



Federal Ministry for
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth

National Action Plan.

For a Germany fit for children

2005–2010



Foreword

Dear Reader,

In May 2002, heads of state and government, politicians and children from all over the world met in New York for the Second Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Children (World Summit on Children 2002) to improve the lot of children worldwide. Concluding the meeting, the participants adopted a document entitled “A world fit for children”, in which they undertook to submit National Action Plans to provide young people with good opportunities to embark on life.



I am pleased to be able to hereby present the National Action Plan “For a Germany fit for children”. It was drawn up with the participation of a number of actors in the field of child policies from all levels of politics and society. I find it very important that children were also given the opportunity to make a contribution to this National Action Plan, which has found its way into the National Action Plan’s draft proper. Besides, we have included the results of the Children’s Conferences which took place during the National Action Plan’s drafting stage in the appendix.

The participation of young people will remain important in future too. Within the framework of Project P, an initiative to increase young people’s political participation, which my ministry is running in cooperation with the Deutscher Bundesjugendring (German Federal Youth Council) and the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Federal Agency for Civic Education), children and youths are thus asked to discuss the required actions and measures contained herein.

This shows: the Action Plan is not only the conclusion of a development but also the beginning of a dynamic process. I would like all people with such responsibilities and citizens and especially children to get really involved in this process. If that happens, in a few years’ time we might actually say with conviction: Germany is a country fit for children and families.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Renate Schmidt". The script is cursive and elegant.

RENATE SCHMIDT
FEDERAL MINISTER FOR FAMILY AFFAIRS, SENIOR CITIZENS,
WOMEN AND YOUTH

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I.

Preamble

The objective: a Germany fit for children

Our children do need us – today and every day! And that is the only way we will see a good future for us all. We work for a commonweal that promotes, protects and counts on its children to create both a present worth living and a sustainable future for our society.

In terms of responsibility for children, parents come first. Children can experience security, love and solidarity within a family, where they learn to take their first steps, not only literally but in life, where they get basic education and knowledge about rules, where they experience values.

We all know how very important the achievements of families are for a country's successful future. At the same time, we see that many families come up against limits in child-care and child-raising. This has to be put down to far-reaching economic and societal changes. In an age of a globalised economy, the labour market demands more and more permanent flexibility, mobility and availability from employees. This contrasts with the needs of children, and families only have limited influence here. Private responsibility aside, this also calls for more public responsibility in catering for the next generation.

The Federal Government accepts this responsibility. It wants to shape living conditions in a way that provides young people with the best opportunities when growing up. Our policies focus on two considerations: first, the family as a social net needs to be better supported and requires targeted assistance. Second, our efforts have to concentrate on creating a family-friendly infrastructure. Our society needs stable families.

A Germany fit for children means to take more heed of boys' and girls' interests, needs, wishes, hopes and expectations. We are all obliged to promote children and youths in a comprehensive way. This is the only way they can mature into self-responsible and competent people who will find their own way in society at large. In Germany, the social background is still a decisive factor for both the 'when' and 'if' of the attainment of these objectives. That is why politics has to focus on equal opportunities. Neither the parents' social nor their financial background should be allowed to determine a child's opportunities in life and its development.

We have already successfully taken a number of steps on our way there. In an international comparison, the Federal Republic of Germany obtains a fairly good rank when it comes to having realised the rights of children. A lot has been achieved for families and children in the past few years in particular:

- Since 1996 there has been the legal right to a nursery place.
- Since 2000 children have had the right to a non-violent upbringing.
- In 2003 the new Youth Protection Act (Jugendschutzgesetz) entered into force.
- From 1998 to 2003 financial transfers to families grew by € 20 bn and child benefit was raised three times.
- Since 2001, a new law on parental leave has enabled mothers and fathers to bring up their children in partnership in their first few years.

Still, we all know that we have yet a long way to go until we shall see a Germany fit for children. For that reason, the Federal Government will make even more efforts over the next few years. Germany is supposed to change from a country grown unaccustomed to children to a country where children are welcome. We see a dual responsibility for improving young people's living conditions: for our children's future, of course – but also because we take our exemplary function in this world very seriously.

