Europe in Bruges and a MSc in European Social Policy from the London School of Economics, where he also worked as a researcher.
Olivier Thévenon is a Policy Analyst in the OECD’s Social Policy Division. As such he has contributed to the development of the OECD family Database, and to OECD publications such as: Babies and Bosses; Doing Better for Families; and Closing the Gender Gap. He is also a researcher affiliated to the French Institute for Demographic Research and is actively involved in European projects including: Families and Societies, and the Gender and Generation Programme. Previously, he worked as a project manager at the research department of the French Ministry of Social affairs, supervising programmes on the comparison of employment and social protection systems.
Dr Dinesh Sethi is the Programme Manager for Violence and Injury Prevention, at the Division of Noncommunicable Diseases and Promoting Health through the Life-Course, WHO Regional Office for Europe in Copenhagen, Denmark. He is responsible for collaboration in the area of violence and injury prevention between health ministries and WHO and coordinates a network of focal persons for violence prevention from the 53 countries of the WHO European Region. Before this he worked at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine with an interest in violence and injury prevention and the evaluation of trauma services in low and middle income country settings. He read medicine at Liverpool University and trained in public health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the London Region. Dr Sethi has published widely with over 50 peer review papers, major documents, and has worked on injury and violence prevention for the past 15 years. His interests include road safety, child injury prevention, the transfer of good practice and the prevention of interpersonal violence, in particular child maltreatment. To advocate for violence prevention, he has co-authored numerous European reports, including the European report on preventing knife crime and violence in young people, the European report on preventing elder maltreatment and the European report of preventing child maltreatment. Currently, one of his main areas is to provide support Member States in implementing ‘Investing in children: the European child maltreatment prevention action plan 2015-2020’.
Ulla Lindqvist

Central Union for Child Welfare, Finland

Ulla Lindqvist is a programme manager for Emma & Elias at the Central Union for Child Welfare.

More information about her work can be found at www.emmaelias.fi.

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

I’m very interested in other countries solutions on issues and concerns related to family and parenting support.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

I hope that I can bring my experience and knowledge from the Finnish society to participants not only from our presentation but also from informal discussions.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I wait eagerly to learn new things, having new ideas on how to develop Finnish system and also the opportunity to meet interesting people.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

I see many possibilities, for example I can utilise the lessons learned in our conferences not only for myself but also deliver the learning to participants to Finland, where we can translate the most interesting pieces from our point of view.
How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

I am looking forward to attending the Galway-school. Personally, I am interested in each of themes, but especially in investment and evaluation, the latter being part of my current occupation. Throughout all the themes, the role of NPOs is also interesting to me. Combining transfers and services is something I look forward to hearing about. I have found the Eurochild’s contribution on CCTs very significant and I am eager to learn more. When it comes to NPOs, I think there are at least two countries represented that have the so called 1% system in use. I hope I will get a chance to hear about that too. We can do our share to and tell about our experiences concerning the funding as well.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

My home country is known to have invested in children. It is also one of the successes in rankings time after time. However, times may be changing and we must learn a lot from others’ experience. We are prepared, of course, to tell about our own recent history. I am not suggesting that we should concentrate on history only, but on the other hand, a mere sharing practice sometimes is not enough.

From our perspective, we can contribute by sharing our knowledge concerning when, how and how much our nation has invested in families and children, and with what consequences.

Recently I have had a great opportunity to study and learn what Finnish NPOs are doing in order to promote families’ wellbeing. My opinion is that even though some rankings flatter our society it does not make us child-friendly in our everyday encounters. We have much to learn from various countries.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I believe that we will obtain very useful knowledge about evaluation as well. It is my concern and feeling at the moment that we do not cope well with the pressure of showing impact. One of my concerns is the notion of evidence. I am looking forward to hearing presentations regarding this and perhaps discuss that theme with experts. That will probably be the most significant outcome for me.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

There are numerous ways in which the learning could be applied in our home country. Perhaps what they have in common is operating without unnecessary borders like transfers/service; social/health/recreation; public/private; volunteer/professional and so on.
Julia has trained as a social worker and holds Masters from Helsinki University in Social Work. She is currently in a Senior Advisory role.

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

I have been working as a child protection social worker in the municipality, and as a social work specialist in third and private sectors. My key specialization is linked to parenthood evaluation and assessment methods within the child protection aspect. In my opinion, this calibrates well with the school core themes.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

I would be interested in sharing the knowledge and practical methods that are used here in Finland.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I am convinced that sharing and receiving information about new practices and theories is one of the main outcomes of the school. I hope that there will be a possibility to compare the systems and practices and to learn more about innovations.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

One of the main strategizes of our organization is to search for new practices and provide the information to our members. In fall 2016, we will be organizing a conference for the whole child protection/social work field. Each year, there are about 1000 participants from all over Finland. It would be a perfect opportunity for introducing the freshly gained knowledge.
Karen Graham
Rossett Training, United Kingdom

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

The breadth of my work includes education, family and parenting incorporating the challenges of the poverty agenda and its impact on children and families. Understanding and promoting children’s rights is an important element of this work from parenting and family practices through to contributions to, and promotion of, national policy reform and workforce development. These aspects of my work are employed to inform and support training and development of staff across Wales and are directly related to the core themes of the school. In addition, they feed into my broader work with the World Forum Foundation Working Group on Children’s Rights and global promotion of the rights of the child.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

I anticipate being able to contribute an understanding of how the Welsh Government supports the UNCRC. I recognize that work involving children’s rights is concerned not only with providing learning, development and care to children but that it is also linked with issues of women’s employment and equality of opportunity; child development; child and family poverty issues; language development for children and transmission across the wider community; labour market supply; health; social welfare; and education and can discuss these aspects of provision in Wales and the challenges facing integrated working strategies. I can offer examples of good and best practice that provide cross sector exemplars of how national policy is implemented through diverse practices that achieve positive impact across Wales. I can also offer insight into how challenges can and have been overcome to achieve these outcomes using available resources, an important consideration in times of austerity.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

Currently, work is being undertaken to reshape much of the workforce development offer to those working with children and families at all levels of learning. I would look to apply new knowledge in my contributions to this agenda in addition to using this new knowledge for the benefit of current learner cohorts.

As a contributor to the national Parenting Expert Group a broader perspective offering trusted exemplars of practice is welcomed as is the potential to share practice and developments more widely. As a Welsh team we are confident that learning from this project will support and inform Welsh policy and strategy particularly the Welsh Government’s Positive Parenting Campaign.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I look forward to hearing about initiatives across Europe that embed a similar philosophy and using new knowledge and experiences to benefit those we work with across Wales. Post engagement in the designated school days I look forward to ongoing dialogue and perhaps partnership arrangements that could be used to develop shared working practices that would improve our national offer.
Gail Bennett
Flintshire County Council, North Wales

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

I manage an Early Years and Family Support service within a Council that includes several early intervention and prevention services, supporting families with children and young people 0 – 25 years. I have led on the Parenting Strategy for Flintshire for the past 8 years with the support of a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary group to promote positive parenting and parent voice; information provision; parenting programmes and family learning; partnership with primary and secondary schools and ensuring we have a skilled workforce, promoting consistent messages and providing quality services. I chair the All Wales Parenting Coordinators network, and have done so for the past four year, supported by Children in Wales, with links to the Welsh Government. I am particularly interested in the child and parents journey through services, and how needs are prioritised and met by integrated services and pathways. I have particular interest in the theme of evaluation methods including the use of the WEMWBS evaluation tool. We are also the first authority in North Wales offering the FAST (Families and Schools Together) programme, through the use of pooled funding between a variety of Welsh Government grants.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

I look forward to hearing the speakers and discussing and reflecting on how I can bring the learning back to Flintshire to influence local practice and service developments. There will be opportunity with my delegation colleagues to consider how the learning can be shared in Wales, and how we can strengthen existing work, for example, offering training such as working with parents to practitioners. I would hope that my practice knowledge, and plans for future developments in Wales will help other attendees, who may have similar challenges or solutions!

