

“CHILDREN’S RIGHTS IN ALTERNATIVE CARE: WALK THE TALK!”¹

8-9 November 2016
Paris

Ministère de la Famille, de l'Enfance et des Droits des Femmes

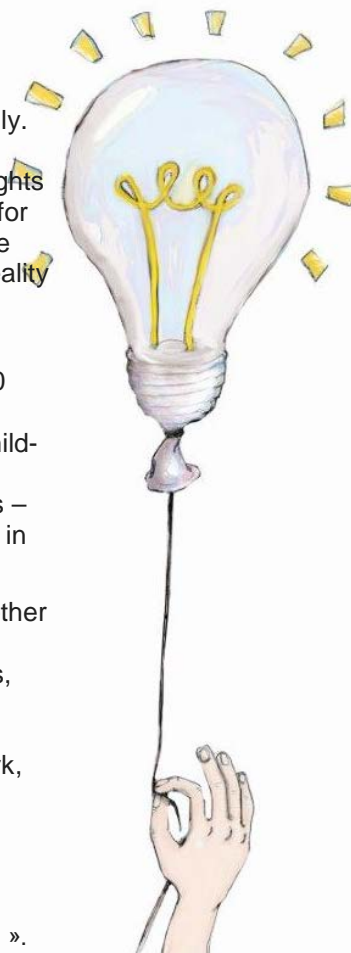
A. BACKGROUND

Care professionals work directly with children in various responsibilities, as social workers, youth workers, educators and psychologists, child therapists, child care co-workers, foster parents and others. They are part of the child care service workforce, which also includes other professionals having an impact on the lives of children in alternative care, be it at policy level or in direct interaction with them. If equipped appropriately, care professionals have the means to instil effective and meaningful change for children and young people in care. This means that they can help children to develop to their full potential and, ultimately, empower them to participate in processes that impact upon their lives. Recent participatory research of child's views conducted by SOS Children's Villages in Europe (see *When Care Ends*²) has signalled that while young people value highly the role of care professionals in protecting their rights, there is still a worrying gap in the awareness of care professionals about these rights, especially in applying a child rights-based approach to their work.

Clearly it is impossible to build effective child protection systems without strengthening and investing in the child care service workforce, in particular in care professionals, who carry a responsibility to protect, respect and fulfil the rights of children in alternative care. The importance of training care professionals as part of the deinstitutionalisation process is well highlighted in various international and European policy documents and recommendations calling for a paradigm shift, viewing children as rights holders instead of “objects of care” only. SOS Children's Villages have worked tirelessly to ensure a holistic approach to the development of quality care alternatives for children and young people which places their rights at the centre of all service delivery. Through the use of the UNCRC and the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, SOS Children's Villages together with partners, such as the Council of Europe and Eurochild, have made efforts towards rendering children's rights a reality for all children who have lost parental care or are at risk of losing it.

Most recently, as part of a project financially supported by the European Commission DG Justice, SOS Children's Villages, together with the Council of Europe, Eurochild and with 40 national and international partners, has developed the practice-oriented manual “Realising Children's Rights”. This manual is a tool for training care professionals on how to apply a child-rights based approach in their daily work with children and young people in alternative care. Until the second half of 2016, more than 900 care professionals in eight European countries – Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Romania, Croatia, France, Italy, Hungary – will have been trained in this approach using this manual.

The **conference “Children's Rights in Alternative Care: Walk the Talk!”** shall bring together a range of stakeholders from the child protection area including representatives from the European Commission, Council of Europe, national Ministries, child ombudspersons, NGOs, universities, as well as care professionals and young people themselves. The conference is meant as a platform for starting a discussion on how to raise the capacity of the child care service workforce and in particular care professionals on embedding child rights in their work,



¹ Title in French is « Les droits de l'enfant accueilli en protection de l'enfance: de la parole aux actes ! ».

² <http://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/publications/publications/research>

ensuring that they acquire the practical child care skills and capabilities to support and enable the development of each individual child to his/her fullest potential. The training module produced by SOS Children's Villages together with national and international partners, as well as the experience gathered while implementing the project in 8 European countries, will serve as starting point of the discussion.

More specifically the goals of the conference are to:

- ✓ **Sensitise actors** in the field of child protection on the necessity of making children's rights an integral part of care, and therefore, something that professionals working in this field should be concerned with.
- ✓ **Show decision-makers** that this will only be possible if children's rights are integrated in the initial and continuing training of professionals, and present the European module developed by SOS Children's Villages and its partners as one solution.
- ✓ **Reinforce the legitimacy of SOS Children's Villages and its partners** in engaging in the improvement of the quality of care and in the training of care professionals.
- ✓ **Promote exchange between European stakeholders** around the results of the project and similar initiatives.
- ✓ **Present the impact** an effective child-rights training together with youth participation can have in raising the capacity of professionals and thereby the quality of care.
- ✓ **Create a nurturing environment** to launch a partnership around the recommendations based on the evaluation of trainings conducted with more than 900 care professionals and develop follow-up initiatives (e.g. advocacy messages, roadmap).

The event is co-organised by SOS Children's Villages International and SOS Children's Villages France with support of the Defender of Rights and the French Ministry of Family, Childhood and Women's Rights and with financial support from the European Commission DG Justice.

B. TARGET GROUP

Day 1: 280 participants (maximum room capacity):

- Delegations of 8 countries (SOS Children's Villages, national partners and young people) and of the European partners
- Decision-makers who develop policies and strategies at national and international level (Members of the network ENOC, representatives of Ministries and local authorities, departmental councils, Council of Europe, European Commission, EUROCHILD, Terre des hommes, etc.)
- Representatives of French associations and facilities which are members of the Child-rights Ombudsmen Committee, other associations
- French professionals from departmental councils and from the relating child-protection sector as well as actors from the field of social work education
- Representatives of the headquarters and other establishments of SOS Children's Villages France

Day 2: 90 participants (maximum room capacity):

- Delegations of 8 countries (SOS Children's Villages, national partners and young people) and of the European partners
- Decision-makers and representatives of like-minded organisations

C. YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Some of the young people who participated actively in different activities of the European project will be invited to take part in the presentations of the national delegations.

