

Learning for well-being: A policy priority for children and youth in Europe ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Full report in pdf ^[2]

Excerpts from the introduction:

Children's well-being is a key dimension of sustainable development and social resilience; it is about our present and our future. It requires recognition as a central building block of the European policy agenda. In Europe we do not invest enough in our children. The European Union does not have a children's policy - nor do many countries. Children have weak or no political representation and most countries and institutions do not offer children and young people the opportunity to have their voice heard and participate in decision-making. Children and youth are particularly hard hit by the financial insecurities in present day Europe - their future is at stake.

But we should not continue as in the past and we do not need more of the same. Most societies are not creative and daring enough in affecting changes for the well-being of children. We require a vibrant debate on what childhood means at the beginning of the 21st century. We need to radically shift our mindsets and transform how we think about children, learning, health, education and society.

We are advocating for a paradigm shift that will:

- consider children as competent partners, nurturing personal responsibility
- more than compliance
- understand learning not only as a cognitive, but as an integral process
- with many dimensions
- move from disease and treatment centred healthcare to promoting
- health and well-being
- move from standardized education to child centred education
- move from sectoral to systemic solutions in policy and society

There is no policy maker that does not underscore the sentence "children are our future - we must invest in them". Yet the action that is needed rarely follows, despite the negative economic and social consequences for individuals, communities and society at large. Children's well-being touches on many sectors of government and it will be a defining factor of Europe's socio-economic future - but in particular it relates to the policy priorities of three of the largest service delivery systems in European welfare states: social services, education and health. There is increasing critique that these sectors do not deliver the outcomes that are necessary to ensure a more equitable society, better well-being and a healthy and well educated population - indeed their failure rate is disconcertingly high. Early school leaving and obesity in children are just two prominent examples.

Region: Europe ^[3]

Tags: children's rights ^[4]

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