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I am an advocate for evidence based practice, reflective learning and having opportunity to discuss vision with colleagues to make it a reality. In Wales we have a strong group of parenting practitioners, along with Welsh Government Guidance that supports the delivery of services. I would hope that my learning will enable me to think about how we further develop and strengthen services for the best outcomes in the Flintshire community, and the parenting and family workforce community. It would be great if this could lead to further collaboration and learning across Europe to take forward common areas of work.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

I think there is an opportunity to bring learning from each of the speakers back to Flintshire as we continue to develop services under new legislation around social care and wellbeing. This provides opportunity for integrated services and for taking forward programmes such as Families and Schools Together. Along with Geraldine Murphy, Children in Wales, I would be aiming to bring this learning back to the All Wales Coordinators group, which has representation from the 22 local authority areas in Wales. We recently arranged an All Wales Conference and along with the learning from both Conferences I think we should be considering as a forum how we can take this forward to the best values for practitioners and families in Wales. I would hope that we can continue to strengthen our links with academics through the various universities that we have contact with and the Early Intervention Foundation.
Geraldine Murphy
Children in Wales, United Kingdom

Geraldine currently works with Children in Wales and Praxis Makes Perfect. Information on both can be found at www.childreninwales.org.uk / www.praxismakesperfect.co.uk respectively and she can be contacted on Geraldine.murphy@childreninwales.co.uk

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

My main work with Children In Wales relates to the school’s theme of integrated practice and how to get the best outcomes for children through family and parenting support. My work involves the facilitation of a number of national policy groups and practice networks in Wales relating to children’s rights, children and families services, parenting and family support, and child-poverty programmes. I also take great interest in the theme of evaluation methods and I am an advocate for inclusive research and consultation approaches.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

I look forward to engaging in discussions and lively debate in all the workshops and of course in the informal social sessions. As I’m originally from Ireland (Dublin) I hope I can offer insight into the Irish sense of humour. Alongside my Wales delegation colleagues, Gail Bennett and Karen Graham, I bring knowledge that will contribute to discussions, provide exemplars of good practice and offer reflections on current challenges to achieving outcomes desired.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I envisage that I will gain a wealth of knowledge of policy and practice informed by the work of the European countries represented. I also hope that I can maintain dialogue with delegates after the symposium which will inform our work in Wales and possibly lead to further collaboration. The outcomes I envisage would contribute to improvements in the ongoing national professional development framework offered by Children in Wales.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

At Children In Wales we deliver a programme of national and regional seminars and action learning events. I envisage bringing lessons learned from this symposium to these events. We are currently testing out new ways to get people involved in these times of reduced budgets and capacity to travel and meet in conferences. These alternative ways of sharing and collaborating include filming conference and seminar presentations and sharing these and other digital media online and in local seminar or workshop events.
Michelle McCabe
Lifestart Foundation, Northern Ireland

Michelle McCabe is the Communications Manager at Lifestart Foundation. Information on Lifestart’s history, programmes, approach, parent support and intervention can be found at www.lifesupportfoundation.org/michelle@lifestartfoundation.org.

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

My interests, both professionally and personally, lie in the promotion of better outcomes for children. In particular I am interested in how children develop positive infant mental health and self-regulation in the early years and if there are particular groups deemed most vulnerable for example, infants born preterm.

Central to these interests is the recognition of the services and interventions being offered, and delivered, to parents; how effective are they, and how are they being evidenced. To ensure better and more effective public spending, I believe that robust evaluation measures must be in place to ensure that service providers and commissioners can remain programmatically and fiscally vigilant.

As a strong advocate for children’s rights, I believe that the rights and needs of the child should be paramount in all policy making and service commissioning. By putting children first, cycles of disadvantage can be broken.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

Having worked within various NGO’s for many years, specifically in the areas of childrens rights, mental health, and parenting support, I feel I have gained a vast amount of experience and knowledge in the four core themes and this is where I can share opinions from a practitioner’s point of view.

Furthermore, as a doctoral student of Childhood Studies, I believe I can actively contribute and offer much to the debate.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I envisage the knowledge and information gained from being part of the school will not only enhance my personal and academic interests, but will enable me to share information across other agencies and networks of which I am part. I hope that the information I can share with others can be used in some way to inform practice in other participating countries and we will leave having a sense of achievement and collaboration that can enhance the European agenda on improving children’s lives.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

There are many ways that the learning gained from this school can be implemented. Information can be disseminated across local, regional and national networks of special interest so that relevant areas of practice and research are informed. It can be included in public consultations for policy development at a strategic level, and used by organisations to understand what the benefits, effective and efficient use of evaluation to evidence programme/service delivery can be. It will also help to raise the importance of implementing a right’s based approach to services and interventions across public, private and voluntary sectors.
Maurice Leeson

Dept. Health Social Services and Public Safety
Northern Ireland.

Maurice Leeson is the Children’s Services Planning Professional Advisor, a member of Health and Social Care Board and Programme Manager for the Early Intervention Transformation Project with the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety.

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

In this role I am responsible for supporting a Northern Ireland multi-agency planning group (Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership) which is committed to working collaboratively to deliver good outcomes for children and young people. This body includes Health, Social Care, Criminal Justice, and local Council, Education, Housing and Departmental senior managers. It also includes senior managers from the voluntary and community sector. CYPSP is committed to integrating a children’s rights perspective into all aspects of its work. CYPSP work includes supporting subgroups to develop a range of integrated plans to improve outcomes for vulnerable children including children at risk of offending, BME children and young people, LGBT young people, young people affected by parental mental ill health, children and young people affected by domestic and sexual violence, disabled children and young people.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

My contribution to the symposium will be taken from my experience/knowledge based on commissioning, planning and information roles, my experience managing a process that is committed to children’s rights, my involvement in early intervention research and my role in policy in government.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

The core outcome for me is the opportunity to learn from the experiences of other delegates looking at similar issues from other countries and to use that knowledge to inform the work I am involved in in NI.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

The themes from the conference are very much part of the NI policy, planning and commissioning landscape and I am involved in all three spheres.

In my role as Programme Manager of the Early Intervention Transformation Project in the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety I am a member of the Family and Children’s Policy Directorate. This gives me a route to influence the policy debate. I am also involved in the structure which supports the NI Executives Delivering Social Change programme of which the Early Intervention Transformation Project is a key part.

In my role as the facilitator of the NI multi-agency planning process I have the opportunity to introduce the thinking from the symposium to a wide range of organizations involved in delivering services to vulnerable children.

In my role as a member of the HSCB Commissioning team I have the opportunity to influence the structure and direction of commissioning of children’s services.
Professor Trevor Spratt is the Director of the Children’s Research Centre at Trinity College Dublin.

Having worked for some 10 years in social work practice with children and families his research interests are in this area. These include, decision making by professionals, how policy objectives are translated into professional practises, the development of child protection systems internationally, and the impact of early adversities in childhood as realised across the life-course.

Email: sprattt@tcd.ie

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

For some years I worked as a social worker with families and children. In recent times I have worked in university settings with a particular interest in carrying out studies, the results of which will be beneficial to professionals working with families and children in making their interventions more effective. Having better services is, however, only possible by having research informed by the perspectives of children and their families themselves. This builds a set of meaningful working relationships between all parties, whilst giving voice to children in line with the aspirations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

I have a particular interest in the balances to be struck between enhancing the rights of children, working in partnership with parents and ensuring that children remain protected. It will be helpful to hear the perspectives of other delegates in relation to how solutions may be found in reducing such tensions. My own work has involved studies of social work practice with children and families, including the decision-making and the evidence base underpinning assessment and intervention. Again, I am interested to share my own findings and hear from others with respect to these issues.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

In practice and research it is easy to have narrow perspectives both with regard to how we understand the problems experienced by families as well as the potential solutions to these. An international perspective immediately challenges such local viewpoints and causes us to think in different ways about the issues. I am sure that the presentations and discussions will have this effect as we seek to learn one from another.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

In Ireland we have aspirations to help and support families whilst ensuring that children remain protected. Such balances in legislation, policy and practice are difficult to strike. One way of doing so is to ensure that lessons from other nations in Europe are brought to discussion tables where such policies and practices are considered, with internationally informed decisions ultimately being better for children.
Dr. Aisling Gillen is the National Policy Development Manager, Family Support and National Programme Manager for the Development & Mainstreaming Grant for Prevention, Partnership & Family Support with Tusla Child & Family Agency, Ireland. See www.tusla.ie for publications on Parenting Support Strategy, Participatory Practice, Meitheal National Practice Model for early identification of need and help-provision; Commissioning; and Guidance to the Area-based approach to Prevention, Partnership and Family Support.

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

In my work, I am responsible for national policy development in relation to supporting parenting, participatory practice, commissioning and family support for Tusla Child & Family Agency. I am also involved in managing a national change management programme to build new structures, processes, posts, practice and partnerships for supporting parenting; family support; early identification of need and help; participatory practices with children, young people, parents and families; and commissioning throughout Tusla and partners. This programme of work is supported by a grant from Atlantic Philanthropies. Therefore, my work interests coalesce firmly with the themes of the school, particularly in relation to the application of practice-based evidence into systems and contexts and in relation to the focus on children’s rights.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

I envisage contributing actively to the school through robust exchange of ideas to ensure that I engage as proactively as possible in cross-country learning.

I will sign-post colleagues to key outputs produced by Tusla, in partnership with the Unesco Child & Family Research Centre, NUIG, which relate to the Conference themes. In addition, I will seek opportunities for further collaborations.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I envisage increasing my knowledge and understanding of how family support impacts on the realization of children’s rights and on learning more about work in other countries on developing practice in relation to integrated family support systems. Tusla is very interested in bringing international expertise and learning to the core of our practice communities and I will be looking for ways in which to do this over the next three years.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

I have a key role in policy development in relation to children’s rights and family support in Tusla and will actively be feeding into the ongoing development of Tusla thinking and policy formation in these areas. We have national Working Groups on Commissioning, Supporting Parenting, Participation & Children’s Rights, application of an area-based approach to Prevention, Partnership and Family Support and I will be feeding in all the learning and contacts to these relevant groups.
Adam Janda
Civic Association Prima, Slovakia

Adam Janda is a psychologist, DROP-IN centre coordinator, outreach worker with users of drugs, sexworkers and the homeless in PRIMA, which is a non-governmental agency. Adam is also a contact worker with children and youth in the low-treshold centre MIXklub in a socially excluded community - project of Children fund of Slovak Republic.

