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VIII annual international conference on preventing child abuse “What Kind of a Place is Kindergarten?”

Children change, and so do the expectations in regards to nursery schools. We keep trying to strike a balance between the child as an individual person and children as a group, between strict order and freedom, the rules set by an institution and the wishes of parents, old habits and new methods. How not to be confused by all that and be aware of one’s role in the life of the child?

The goals of the conference are:

- To strengthen the role of nursery schools in promoting child safety;
- To inform about the most recent research on child disciplining practices;
- To give practical advice for work with children and cooperation with parents.

The target audience of the event is the staff and managers of nursery schools, parents of pre-school children, as well as others involved in the protection of children’s rights.

PROGRAMME

9:00 - 9:30	Morning coffee, registration
9:30 - 11:40	Session I
9:30 - 9:50	Opening of the conference. <i>Agnese Sladzevska ("Center Dardedze")</i>
9:50 - 10:30	Is it easy to be a child? Developments in modern childhood research. <i>Zanda Rubene (University of Latvia)</i>
<p>Presentation: Childhood research is an interdisciplinary area of study in modern social sciences. A new theoretical understanding of childhood is arising in the postmodern society, making researchers review the perception of the "child" phenomenon and the goals and tasks of raising a child, thus shifting the research focus from the moral obligation in pedagogy to a child's needs analysis for everyday experience development. Pluralism of thought and lifestyles that characterises a postmodern situation promotes liberalisation tendencies in child raising and the formation of a child-centred society, as well as provoking a discussion on the disappearance of childhood in its traditional sense. Within the context of childhood research, the following questions are put forward:</p> <p>Why is adults' authority in child raising on the decline? Why do adults think that nowadays children have too many rights? How to raise a child whose games and conversations (i.e. culture) are often not understood by adults?</p> <p>Zanda Rubene: professor in general pedagogy at the University of Latvia since 2010. Since 2016 – Head of the Department of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education, Psychology and art of the University of Latvia. Research interests: childhood research, digital childhood, critical thinking as a pedagogical phenomenon.</p>	

10:30 - 10:50	Pedagogue's Role in the Life of a Young Child and Creating a Safe Environment in a Nursery School. <i>Iveta Nagla (Riga City Council's Education, Culture and Sports Department)</i>
<p>Presentation: While a child's parents are away at work, a nursery school pedagogue stands in for the child's mother and father. It is important to create and strengthen the cooperation between the pedagogue and the child's family, but what to do and how to act when the teacher notices changes in a child's behaviour? How to talk about them with parents in order to solve the problems together? How to create mutual trust? Lately, these questions have been growing in importance; therefore, it is both worth it and also necessary to strengthen the pedagogues' educational literacy.</p> <p>Iveta Nagla: More than 20 years of experience as Head of the Preschool Education Department of Riga Municipality. Started her career in a preschool education institution.</p>	
10:50 - 11:10	Teachers' competence in promoting children's welfare. <i>Kristīne Jozauska (State Education Quality Service)</i>
<p>Presentation: Each child has a right to a fulfilling and healthy life, and it is our – the adults' – responsibility to provide children with environment that promotes trust, friendship, safety and happiness. In the modern society with its unlimited possibilities and risks, children's right protection encounters new challenges and lack of safeguards. In order to use the rights protection mechanisms efficiently, it is necessary to, first and foremost, have a common understanding of the problems. Children's rights protection experts all over the world acknowledge that the principle of cooperation and split responsibility is the basis of healthy children's development. The role of educational institutions in promoting children's identity, welfare and mental health is steadily growing. Research confirms that the teachers' competence has direct correlation (whether negative or positive) to problem solving.</p> <p>Kristīne Jozauska: National coordinator of the specific objective No. 8.3.4. "Reducing Early School Leaving by Implementing Measures of Prevention and Intervention" of the State Education Quality Service operational programme "Growth and Employment", project No.8.3.4.0/16/l/001 "Support for Early School Leaving Reduction". ↴</p>	

Master of Psychology and Education Sciences; currently studying for her doctoral degree in pedagogy. The current professional experience involves mainly work in children’s rights protection, consulting, providing psychosocial help for both children and their parents, networking with partner organisations. In recent years, Jozauska has been working in education, researching the teachers’ competence within the dynamic fluctuation of the educational system.

