



# Valuing Children, Valuing Parents

*Focus on family in the fight against child poverty in Europe*

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## Recommendations for the European Union strategy for fighting poverty and social exclusion

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- **Involve children and their families in the research and evaluation of policies to combat child poverty**

The success of policies and practices that combat child poverty is always compromised by the difficulty of enabling people in poverty to take a full and active role.

We recommend that:

- work is carried out to understand and promote the conditions required for constructive dialogue and cooperation between people in poverty and the other parties involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion
- projects and research should have qualitative and participatory dimensions
- new indicators on poverty and social exclusion which relate specifically to children should be developed, in partnership with families.
- children and parents should help to build a better understanding about the most important features in the child's life during their childhood and for their future, and how to guarantee these features for all children.

- **Recognise that children play an active role and support them in this**

Children can be a force for change and empowerment – both for their families and in their wider circle. They need friends for themselves, for their families, and for their own adult life.

We recommend that:

- greater recognition should be given to the role that children play within their family, at school and in the local community, in the fight against poverty and exclusion
- measures should be taken to ensure that initiatives involving children reach those who are the most disadvantaged.

- **Focus on the family as a network of social ties, emotional ties, skills and strengths**

Families cannot live without friendship and support. We must look at the family in the context of its local environment and networks – the connections which the family unit makes and the connections which are denied to it.

We recommend that:

- conditions are identified in the community and in the home environment, which will support families and children and allow them to develop their skills and fulfil their potential

- an exchange of information and ideas is developed between people involved with schemes that see the family group as a basic network, which can be the springboard for individual and collective action
- existing schemes which strengthen family and inter-family dynamics are used to inspire the future development of European strategies to combat poverty and exclusion, particularly in relation to children
- the EU objective to promote 'action to preserve family solidarity in all its forms' is monitored and evaluated
- measures taken in the pursuit of other strategic goals (jobs, financial resources) are monitored to ensure that they do not have negative effects on family life and on family projects which help children and parents to 'live and grow together'.

- **Understand the links between child protection policy and the strategy to fight poverty and exclusion**

It is vital to gain a deeper understanding at the European level of the links between the strategy to fight poverty and exclusion, and child welfare and protection policy.

We recommend that:

- research and statistical analysis is carried out to identify the number of children and families affected by child protection systems and the situation of these families, with particular focus on socio-economic aspects
- long-term studies and research on the experiences of children and families who are affected by care orders from child protection services – particularly those living in poverty and exclusion – assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of existing measures, and their outcomes for the children and parents concerned
- child protection practices are evaluated for their impact on access to support and fundamental rights for some parents in poverty and exclusion.
- research is carried out at the European level to establish the impact of parents' fear of accessing support services in case this leads to unwanted intervention and even the possibility of their children being removed
- these concerns are incorporated into Daphne, the European Union programme to prevent violence against children, young people and women.

- **Support for professionals in changing working approaches and practices**

Evaluation of practices in line with objective 4b of the Social Inclusion Strategy ('adapting administrative and social services to the needs of people') should offer a better understanding of how policies and measures outlined in the National Action Plans for Social Inclusion are implemented and perceived, not only by the professionals, but also by the families who benefit from them.

We recommend that:

- new forms of training, support and supervision help those who involved in educational and social intervention to develop a new way of perceiving and taking account of the family network
- new ways of working in partnership with families in difficulty are developed that take into account their aspirations and abilities
- parents affected by child protection measures, particularly the poorest, participate in the training of professionals working in social and educational support
- high priority should be given to the search for alternatives to separating children and parents in situations of poverty and exclusion
- budgetary decisions reflect the need to create a stimulating environment for professionals, with provision for innovation, experimentation and research.

**Full discussion paper can be ordered from :** ATD Fourth World Europe, 107 avenue du Général Leclerc, 95480 Pierrelaye France (price 18 Euros incl. postage) **or downloaded from :**

[www.atd-fourthworld.org/europe/valuingchildren/index\\_vcvp.htm](http://www.atd-fourthworld.org/europe/valuingchildren/index_vcvp.htm)