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

With respect my particular interests I think, that the school will help me to understand and gain better know-how to support children rights in practice.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

I would like to bring my view, questions and experiences from practice in Slovak republic.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I think, that outcomes from the school will help me to understand the ideal way of networking all areas related to children rights in the way of supporting them in our country.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

I hope, I will have improved knowledge of this after the School in Galway
Zuzana Kondradova

Coalition for Children, Slovakia

Zuzana’s current role is at Coalition for Children Slovakia, Secretary General. More information on her work can be found at:
www.koaliciapredeti.sk / zuzana.kondradova@kaoliciapredeti.sk

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

Coalition for Children Slovakia prepared the Complementary Report of CRC Implementation in 2007-2015 in Slovakia of which I was an editor. The report follows the clusters for CRC implementation reporting. Those include education and family and foster care. Slovak legislation is increasingly more reflective of the obligations of Slovakia arising under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, in practice Slovakia is significantly behind and does not use the full potential of the existing legislation.

We consider the incapability of the school system to meet the individual needs of each child the greatest challenge for Slovakia because it affects the largest group of children. We particularly wish to highlight the non-existence of a system of inclusive education, one, which would help disabled, and Roma children to be part of the common school system.

With regard to family support generally (mainly on the local level through community services), the greatest weakness is the lack of preventive activities promoting positive parenthood. These activities would help to avoid crises in families (e.g., poverty, alcoholism, violence), which consequently lead to removal of the child from the family more often than necessary.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

By explaining the situation in Slovakia and sharing the examples of innovative teaching run by NGOs. From 1996 – 2010 I worked for major grant making and operating foundation in Slovakia – Open Society Foundation (part of Soros foundations network). My responsibilities included education, training and employment of marginalised minorities, in particular the Roma minority, management of a network of Roma Information-Counselling and Coordination Centres in regions promoting education and training opportunities among Roma population. Currently I have been working for the Coalition for Children Slovakia and I’m coordinating the collection of information and data for the purpose of CRC reporting and other researches and inquiries needed.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

By sharing the information with teachers and NGOs that work directly with schools.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

Coalition for Children Slovakia is a network organisation representing 11 non-governmental organisations. Coalition is an advocacy body that attempts to influence state policies in regard to the rights of child in Slovakia. Gained learning I will be sharing with our members at the roundtable as well as in advocacy activities of our organisation. During the Slovak EU Presidency in 2016 we plan to organise a joint event to promote the individual needs and abilities of every child. Absence of inclusive education in Slovakia is another challenge that opens space for involvement of NGOs by introducing best practices.
How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

The main topics of the symposium / schools reflect the findings of the Supplementary Report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Slovakia in 2007-15 prepared by the Coalition for Children Slovakia and was presented in October in the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva. In Slovakia there is a lack of comprehensive systematic early support for families in crisis by the state, but especially by municipal level. Up to 21.9% children in 2012 were living at the risk of poverty. These families often lack the means and the skills to ensure the development of the child. There is no comprehensive system for monitoring public spending for the family. Since 2013, there have been campaigns in Slovakia that strongly promote the primacy of parental rights over children rights.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

Speaking about our experience from advocacy activities. Sharing experiences of colleagues in the Coalition for Children of Slovakia who work in supporting families in crises, development of parenting skills and development of foster care. Children of Slovakia Foundation, from which I come from originally, has been leading the campaign to support positive parenting for the second year. This campaign is supported by the outcomes from surveys that can be an interesting contribution to the symposium. We also organize educational activity for schools to support them in the conversion to open learning environments including active involvement of parents in school events. As a mother I have 12 years experience of active involvement of parents in events in the Montessori school and as a member of the municipal council I can bring experience from municipal level with families in crisis.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

In the frame of Coalition for Children we will use the examples of good practice across Europe that can contribute to development of positive parenting, systematic and integrated support for families in crisis, and particularly in the early detection and support of families at the beginning of the crisis. I would like to also witness more arguments on why the rights of children should be protected and why it is not enough to protect only the rights of the family. I'm also interested in the topic of supporting of families with a disabled child.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

All information gathered at the symposium we will use in support of our advocacy activities. We plan to present our main findings of the Supplementary Report on CRC Implementation in Slovakia with focus on family care and development of themes of inclusive education for children with special educational needs in the pre-election campaign of political parties before the parliamentary elections in the spring of 2016. Allocation of more funds within the new programming period of ESIF 2014-20 for inclusive education is our priority too. Establishment of European partnerships will be an added value to the programme.
How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

It is my honor and pleasure to be a participant in the Galway School “Child Rights in Practice and Research”. I am a psychologist, family psychotherapist and adviser for social protection in the Republic Institute for Social Protection in Serbia (RISP). For 25 years I have worked in the system of social protection (SSP) and from different positions I am in constant interaction and have experience working with children and families: as a psychologist and director of the Center for Social Work (1990 - 2008), as director of an institution for mentally challenged children (2005 - 2008), as well as children’s and family psychotherapist (2008 - present). In the position of adviser for social protection in RISP (2008- present) I am dedicated to improving the position of children and families in Republic Serbia through the contribution to new systems solutions, education of professionals in the SSP and the development of new services aimed at children and families. Currently, I am the coordinator of a UNICEF project.

In addition to this experience, I think that it is useful for other participants to hear the experience in piloting the Family outreach worker service, a new service of intensive support to biological families at risk of relocation of children. The service has been piloted in 4 cities, and it has so far included 430 families. We are currently at the stage of developing standards for the service and we are making efforts to ensure the sustainability of the service through institutionalization and funding from the central level.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I expect to exchange experience with other participants of the conference on the topic of new solutions, services and interventions in the field of protection of children’s rights and support to biological families, exchange of best practices, particularly in terms of developing similar services that are focused on support for families in crisis.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

Opportunities for the transfer of experience within the system of social protection in Republic Serbia lie in the government’s firm commitment to provide vulnerable families with a support that would allow children’s staying within their families, but in a safe and secure environment. The new legislative framework supports the development of social services adjusted to the users’ needs and a plurality of service providers. In this sense RISP has a role to initiate new approaches and to incorporate instances of good practice from other countries.
Sasa Stefanovic is the Director of the Network of Organisations for Children of Serbia.

Further information can be found at www.zadecu.org, office@zadecu.org, orsashastefan@gmail.com.

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

The Network of Organizations for Children of Serbia works on advancing the rights of children in Serbia, improving their status and improving their quality of life. Accordingly, we advocate for fulfillment of every child’s right to live in a family. We presume that the family environment is the best for their development, and that a child’s separation from the family is extremely stressful and painful. We are aware that there are families who are faced with numerous problems that may impede upon a child’s normal life. It is therefore necessary to provide them with good quality, timely and intensive support tailored to the needs and specific situation of each family.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

The symposium is an opportunity for us to share our experience in providing and planning support to parents and families and the problems faced by parents. Our network brings together a large number of organizations that share the information from their work, the problems that parents and families report to them, the parents’ view on the importance of financial supports for families and necessary services.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

My participation in this event, which will bring people from different countries, organizations and institutions together, will bring us new perspectives, knowledge, methods and approaches that we can use for effective advocacy in our country.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

We will use our thematic meetings with our network members to share the information about the developments and trends in the realization of children’s rights and family support. We will integrate this information into our advocacy initiatives and incorporate it in the policy document which we are developing to support social inclusion, inclusive education and family support.
Aleksandra Miletic
Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Serbia

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

My department in the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs is responsible for defining project interventions in the area of social services and social inclusion that are supported through EU pre-accession support (in the context of EU integrations) and other donor modalities. Developing family support services are central to securing the social inclusion of the most vulnerable families – that they are the client group of the Ministry I work in.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

My experience in being part of a team that manages EU funds directed at reforming the social protection system so that it reaches out to the most vulnerable families can be useful to other participants coming from countries that are beneficiaries of EU funds in areas of social inclusion (either structural funds or pre-accession assistance).

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I hope to increase my understanding of how the social services system in Serbia can be reformed so as to better support the most vulnerable families. With this knowledge I hope to be able to contribute to shaping reform initiatives of the Ministry that are supported by development actors such the European Union and UNICEF.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

I hope to advance my understanding of different types of services that can support families that are at risk of separation ie families that are ‘at the edge’ of the care system.
Ljiljana Vasic
Promoc Deci, Serbia

Ljiljana is the Director of Promoc Deci and member of Eurochild and its thematic group for early years.
ljiljana@promocdeci.org

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?
My interests are to help young children get all the support needed in an integrated way and with their best interest to realize their capacities, so all four core themes are extremely important to achieve this goal.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?
I can share the information from the field, participate in developing a better relationship between the research, practice and use of evidence for policy making. I can also participate in developing a case study or any similar future document about the research, practice and policy in this field in Serbia.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?
I envisage more information, better knowledge about best practices, more links and potential for joint future initiatives both at the national and European levels. I also envisage gaining more skills for better evaluation of the implementation of various policies and practices in this field.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?
Since the first National Act on Children, a new National Action Plan for Children in Serbia needs to be developed, I see the potential to contribute to the development of a better linked and more integrated approach for child-centered family support, more thought through and integrated services and generally, more inter-sectorial approach to children and assurance of the best interest of a child prospective in drafting and implementation of the policies and practices.
Agnese Lgaune
Riga City Council, Latvia

Agnese has been working in social field for more than 15 years already. I started as a child and family social worker in Riga Social Service, then became a leader of unit of social work with families with children. After that she became a leader of one of the territorial centres of Riga Social Service and at the moment is working as leader of Sector for families with children of Riga City Council Welfare department already for 6 years. Riga City Council Department of Welfare is a main institution of Riga Municipality within the competence of social services, social assistance, access to health care, health promotion and prevention, including restricting the spread of addictive and employment promotion issues.