11:10 - 11:30 **Parents in the kindergarten – wishes and reality. What can we do to ensure that the experience is positive?**
Zane Johansone (Latvian Parent Movement)

Presentation: we are going to discuss the parents’ expectations and wishes, concerns and even fears when preparing and sending a child to a preschool educational institution, as well as successful cooperation – what it means, the possible forms of cooperation and how it can benefit all parties involved.

Zane Johansone: a mother of two sons. One of the founders of the Latvian Parent Movement, as well as its board member; the originator of the idea for the “A Positive Start of School” project (2013 - 2016) and its coordinator, the co-author of the study “Assessment of School and Pre-School Self-Governments and Recommendations for Improving Efficiency” (2012).

While her children attended the pre-school institution, Johansone was actively involved in its council, as well as being its Head for many years. Now, she is taking part in the parent council of the school. While working on the project, we had many discussions with the parents and Heads, as well as the pedagogues of pre-school educational institutions, about the role and involvement of the parents, which is not always seen as a positive factor; however, if the cooperation is solution-oriented and based on mutual trust, it is even desirable and welcome. The results can be surprising!

11:30 - 12:00 **Panel discussion**

12:00 - 13:00 ***DINNER***

13:00 - 14:50	Session II
13:00 - 13:15	Supporting parents in upbringing without violence – examples of good practices in Poland. <i>Renata Szredzińska</i>
<p>Presentation: The presentation will address examples of good practices in supporting parents of young children based on the experiences of the Empowering Children Foundation. Both systemic and practical approach will be presented.</p> <p>Renata Szredzińska: MA in modern languages and sociology, post graduate diploma in public relations and the media. She has been working in Empowering Children Foundation (previously known as Nobody’s Children Foundation) since 2008 as coordinator of Good Parent - Good Start programme aimed at prevention of young child abuse. Member of working groups on family support at local and international level. Author of scientific articles on children rights and prevention of young child abuse.</p>	
13:15 - 13:40	Making childhood safer in the Baltic Sea Region. <i>Turid Heiberg and Daja Wenke</i>
<p>Presentation: Turid and Daja are currently responsible together with several countries in the region to implement the Non-Violent Childhoods project on moving on from corporal punishment of children. The Baltic Sea Region is almost a no-corporal-punishment zone for children with 10 out of 11 countries having prohibited corporal punishment in all settings. Through national consultations and expert meetings, the project aims at developing guidance material with global relevance.</p> <p>Turid Heiberg is the Head of the Children at Risk Unit in the Council of the Baltic Sea States. She has worked with human rights and child rights issues for more than 30 years in the region and internationally.</p> <p>Daja Wenke is the Research Coordinator of the Non-Violent Childhoods Project. She has long-standing experience as researcher and consultant on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p>	