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

My particular interests are connected with professional interest on how to build a system of preventive work or family early intervention programmes where there are interdisciplinary levels involved - institutions (states, municipal, nongovernmental and research, by the way) and different kinds of professionals. The main aim of this system is to find out and discover the main risks and problems of families as soon as possible, and the outcome is the better conditions, new resources, strengthened parents and families, and the winner is all of society together.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

I have had experience in implementation of different new services and new social programmes in the field. At the moment I am undertaking a professional Master’s degree in 'Organizational Management'. Overall I hope that my competencies, knowledge, professional skills and experience will be my contribution to the symposium.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I hope that learning gained from participating in this symposium will be experience which I will be able to apply in practice and development of those services in Riga municipality, taking into account this approach.
Linda Ziverte

SOS Children's Villages, Latvia

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

I represent SOS Children's villages Latvia. The main areas of our work are networking with other professionals and policy makers, advocacy for child rights and improvement of the system regarding support for children and families. Currently we are working on an ambitious pilot project on implementation of an early prevention system within Riga Municipality. In the project we are cooperating with Riga Municipality, kindergartens, researchers and other NGOs. My particular interest is to strengthen my knowledge and networking in further advocacy to promote the idea of prevention as priority for social services system for families and children.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

Participation in the symposium is a possibility to share many years of experience working in the field of social as a researcher, lecturer and project manager and currently national program director and advocacy adviser in SOS Children Villages Latvia.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I am looking forward for new contacts, fruitful exchanges of experience between partners from different countries and sectors, and inspiration for further work when coming back home.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

For the organization and personally as a SOS Advocacy adviser I communicate with different stakeholders from the child care sector. Participation in the school will give me the opportunity to pay more attention to promoting principles of the best interests of the child and prevention.

I envisage gaining deeper understanding about child rights approaches and how to apply it in our daily work. My special interest is about topics on evaluation methods.
Mārtiņš Moors

Dept. of Welfare, Riga City Council, Latvia

Mārtiņš Moors is Head of Social Administration for the City Council of Riga. Further Information about Mārtiņš and his work can be found from: Martins.Moors@riga.lv

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

In Riga I am responsible for development and monitoring of social services for families and children. Our particular interest is prevention of children placement in institutions and focus on best interests for child and coordination of involved parties.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

I hope to share knowledge and experience of ensuring social services for Riga's inhabitants.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I envisage gaining knowledge and setting a basis for developing of a long-term, multi-sectoral and holistic approach to prevention as well as to build innovative and sensitive evaluation tools for assessing short term results and long term changes.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

I see a possibility to influence the Riga municipality approach to child care and social work.
Aivita Putina
University of Latvia

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

I have mostly worked on family, gender and reproductive rights issues in my academic career. I have been trained in a very intellectual PhD programme in social anthropology at the University of Cambridge. Already doing my doctoral research I realized shortcomings of solely academic approach. Research participants did not receive any benefit from my theoretical insights in building the post-Soviet maternity care policy. Immediately after completing my degree I engaged in two-year post-doctoral fellowship in policy analysis at Central European University which allowed me translate my knowledge into policy-relevant evidence and language.

My particular interest in family and parenting support has come through a different source - collaboration with several NGOs requesting research on the legal situation of children at early age, addressing the system of detecting domestic violence risk for young children, feasibility of out-of-family care and family-based services and recently the introduction of an early warning and intervention system in Riga municipality.

On the one hand, though all this research including analysis of literature and good practice in other countries, I did not build links with researchers working on similar issues and level in other countries. On the other hand, this applied knowledge has never been transferred to an academic level as I lacked background and time. These also were not “hot” academic issues.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

I hope my practical experience and knowledge of the field would enrich the discussion with evidence from the Latvian difference. I would also gladly contribute my experience in research methodology and in transferring the research into policy process. Anthropology has a lot to offer understanding family related policies and practices using the angle of post-Socialism and deep ethnographic approach which allows addressing the level of actual practice vs. beliefs about it.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

My experience in the field suggests that it is essentially multi-disciplinary and I look forward gaining systematic knowledge on current approaches and resources in this policy field. Most importantly, I expect that contacts with researchers and other participants would open ideas and plans for future cooperation.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

Family-oriented services and early risk detection are really important issues for current family support systems in Latvia. Family-based services and detection of violence have been introduced in Latvia comparatively recently; there is strong political pressure for working with risk in the families but instruments are largely lacking. I participate in the national research programme consulting the Latvian Parliament on family policy and the Galway school experience would allow including this agenda in the consultation process.
Nektarios Stellakis

University of Patras, Greece

Nektarios Stellakis is an Assistant Professor at the University of Patras Greece. He is the Regional Vice President for Europe for World Organisation for Early Childhood Development (OMEP) and is based in the Department of Early Childhood Education at Patras.

More information can be found at www.worldomep.org or at nekstel@upatras.org.

**How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?**

One of the lessons I teach in my Department is “Family Literacy in Early Childhood”. Moreover, as a member of World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) I am working on issues related to both children’s rights and family empowerment and I think that these two are really interrelated and interdependent.

**How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?**

I will try not only to present the current situation in Greece, but also, to contribute on finding applicable and practical suggestions.

**What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?**

My participation is really important for me and I am looking forward to hearing about the situation in other countries as well as to exchanging ideas and to working together with other participants to find solutions for the benefit of all children and especially those from less privileged backgrounds.

**What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?**

Although it is difficult to be optimistic I will try to communicate the results of the school not only to members of OMEP or academic staff but also to other NGOs and public bodies such as Ministries, Children’s Ombudsman, UNISEF and UNESCO.
Maria Iliopoulouel

Vice Mayor of Athens with Responsibility over Child Rights Issues, Greece

Vice Mayor of Athens with Responsibility over Child Rights Issues at Liosion 22, 10438 Athens, Greece.

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How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

My status as a vice-major for the Child, in Athens, the biggest Municipality in Greece, is obviously consistent with the subject of this symposium. My 5 year experience as a stakeholder in all the areas that deal with the best interests of the child, in a country under severe financial crisis and many challenges along the way, has provided me with some useful conclusions basically in the fields of social policy practises to support children and their families in terms of nourishment, free evening schooling for pupils who wish to enter Greek Universities and afternoon creative activities for younger children and their families. Also, due to the high percentage of immigrants passing Greece’s borders, we are obliged to implement emigration policies that respect the young immigrants and provide them with all the help they need, without stigmatizing them. Furthermore, Athens Municipality is implementing a program in collaboration with the University of Chicago and the Greek Polytechnic school – Department of Architecture, which wishes to transform a number of school classes in public schools, in order to enhance students’ learning procedures.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

All the above mentioned programmes bear in mind Children’s Rights as they are imposed by the UN Convention (1989). Our experience from supporting families in Athens, the capital of a country under severe crisis, will certainly contribute to any relative workshops.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I am looking forward to listening to colleagues from countries with relative problems and really look into some efficient practices from their experience, on supporting parents in their upbringing in a controversial world that deals with poverty and all sorts of violation as far as human and children’s rights is concerned.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

Clearly, my status gives me the opportunity to put into practice any ideas that would be useful for the current programs my Municipality runs. However, I intent to transport all the knowledge gained during this symposium, to constitutions in Greece, such as the Greek Ombudsman on Children’s Rights, my Municipality, PTA’s in public schools etc.
How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

Children’s Rights have always been in my agenda as a preschool teacher. I have perceived them as a precious tool in the educational procedure with my students, seeing myself as a vehicle of abstract notions, which needs to be clarified through practical ways. Thus, my duty is to attach a certain meaning to the concept of equality or respect, freedom and responsibility, solely through my actions or reactions to conflicts which come up on a daily basis at school amongst the students or a conflict that a student may have experienced at home. But how does a child claim and ensure his/her right and be successful in that? Baring in mind the complexity of such a philosophical matter, I issued in 2011 a children’s novel by the title “Do I have the Right to tell a story?”, which is based on the UN Convention (1989) on Children’s Rights. The heroes come across with such incidents that make them realize their fundamental rights and those of free speech through democratic procedures.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

My M.A studies on Child Care, Law and Practice along with my experience from Greek private schools and NGO’s have provided me with the necessary experience and framework to work with colleagues from the same field and exchange views and possibly solutions in the dynamic territory of education and modern parenting.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

The Greek financial crisis has burdened the position of children who strive to cope in an unfair framework, which lacks a national scheme for Children’s Rights, often in conditions of severe poverty and violation of their fundamental rights. Thus, I’m looking forward to meeting practitioners from other countries with similar problems and come back with some efficient practices and tools as far as enhancing families to safeguard their children’s interests.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

Apart from being the Principal of a private Kindergarten school in Athens ("Europotypo"), I am the project manager of two programs funded by the EEA Grants. The Greek branch of Home-Start (Home-Start Hellas), which is one of the UK’s leading family support charities, is implementing a program in Greece (Pireaus), where families are shown, by trained volunteers, constructive ways to deal with the daily problems in their upbringing. Antirropon, is an NGO which is currently working on a project, funded by the EEA Grants, in collaboration with the Council of Europe and Greek UNESCO, on the political rights of children, (art. 12-15 from the UN Convention ). The particular program is aiming at creating groups of Roma and non-Roma teenagers and obviously influence and sensitize all their adult caretakers, as a collateral result. I expect not only to supply all the abovementioned frameworks with knowledge and experience from the current symposium, but to try to organize workshops with parents, who see their children’s rights as an extra burden in a confusing world, with the social media leading the way to a new human communication and all the relative consequences.
Bert Prinsen

Dutch Youth and Family Centres, The Netherlands

Bert Prinsen is a parenting support and health promotion specialist. After 30 years of professional experience in the field of mental health promotion, school health education and public health he was working at the Netherlands Youth Institute until 2012. Nowadays he is senior consultant on parenting support and the development of the Dutch Youth and Family Centres and project manager of some R&D projects on parenting support and prevention at the JeugdZaak. He was engaged in the development of parenting support programs like VoorZorg (Nurse Family Partnership), the community based support program ‘Mothers Inform Mothers (MIM)’, the coordination of care for families with multi-problems and the Dutch standard of parenting support in child public health. Together with prof. Tom Van Yperen & Dr. Harrie Jonkman he wrote the chapter on ‘Prevention of antisocial behaviour in the Netherlands’ in the book ‘Tomorrows criminals’ of Prof. Ralph Loeber (eds).

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

Parenting support is not a unidimensional or unilateral activity, but always embedded into the broader system of child and family support, school and education and child welfare. That also means there will be a strong connection of parenting support and child development and learning, not only in the schools but also in the kindergartens and the preschools. Otherwise we know that the best support of parenting and especially of the prevention of severe parenting problems is when parents and children are targeted both and together. A parallel process is between school and the family. I am wondering what this means in case of successful programs and policies.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

The best way of contributing to the symposium is by presenting the Dutch studies of cost effective and sustainable parenting support, by explaining the Dutch system of school youth care and by showing examples of intersectoral support of child public health, youth care and the (pre-) school system like Alert4you, the school based program of M@zzl, the Youth and Family Centres in the province of Zeeland (together with Nicolle Verstraeten) and the interdisciplinary support teams at the neighbourhood level.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

Interesting outcomes for me would be learning of studies of effectiveness programs and policies resulting in developmental, parenting and behavioral gains for children and parents by the school system in cooperation with the sector of youth care and parenting support. Otherwise it would be nice to explore the success factors of these programs and policies.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

Being a consultant I will be able to advise municipalities, schools and youth care organizations to implement successful programs and policies of other European countries. Otherwise as a member of the Dutch Working Group on Prevention Initiatives I am always looking for better and more successful methods of prevention, in this case for instance at the edge of school and child public health of child welfare. We will be able to deal with these examples in this group.
Nicôlle is an experienced practitioner, policy maker and pedagogue at a youth and family centre in the Netherlands. She works in a municipality in the south of the Netherlands holding a population of about 7,000 families. We estimate that about 23% of the children have some risk of development or parenting problems. The main field of her experience lies within Public Health, Health Education, Parenting Support and Youth Care.

Nicolle.verstraeten@gmail.com

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

At the youth and family centre we try to deliver adequate information and advice for simple questions and adequate help for bigger problems. A way to contribute to the congress is to exchange information and best practices. We want to promote positive youth development in our community. We focus on delivering better quality by introducing evidence based instruments and interventions. We introduced assessment instruments in the interdisciplinary supports teams that help in assessing the nature and severity of problems to discover the needs of the children and parents. We have the ambition to equip the professionals in dealing with the most common problems in parenting. Professionals are trained in empowering families to find their own answers and solve their problems with a minimum of help as possible. Our key ingredients are motivational interviewing; solution focused techniques in a process of dialogue and shared decision-making.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

It would be nice to find some key examples of how to implement integrated services, because in the Netherlands we are still working on better connections between several support systems. I hope to discover and learn from the other members about the core themes and how they integrate services, evaluate and monitor the results.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

In my local and professional network I will present the findings of the congress through oral and digital presentation. Together with my colleagues form the Dutch delegation we will make efforts for structural embedding by the Dutch Youth Centre (NJI) by Mrs. Caroline Vink and ‘de Jeugdzaak’ by Mr. Bert Prinsen. An international congress is the ideal opportunity to share and spread this knowledge and experience. We can spread the knowledge to client’s organizations, public health professionals, schools and educators, researchers and policymakers.
Caroline Vink is senior advisor at the Netherlands Youth Institute. She works at the programme ‘transition and transformation’, on the decentralisation and transformation of all child and youth services to the local governments. She advises (local) governments and service providers for children, young people and families and also organises conferences and ‘learn & share’ meetings on many issues related to the transition, including lectures and chairpersonship.

She is also an expert on international children & youth policy and has worked on many international reviews and comparisons and has organised expert meetings and study visits. During the last years the focus has especially been on what can be learned from other countries with decentralised policies. Part of her work is to monitor trends and (international) developments that are relevant for the policy and practice of children & youth policy. Until the end of 2013 she was the chair of Thematic Working Group on Family and Parenting Support of Eurochild. In 2012 she was responsible for organising the Think Parents! Conference in the Hague, The Netherlands, together with the university of Amsterdam and in partnership with the Council of Europe, Eurochild and many other partners. She has also coordinated a two year Daphne programme with 5 countries on what works in combating child abuse and recently has been involved in a peer review on investing in children within the European Social Network. All of her work is at the crossroads of research, policy and practice.

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

My particular interest is the way in which parenting support is embedded in universal and targeted services which succeed in normalizing parenting issues. Effective integrated working is essential in ensuring that parents receive the support needed. Important questions remain concerning effective ways of involving parents in policymaking. Parents constitute a highly diverse group, with differences in family constellation, ethnic background and social-economic status. One common problem in practice is that not every parent is reached equally. This could also be the case with involvement in policy (e.g. needs assessments).

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

I have an in-depth experience and knowledge on how to reconcile knowledge and practice in an international context. I can particularly contribute to helping ‘translate’ different contexts and realities and finding common grounds and issues. Also the major system change in child and family services that is taking place in the Netherlands, with an important role for normalizing parenting issues and interdisciplinary working, can be a relevant case study for the meeting in Galway.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

Contributing to putting parenting support as an important and growing domain in professional practice, research and policy all over Europe back on the agenda.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

As a national knowledge institute we can disseminate the results together with experts and practitioners. It will be a joint effort of the Dutch participants.
Bénédicte Jacquey-Vazquez
Apprentis d’Auteuil Foundation, France

Bénédicte Jacquey-Vazquez is Head of the Program “Family Houses”, senior advisor for parenting support, Fondation Apprentis d’Auteuil, Paris, France and a member of the national observatory on poverty and social exclusion

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How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

The symposium relates directly to the program I am developing at Fondation Apprentis d’Auteuil i.e. “family houses” which provide parenting support to isolated parents. Parenting support is still an emerging topic in French family public policy. I am convinced that we need to offer more universal non-stigmatizing parenting support services in France and to find a path towards a transition from our currently mainly curative approach to a more supporting and preventive approach. Out of the 7 trillion of euros spent in France on child protection each year, 80% is spent on foster care and only 20% is spent on prevention measures.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

I can contribute by presenting the French context and explaining about our “family houses” program inspired from community organizing in Quebec.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

One of our goals is to increase the public and private funding available to our “family houses” program. We are also currently struggling to convince our policy-makers in France to invest more in parenting support services. So I expect to learn more about evaluation and parenting support services. Learning about evidence-based evaluation abroad can help us to effectively lobby our policy-makers and donators in France.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

In an economically constrained environment, French decision makers need to develop alternatives to institutionalized care and start building more inclusive practices towards for families in difficulty.

My learning can be transferred to professional and decision makers both in Apprentis d’Auteuil and in the public sector, in the field of state social policy.
Claude Martin
CNRS, Head of Research Units, France

Training: Master in psychology, (France and Canada) (1979) PhD sociology University of Paris Saint-Denis- Vincennes (1992 with Robert Castel) and French habilitation (2002 Paris Sorbonne). Research assistant at the university of Caen (1982-1992), Professor at the French School of Public Health, Rennes (1992-1996); Researcher at the CNRS (1996-2002); Research Professor at the CNRS (since 2002); Chair on "social care" at the EHESP School of Public Health and director of the Centre of Research on Political Action in Europe (a research team of about 100 researchers in Rennes, France).
Principal research interests: childcare, family and long term care policies; transformation of the welfare state in post-industrial societies.

Claude.Martin@ehesp.fr

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

The symposium relates directly to my main research interests: i.e. childhood and family policies in a comparative perspective. I just finished a research on parenting support policies in Europe comparing the situation in 5 EU member states (France, Germany, UK, the Netherlands and Sweden) with my colleagues Mary Daly, Trudie Knijn, Ilona Ostner and Asa Lundqvist (PolChi http://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/213091.html ). See in particular the special issue of the British Journal Social Policy and Society (14 (4), September 2015) and the collective book ‘Être un bon parent’: une injonction contemporaine (Presses de l’EHESP, 2015).