13:40 - 14:00	Working with parents and children – good practices from Brave Phone. <i>Sara Milavec and Anamarija Vuić</i>
<p>Presentation: Brave Phone was established in 1997 as a helpline for abused and neglected children in Croatia. Over the years, Brave phone has become a source of help for all kinds of problems faced by children in their daily lives, and now offers support to children, their parents, and professionals through diverse community programmes. In this lecture, psychologist from Brave Phone will share best practices from different prevention and intervention programmes with emphasis on the ones with kindergarten children and parents as target groups.</p> <p>Sara Milavec, psychologist, program coordinator at Brave Phone and national coordinator for the project From policy to reality – shifting attitudes and practices from corporal punishment to safeguarding children. She has various work experience in group prevention and counselling work with children and counselling for parents. She is included in education for parents, experts and volunteers about violence between and against children, group work and creative techniques.</p> <p>Anamarija Vuić, psychologist, psychotherapist in training. Working as a helpline coordinator at Brave Phone. She has various work experience in the field of child protection, advocacy and volunteer work. She is currently a Deputy Regional Representative at Child Helpline International.</p>	
14:00 - 14:20	Child-centred?! <i>Dana Narvaiša (Cēsis New School)</i>
<p>Presentation: The first and actually easiest step is to wish for the child to be in the centre. The second step is to understand and together agree on what the term “child-centred” means. The third step, however, is the most difficult: in order to implement a child-centred approach, it is we – the educators and parents – who have to change. I will share the experience of Cēsis New School gained over four years in its journey towards a child-centred approach.</p> <p>Dana Narvaiša: two years of experience in teaching at secondary school, five years of experience in creating a school together with parents – it means working with parents and pedagogues as well as with children.</p>	

14:20 - 14:50	Panel discussion
14:50 - 15:20	COFFEE BREAK
15:20 - 17:30	Session III
15:20 - 15:40	Are children safe from corporal punishment? Results of the research in Latvia, Croatia and Poland. <i>Renata Szredzińska</i>
<p>Presentation: How popular is corporal punishment in our countries? What is seen as a permissible method of disciplining a child in the family and in the day nursery/kindergarten? Where can parents find support when they experience difficulties with child upbringing. These and other issues will be addressed based on the results of the latest research conducted in Latvia, Croatia and Poland in 2017 within the Daphne project „From policy to reality: shifting attitudes and practice from corporal punishment to safeguarding children”.</p> <p>Renata Szredzińska: MA in modern languages and sociology, post graduate diploma in public relations and the media. She has been working in Empowering Children Foundation (previously known as Nobody’s Children Foundation) since 2008 as coordinator of Good Parent - Good Start programme aimed at prevention of young child abuse. Member of working groups on family support at local and international level. Author of scientific articles on children rights and prevention of young child abuse.</p>	
15:40 - 16:00	What is discipline and can it become dangerous? <i>Laila Balode (“Center Dardedze”)</i>
<p>Presentation: What do we mean by “discipline”? Do we have a unified understanding of the topic in the 21st century Latvia? Why do pedagogues sometimes treat it with unfounded deference? Do we have a sufficient array of disciplining methods at our disposal and are we always confident in their application? I will seek answers to those questions in my speech. May we succeed!</p>	

Laila Balode: Board member of the foundation “Center Dardedze”, Director of the Counselling Department. Master of Social Work, lector, granny.

16:00 - 16:30 **Pre-school children and disciplining.**
Līga Redliha (“Center Dardedze”)

Presentation: the presentation is going to discuss how age-appropriate positive disciplining can benefit both children and adults. The basic principles of disciplining and specific methods of discipline are going to be covered.

Līga Redliha: Daily work involves advising both children and adults, psychological evaluation, creating research assessments. Many years of experience in leading training groups for experts, support and educational groups for parents in regards to child raising, disciplining and other topics.

16:30 - 16:50 **Programme “Child-Safe and Friendly Kindergarten”.**
Ilze Žagare (SOS Children’s Villages Latvia)

Presentation: Explaining the “Child-Safe and Friendly Kindergarten” programme and how we intend to cooperate with municipalities in order to further implement it in Riga and Latvia.

Ilze Žagare: Representative of the team of developers of the “Child-Safe and Friendly Kindergarten” programme, Head of Resources and Competences Centre of SOS Children’s Villages Latvia.

16:50 - 17:20 **Panel discussion**

17:20 - 17:30 **Conclusion**

“From policy to reality - shifting attitudes and practices from corporal punishment to safeguarding children”(“No teorijas uz realitāti – attieksmes un prakses maiņa no miesas sodiem uz bērnu aizsardzību”, Nr. JUST/2015/RDAP/AG/CORP/9175)