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

I can contribute by presenting some elements of this collective research and more precisely explain the French context and some specificities in relation to evidence-based policies in the field of childhood.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I hope to learn new elements concerning methods and instruments of intervention towards parents and their children.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

My learning could be transferred to professionals and decision makers in the field of public health, social intervention and social policy, but also to graduate students in France.
Flora Bolter
ONED, France

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

As a political scientist working on child protection issues, I am particularly interested in developing my knowledge of family and parenting support initiatives in various countries, as well as of their outcomes. A good child protection system is one in which situations of danger are detected and children helped, but which can also rely on a strong prevention network, based on universal social services as well as specialized and/or targeted interventions with children and families. Family and parenting support bridges the gap between universal services and targeted interventions: it can therefore play a pivotal role for child protection, and is connected to many issues that child protection is confronted with.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

Because of my focus as a specialist in child protection services, my outlook is informed by the issues that are raised by child protection interventions. The question of the delicate balance between parents’ rights and children’s rights is one that is very present in this framework, particularly in France where trying to reach this balance and promote interventions that do not separate families was one of the driving forces between the 2007 reform of child protection. It is my hope that I can contribute to the symposium by drawing examples from the French context.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

Making the case for the development of family and parenting support requires evidence and knowledge of existing practices in a variety of settings. Being part of these discussions would, I think, help me to refine my vision of these initiatives and their outcomes, which would be significant both for the work ONED does to help professionals identify best practices and develop their own, and for my particular work in terms of observing the broader system and understanding its evolutions.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

In France, parenting support is gaining momentum as a form of intervention with families. It is seen as an effective tool to prevent child abuse or situations of danger. But it is still not perceived as a social investment, in that it is not articulated to other types of intervention or thought of as having long-lasting and potentially large-scale effects. Drawing from promising practices from all over the world, and from European countries in particular, would help promote the generalization of these interventions and to frame them as a right of both families and children.
Renata Szredzinska

Nobody’s Child Foundation, Poland

Renata Szredzinska is Programme Manager for Nobody’s Child Foundation ‘Good Parent- Good Start’.

More information about the foundation or Renata’s work can be found at www.fdn.pl / renata.szredzinska@fdn.pl.

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

In the Nobody’s Children Foundation I coordinate and early intervention programme called “Good Parent – Good Start”. It is aimed at supporting vulnerable families with young children (aged 0-6). The programme is strongly based on interdisciplinary cooperation with various statutory institutions and organizations. We are also currently looking into improving our evaluation methods to be able to demonstrate the effects of such an approach. In our organization I am also a member of a working group to constitute a road map for improving the respect of children’s rights throughout all our activities and promote an approach based on children’s rights among other organizations in Poland.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

What I think I can contribute to the symposium is sharing our 7-year experience of building interdisciplinary cooperation in early family support in Warsaw.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I hope that the symposium will be a great opportunity to learn about inspiring practices in integrated working and promotion of children rights and to gain knowledge of building and using evidence in prevention programmes.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

I hope to be able to use information in our daily work and with our contacts with local authorities and statutory partners.
Monika Sajkowska is the Chair Person of Nobody’s Children Foundation, a non-profit organisation working toward the goals of protecting children from abuse and providing help for children for abused children, their families and their care givers. More information can be found at www.fdn.pl

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

I can share our 25 year experience in counteracting and preventing child abuse and neglect. As a researcher and an author of numerous studies on the problem of child abuse and neglect, I can also contribute with the information and data on this problem in Poland.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I hope to gain knowledge on good practices in family support and prevention of child abuse and neglect in other European countries. I also hope to expand my knowledge on evaluation methods, on building the evidence and using it in planning new activities. I also hope for inspiration on improving cooperation with local and central authorities.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

In the Foundation, I am also editor-in-chief of a scientific quarterly magazine “Dziecko krzywdzone. Teoria. Badania. Praktyka" (Child Abused. Theory. Research. Practice), which is the only magazine in Poland entirely dedicated to the problem of child abuse and its prevention. I plan to use the knowledge gained during the school in Galway to formulate stronger and more evidence based messages to the professionals involved in family support and child protection in Poland.
Joanna-Dolinska Dobek
Warsaw City Hall, Poland

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

Both my own interests and professional work are related to family issues. I was one of the members of the team which elaborated an operational Programme „Family” for 2010-2020 in Warsaw. This program is aimed at supporting families with children living in Warsaw through creating friendly conditions enabling the parents to take proper care of their children and enhancing their well-being. In my opinion, families with young children should be a special focus of interest for policy makers. From the prevention perspective, it is families with young children that should be offered specific support and assistance, that will enable all family members to create secure family bonds.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

Information and knowledge gained during the symposium, as well as examples of good practices, can be a great inspiration for new activities and new projects to be realized in Warsaw. Conclusions from discussions during the symposium can be also very valuable in preparing new policies and strategic documents, aimed at improving the conditions for Warsaw families and children.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

I think I can contribute with my professional experience stemming from work in local authorities and realization of numerous projects for families and children.
Marco Ius
University of Padova, Italy

Marco is a post Doctoral Researcher at LabRIEF, Dept. of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy and Applied Psychology. See http://labrief.fisppa.unipd.it for further information on LabRIEF, publications, news and further contacts.

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

Since 2010, I've been involved in P.I.P.P.I. (Program of Intervention for Prevention of Institutionalization), a National programme developed as an intensive care program for neglectd families, run by the Italian Ministry of Welfare and LabRIEF. P.I.P.P.I. aims at innovating practice of intervention with neglecting families with children 0-11 y.o. in order to reduce the risk of child placement out-of-home. P.I.P.P.I. focuses on supporting parenting through a multi-professional and resilient based approach that are integrated between different institutions, services, formal and informal networks.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

On behalf of P.I.P.P.I. I would share how we are facing the challenge of integration (by articulating in a coherent way the various fields of action around the needs of children living in condition of neglect), the challenge of participation (taking into account the perspective of parents and children in building analysis and response to these needs), and the challenge of evaluation (evaluating every family in a shared way to ensure a transparent, accountable, deep, integrated and quality assessment process). Particularly, my contribution would regard the participatory tools used in P.I.P.P.I., the results of the different steps of P.I.P.P.I. implementation (from the 1st pilot in 2010-11 to scaling up process 2013-2015). Moreover I would refer to the circular connection of research, training and intervention, the organization in 3 different levels of work (scientific, institutional and practice level) and the training and tutoring programme for professionals, coaches and service leaders.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

Being part of the school, I will be able to empower the integration of rights-based approaches in our programme, to deepen the reciprocal relationship between the focus on child’s rights and the focus on parenting support, intervention, and to gain inspiration for continuing the process of the scaling up of P.I.P.P.I.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

At the moment, we are finishing the 1st step of scale up and are at the middle of the 2nd step (84 cities, 1150 children and 900 families). In January the 3rd step will start with 56 more cities and about 600 more children. The “Galway” learning will help with organizing the next steps of scale up, empowering the research-practice dialogue, and reflecting on the way to make P.I.P.P.I. integrate into the future National policies.
Monica Pedroni
Regione Emilia Romagna, Italy


www.sACP.government.bg
www.stopech.sACP.government.bg

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

In recent years, the issue of child protection has become more visible because the economic crisis has taken its toll on local authorities’ budgets. In this sector, we need to develop research, documentation, accountability for the complexity of a particular situation, intensive and integrated integration and full assessment of their outcomes. The protection of the child or adolescent takes place still too often with its “secure placement” not accompanied by a support intervention and “recovery” of the family of origin.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

With regard to the scope of child protection, Emilia Romagna are among the most significant actions. Promoted and supported over the years, the spread of a culture of proactive working with co-projection together with institutions, private capital, citizens and the volunteer sector has created important preconditions for the development of synergies and empowerment.

In 2013, a regional resolution to address and improve the reception and care of child victims of maltreatment and abuse, that in defining the phenomenon provides operational recommendations in the different phases of the intervention: the recognition, activation of network services, reporting to the Judicial Authority and multidisciplinary assessment.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

We have been asking ourselves for years with regard to a possibility of intervening intensively and with greater appropriateness. This is why the theme of social-health integration, evaluation and treatment by a multi-professional team element becomes qualitatively nullifying and necessary.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

This question is very difficult because in Italy (my country) each region has different regulation of welfare policies. The regions in the current Italian system of law have exclusive jurisdiction in matters of social regulation. But I think that in this time of economic crisis and public organizations, there is still work to do, especially in times like these which require great attention and flexibility to change. In this perspective it is crucial that everyone gives what they feel they are able to.
Mila Tashkova

State Agency for Child Protection, Bulgaria

Mila is the Chief Expert for State Policy for the Child Directorate, State Agency for Child Protection. Information on the agency can be found at www.sacp.government.bg that includes contacts lists, a synopsis of their work along with their methods of carry such work out. This is all available through Bulgarian and shortened through English.

www.sacp.government.bg
www.stopech.sacp.government.bg

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

From my perspective, as a participant representative of the State and the State Agency for Child Protection in particular, the scope of the themes and objectives, set by the School are of great benefit to the development and implementation of policies, related to the area of children’s rights. Major interests to me are the integrated approach in the implementation of policies and working together to improve the welfare of children and families in Bulgaria, the practices are aimed at a unified and holistic approach for solving the problems and crises through cooperation of all professional parties from the social, health, educational and cultural life of children and families. In addition, of particular importance are the practices, related to preventive work – early detect of problems, comprehensive child assessment of needs and prevent expansion into negative consequences for children.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

The contribution on my side will be in sharing with the other participants the information and practices of the development and implementation of Child Protection Policies by the State Agency for Child Protection, the coordination and collaboration between all the stakeholders. The State Agency for Child Protection is the specialized body of the Council of Ministries for leading, coordination and monitoring the child protection system in Bulgaria. In particular, I have experience in planning and developing key strategic documents, related to the safeguarding of children’s rights, as well as in the implementation of various projects, connected to the rights of the child.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

To receive new ideas that we could implement in the development of our child protection policies, for coordination and collaboration with other relevant state bodies and NGOs and to possibly make new contacts.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

To disseminate the information, received at the forum, to share the lessons learned and best practices, to discuss with my colleagues the possibilities of changing legislation in the area of child protection.
How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

As an assistant in Constitutional law at the Law Faculty of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” the basic rights and freedoms of citizens and of children in particular are at the heart of my academic and research interests. Although, the rights of the child are incorporated in the Bulgarian Constitution, there is still room for improvement when it comes to the constitutionalisation of the so called participation rights. In this regard, the challenge to recognize those rights that allow children to take part at the decision-making processes on the highest normative level is one of the basic areas of my scientific inquiries. Thus, my academic aspirations for elaborating a contemporary legal basis as a premise for the effective realization of children’s rights fits well in the school core themes.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

As mentioned above, in order to comply with the international standards the Bulgarian constitutional legislator should adopt a rights-based approach that recognizes children as active participants in the realization of their rights. Though, there is no uniform pattern for achieving this goal, one of the outcomes that I envisage from my participation at the school is to formulate some guiding principles to be followed when drafting constitutional clauses on children’s rights. Furthermore, during the next academic year I would be teaching a specialized course on Children Rights at the Law Faculty of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” and I am confident that the symposium would enhance my expertise on the subject.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

The Constitution is a living instrument and should adapt to the changing social-economic and political environment. So far the Bulgarian Constitution has been amended four times but none of these amendments tackle the theme of children’s rights. I firmly believe that the Bulgarian society would soon apprehend the necessity of a more child-oriented policy on the different levels of the normative pyramid. Having said that, I expect to apply the knowledge gained during the symposium in the forthcoming public and academic debate in my country that would trigger the desired paradigmatic shift.
How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

The theme of the school is going to be covered through an aspect which is the philosophy base of the social programme our organization is implementing and this is “Realizing children’s rights through empowering parents and families”. This is really important aspect through which all other sub topics of the school: public investment, integrated practices, rights based evaluation and best interest of the child are going to be covered.

In Bulgaria and in Eastern Europe it is a real challenge to base a professional operation on the foundation of empowerment of parents and families. This is a region which is still struggling to create a culture based on human rights respect, recognition for the role of the family and the local community in the care provision, respect for the capacity of children with special needs and tolerance to diversity. I am really looking forward to a reassurance and useful tips for the way my personal and professional philosophy can be shared with other key players on national and regional level to create a positive and tangible change for children and families.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

Learning and confidence, contacts and generating clear ideas for the pathways of improving the realization of children’s rights in Bulgaria through empowering families and parents and through modern financing policies.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

The possibilities are not very high because of the demand and readiness of the state authorities but because of the clear motivation and realized need of the NGO and academic parts of our society for wiser and more effective policies which respect the contribution of the individual and the community into the change process.
Anna Frank Viron
Talin Centre for Children at Risk, Estonia

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

As a practicing professional at the Tallinn Center for Children at Risk and at the nonprofit organization RuaCrew, working with adolescents with behavioral problems and addiction issues, one of my main concerns is the wellbeing of the children, as well as a productive cooperation with their parents. In addition to the professional empathy I have for “my children”, I’m able to see their angle, being able to place myself in their shoes, so I can, in many occasions, (re)present the children’s role in the thicket of legislation wherever need be.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

Besides being a Head of Department at the Tallinn Centre for Children at Risk and a Managing Member of the Board at RuaCrew, my daily tasks include first-hand contact with the children and their parents, as well as contact with the social workers and child protectors appointed by law, i.e. being part of the whole network supporting the growth of the wellbeing of children, I have a somewhat unique perspective both as an official and as a representative of the children’s rights, hence, I believe it to be possible to apply my know-how successfully in theory and in practice.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

My envisaged outcomes are: new relevant contacts important for my work, fresh ideas to use in my daily work with children, parents and other professionals; updated perspective to improve my practices; to gain more extensive theoretical background to my practical experience.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

The Tallinn Center for Children at Risk is a unique establishment in Estonia mainly due to its practices in the field and its engagement contains sharp and delicate problems with adolescents and their parents – as the Head of Department, being responsible for attaining and forwarding relevant information, it is required that I constantly educate myself as much as possible this symposium being a great opportunity. The non-profit organization, RuaCrew, is part of a roundtable making changes in the legislation for juvenile justice organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia, i.e. we, at the non-profit organization as well as others in the field, believe our firsthand knowledge and experience in the area to have a significant value also on legislation, so as a representative of my organization I can influence the development of the legislative processes to guarantee the best result possible. The job of an organization participating in an ongoing policy debate is never ending, so there is little one can underline in one document pointing out the goals. However, I do hope that the knowhow, contacts and synergy received from this symposium is enough to encourage me - as a manager, member of the board and as a person responsible for children’s rights - to continue working as I believe to be right.
I am responsible for the EEA programme “Children and Youth at Risk” predefined project “Improving the support system for children and youth at risk”. The aim of the project is to develop a cross-sectorial support system to alleviate the risks affecting children and youth and to improve the wellbeing of children and youth, complete with development of an appropriate legal and organisational framework, application of the necessary measures, and ensuring their quality. Cross-sectorial co-operation and preventive work, as well as development of evidence-based interventions, are emphasized.

The main activities of the project are:

1) To create the concept for improving the support system for children and youth at risk
2) To implement two evidence-based programmes - A positive parenting programme "Incredible Years" and a family-based intervention programme MDFT to support youth suffering from serious behavioural problems and their families
3) To establish the regional support units for empowering local governments to support children and families.

We have prepared the concept for improving the cross-sectorial support system for children and youth at risk. The concept describes the main challenges of establishing the cross-sectorial (healthcare, legal protection, education, welfare system, etc.) support system for children and youth at risk, and recommends the most vital courses of action to the state.

At the moment we are in the middle of planning the evaluation of both evidence-based programmes. The school core themes are very closely related to my particular interests, especially integrated practices and evaluation methods.

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Reili Rand
Child Advocacy Chamber, Estonia

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

The School core themes will relate directly to our network, Child Advocacy Chamber, activities and capacity building for advocacy for children’s rights. Child Advocacy Chamber (CAC) is a network of organisations which focus is on policies concerning Estonian children and families.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

As the representative and leader for our country delegation we will prepare the country introduction and participate actively in all discussions.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I envisage an increased awareness and capacity for advocacy and policy influencing on child right issues.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

As growing and developing network for increasing children and families’ welfare, also working closely to influence policies and advocating towards national parliament and policy execution agents (ministries) we are able to feed into any on-going policy debates. Also learning gained will benefit the capacity building for our coalition members.
How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

I am an associate professor, field coordinator, co-facilitator of training programs and academic process at Lviv Polytechnic National University, Ukraine. I am a research consultant on family care issues for the Lviv City Centre of Social Services for Families, Children and Youth. I am also an educator specializing in the areas of crisis and trauma, supervision and multicultural social work issues. I have worked for EveryChild, which is an international development charity working to stop children growing up vulnerable and alone, and was responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring EveryChild Projects on alternative forms of childcare in the City of Lviv and Lviv region. My work has taken me to Canada where I underwent special training in social work as a member of International Exchange Program at the University of Manitoba, Canada, School of Social Work and later was involved in development of a new Department of Social Work at Lviv Polytechnic National University.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

As an instructor and social worker, I deal with many diverse social issues on daily basis; I have to make decisions based on my values, skills and knowledge. I published more than 10 publications on the development of Family forms of State Care System for Children in Ukraine, in particular foster family, on Supervision Development in Humanitarian sector. Unfortunately the child care system in Ukraine still does not meet the demands of the current socio-economic environment and it needs substantial improvement in terms of assessing children living in families at risk of breakdown, preventing children going into institutional care as well as more effective approaches in protecting children’s property rights and welfare in general. The current system of social guarantees and social protection of families and children was developed and legislatively regulated in 1970s and as such, it takes almost no account of the social effects resulting from recent political and economic transformation.

In particular, the current system does not support an individual approach to children and vulnerable families but trends towards broad definitions of what children and families need.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

As Ukraine reclaims its identity and attempts to find a balance between control and empowerment, individuals, families and communities struggle to reclaim and express their own identities and power. In many contexts where humans live together, uncertainty and struggle are often expressed through violation and abuse of rights of those who are closest, children in particular. So it is very important to learn from and gain an international experience of how to deal with those issues and adjust it at home in order to set up community based services for children and families where helpers will be advocating for their rights and assisting in creating proper conditions for the development and valuable social functioning of children and families.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

I believe that participation in the Galway School will help me to understand better the role of helper through various means of confronting and removing barriers to human/child rights in ways that involve working with the children, families, community and/or society toward empowerment. I will think critically about human rights and power dynamics in varying culturally and politically oppressive systems. I hope to assist others to identify gaps in human/child rights and work toward organizing for change.
Halyna Postoliuk
Hope and Homes for Children, Ukraine

Since 2001 Halyna Postoliuk has been working as Country Director of ‘Hope and Homes for Children’ in Ukraine. Important social programs directed to help orphans and children deprived of parental care, prevent abandonment of young children, implement deinstitutionalisation in Ukraine are being carried out under her leadership.

Halyna started her professional career in 1992 as a specialist for social service for youth, where she had been responsible for the development of social service network in one of the regions of Ukraine. Since 1994 she worked as Deputy Head of the department for Youth and Sports of the Kyiv oblast state administration, led the oblast child protection department and was Deputy of oblast department for Youth and Family. In her daily work she dealt with the protection of children and youth, prevention of juvenile crime, supporting families with many children, developing family care for orphans and children deprived of parental care.

In 1998 she had been invited to work with the Ministry of Ukraine for Family and Youth, where she was responsible for organizational and informational activities and public relations.

“...All work at state authority agencies of different levels, and a charity, has been actively supporting the children, especially children left without parental care, fighting for the realization of the right of every child to be brought up in a family. Together with my team we implemented innovative programs on developing of family type homes, social support for women who had intended to abandon their newborn babies, reforming the system of institutional care of children. All of them have become a part of national programs in Ukraine.

However we never stop improving our tools we use in our projects. I expect to receive new kind of approaches we could implement in Ukraine. Our country has the poorest number regarding institutional care for children across Europe, so there’s a lot of work to be done both on practice and advocacy level. Strengthening families and development of preventive services is the core crucial factor of success in provision of deinstitutionalisation programs. So there’s a huge interest to know more about different approaches in empowering children and families.

As the national coordinator of ‘Opening Doors for Children’ Campaign in Ukraine we also provide constant advocacy and capacity building towards national child protection reform. So there are a lot of practices and tools in this area we could also adapt in Ukraine.”
Egle Sumskiene
Vilnius University, Lithuania

Egle is an Associate Professor at Vilnius University, a social worker, sociologist and expert on disability, mental health and human rights issues. She has been working for Vilnius University for over 10 years.

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"During my academic career I have been particularly interested in the process of deinstitutionalization across the Post-Soviet countries. I’m also an author of several publications concerning analysis of the deinstitutionalization process.

Although Lithuania is currently undergoing the process of deinstitutionalization there is very little of academic discourse around this subject. Schools and universities of social work should be active agents of the reform, support it with knowledge, adjusted study programs, as well as initiating academic research into this subject. Nevertheless the academic institutions generally ignore the subject of deinstitutionalization and do not include it in their curricula nor prioritize it in the state funding for scientific research. Thus the students are not prepared to work in the changing system of care and become an active part of it.

On the other hand, Lithuania lacks researches about the best practices, obstacles to the reform, analysis of opportunities. At Vilnius University during my course about Human Rights and Social Work on my own initiative I introduce the students with children’s rights violations in care institutions, however the holistic approach in academia towards child care reform is still absent. This school offers knowledge, up-to-date information, as well as opportunities of networking with an international academic community. Moreover, having direct links with Lithuanian NGOs working in the reform of the system of child care I would contribute to this process with academic knowledge and students involvement."
Vilma Šilaliene is the head of the social assistance division for the Vilnius Municipal Government. More information can be found from, and contact can made at: vilma.silaliene@vilnius.lt

**How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?**

From 25 years as a mother, and 10 years as a professional, I have been working and trying to understand what is the “best” for the child. I am still searching for the answers on how to help the families to keep the right to raise their children and how to help children who have lost their parents and family, in the best way possible.

**How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?**

Simple answers and easy solutions I have not found. At the moment our country (Lithuania) is going through a period of change in the field of child welfare; the transition from institutional care to family and community-based services begun and is in the process.

**What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?**

We need to create a new service system for children and their parents, and for this reason, with a great interest, I am taking part in the Galway School 2015, hoping to find new ideas and solution.

**What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?**

I’m looking for the best examples of evidence-based practices, that I can further use in the decision-making process related to the development of strategic documents on the investment in children and parents; to help make changes to the current child care system and development of the support services to children and families in our city.
Kristina Stepanova

Lighthouse Foundation Lithuania / For the Rights of the Child, Lithuania

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

As Lithuania is currently undergoing a deinstitutionalization process and the country is focusing more and more on finding best solutions for children and families through development of new services and supports, it is crucial to be involved in the discussions and experience sharing in the field of effective investments in children and families. There is no doubt that investments in children are the investments in the future of the society, and that the foundation laid in early childhood is the essence of individual’s health and well-being throughout his/her whole life. Therefore, investments in children can be seen as one of the most valuable long-term investments that contribute to cost saving for governments too.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

One of our delegation members is a representative of Vilnius City municipality. Vilnius City municipality was one of the first municipalities that expressed active approach towards the deinstitutionalization process – the municipality has held several meetings and consultations with non-governmental organisations, approved its’ own Action Plan of Reform of the Child Care system which, inter alia, includes development of more effective services for children and their families. Therefore, there is a great chance that knowledge gained during the Galway School will add to this further development. Also, as the deinstitutionalization process has been actively discussed at the national level, learning gained during the school will provide additional resources for the civil society to be actively involved in discussions and consultations with decision makers, both on national and local level (incl. Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Lithuanian Parliament, and others). E.g., I will hold several trainings at the local level in early 2016, focusing on the deinstitutionalization process and development of the skills in this field of the representatives of the local municipalities, learning gained during the school can be used in this case too, strengthening skills of local municipalities in better parental/families support.
Aliona is an Associate Professor, Head of Social Work Dept. at Moldova State University

**How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?**

The Department of Social Work from Moldova State University has a direct interest in the school generic topic. Starting with 2010 the training of Social work students at Bachelor Degree level is conducted on two specializations: *Social work of families and children at risk* and *Social work of elder people*. At Master Degree level we have several programs: Childhood and Children Rights Studies, Community Justice Administration, Social Services Management, Family-centered social policies. The most popular is Family-centered social policies. The training plan for the Social work specialty includes a lot of courses related with school generic topic. I am also very interested in school themes because I want to enrich my knowledge in this field and to outline new research directions.

**How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?**

I could provide evidence from my practical experience and share lessons learnt about the implementation of training programs and research aligned to international standards in the field of sociology and social work.

**What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?**

I am sure I will leave the school with new approaches to family issues, knowledge and skills in rights-based evaluation and also new methods in social research and family life. I will use the knowledge in informing the professors and students of the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work about topics discussed in the school.

**What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?**

The curricula of the specialty Social work comprise a lot of courses directly related to the topics discussed at school such as: National Legislative Framework in Family field, Family protection policies in national and European context, Methods of elaboration and evaluation of social policies, Social Inclusion Policies, Family and migration: implications for child etc. The information will be used to develop university curricula of the specialty. Knowledge also will be transferred to university partners and disseminate through roundtables, trainings, coaching, scientific conferences etc.
How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

CCF/HHC Moldova has a direct interest in the school generic topic as our work is related to supporting families at risk of separation from children as well as supporting families in order to prepare them for children’ reintegration. Our experience showed that financial support alone is not a guarantee of good functioning. It has to be accompanied with psychological counselling, parenting skills development, emotional support etc.

I am also very interested in working on the sensitive issue of identifying a child’s best interest and making difficult decisions.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

I could provide evidence from my practical experience and to share lessons learnt about the type, methods and duration of working with families; examples of situations when defining and deciding on child’s best interest is not always straightforward.

In a current project our organization works in increasing the advocacy capacities of 25 grass-roots organizations who work directly with children and families.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I am sure I will leave the school with new approaches to family issues, knowledge and skills in rights-based evaluation and its use in advocacy. I will also use the knowledge in informing and mentoring the grass-roots NGOs in 13 counties in Moldova.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

Moldova is in final stage of developing the 2014-2020 Child Protection Strategy Action Plan. According to this plan, one of the general objectives is to ensure that all children grow up in a family environment. For successful implementation of such objective supporting families and integrating counselling with monetary support and benefits is crucial. Knowledge will be transferred to statutory local partners through training, coaching and mentoring.
Rita Nunes
Freie Universitaet Berlin, Germany

Rita is researcher at Freie Universitaet Berlin with an interest in Children’s Rights and Rights Realisation. More information can be found from rita.nunes@fu-berlin.de.

How do I think/feel my particular interests relate to the school core themes?

Being a researcher at the Freie Universitaet Berlin with a background on children’s rights, my particular interest lays on ensuring not only the respect for children’s rights but also the listening and hearing of children when it comes to the realization of their rights.

How do I see myself contributing to the symposium?

By bringing the rights based approach into question and highlighting the importance of child participation. Furthermore, I believe that new synergies shall be considered between academia and practitioners and with this I would like to contribute for a stronger cooperation between these two.

What do I envisage as outcomes for me in being part of the school?

I envisage to, by representing academia, to start new partnerships and involve more civil societies in academic work.

What possibility do you see in your country to apply learning gained and any on-going policy debate that you will be able to feed into?

I believe that at the moment with the situation lived in Germany concerning migration, all topics related to children’s rights and the empowerment of families is of great importance.