Children are our real social assets. That is why they should grow up in a way enabling them to take up the challenges in society and the economy proactively and to participate in shaping these changes. We simply cannot afford that some of our children do not acquire the necessary competences to do that. Every single such case is a huge injustice done. A policy denying people of some social backgrounds the best support and education possible will also damage society as a whole. Therefore, the Federal Government wants to improve all children's and youths' living conditions, regardless of their social background.

The way to take: a National Action Plan

Against this background, the Federal Government presents its National Action Plan "A Germany fit for children". We deem it an important tool for making Germany fit for children. It defines more closely our responsibility for such a development. It is supposed to serve as our policy guideline until about 2010.

The National Action Plan (in the following NAP) takes up the ideas contained in the final document adopted at the Second Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Children from May 8 – 10, 2002 in New York (World Summit on Children 2002) "A world fit for children". All signatories committed themselves to draw up a NAP containing scheduled and measurable objectives and projects to implement internationally defined objectives at the national level. The Federal Government hereby honours its commitment given in the final document, "*... to create a world fit for children taking into account the principles of democracy, equal rights, non-discrimination, peace and social justice plus all human rights' universality, indivisibility and interdependence, including the right to development, which form the basis of a sustainable human development taking the needs of children into account.*"

Further, the NAP takes up the UN Convention on the Rights of Children, passed by the General Assembly on November 20, 1989, which, for the first time, makes the rights of children binding. This convention is a milestone for a world which respects, protects, promotes and involves its children. The convention contains an extensive catalogue of standards in international law promoting and protecting children, and for Germany, as for almost any other state, it is the decisive guideline for our actions in policies for children. It has made for a new view on children and raised the awareness that they have rights of their own.

The Federal Government works hard on a realisation of the demands set forth in the Convention of the Rights of Children in Germany. In 2001, Germany presented the 2nd Country Report on its implementation. In January 2004, there was a hearing on the Report before the UN Committee for the Rights of the Child. This hearing's findings, published in Germany under *Abschließende Bemerkungen - Deutschland*, played an important role in drawing up the NAP, too. The UN Committee's recommendations were included to their largest extent possible.

A NAP requires broad societal co-responsibility and assent. Therefore, the Federal Government drew it up in close cooperation with political actors and civil society from the very beginning. This cooperation involved representatives from the federal level, the Länder and municipalities and from the Lower House's (Deutscher Bundestag) children's committee, experts from NGOs and from business. The draft was coordinated by a steering group; six working groups drew up basic issues for the NAP; children and youths were able to contribute the findings of their own children's conferences. An external coordinator commissioned by the Federal Government partook in this work.

That is how the basis for the NAP "A Germany fit for children" was developed. Six fields of action are at the forefront, and the ensuing objectives are the Federal Government's key issues in a Germany fitter for children coming about over the next few years:

- Equal opportunities through education
 - ▮ Early and individual promotion
 - ▮ Overcoming the educational system's selectivity and turning it into a promoting system

- Non-violent upbringing
 - ▮ Promotion of non-violent child-raising
 - ▮ Studying the problem of "violence through neglect of children"

- Promotion of a healthy life and environment
 - Prevention of new health risks
 - Strengthening integrated and interdisciplinary health promotion as well as child and youth-specific treatment

- Participation of children and young people
 - Development of quality standards for participation
 - Enshrining children's and youths' rights to participation in curricula, training and university regulations and specific advanced vocational training projects for such staff

- An adequate standard of living for children
 - Combating causes of child poverty
 - Showing ways out of poverty-related life situations

- International commitments
 - Combating poverty and realising rights of children in developing countries
 - Further development of international agreements on the protection of children

For a Germany fit for children: a joint endeavour by politics and society

The NAP "A Germany fit for children" commits the Federal Government to child-friendly policies. However, it will not be able to attain this objective on its own. For its implementation it requires support at all national levels and by NGOs. For one, the federal system requires that all who are faced with children's worries and wishes in schools, nurseries, sports clubs and youth centres are included.

A Germany fit for children will only develop if all its people set out on this course. That is why the Federal Government has also invited associations, institutions and bodies from business, the cultural arena and from science to partake in this project. It is such an important objective that in the presentation of the six fields of action we have to consider how the various partners, Länder and municipalities, NGOs, companies, international institutions and partner governments, can commit themselves to create a country fit for children.

Integration and gender aspects will be important during the implementation of the NAP. A Germany fit for children will only deserve such a description if migrant children and youths and their families enjoy equal opportunities. Differences between boys' and girls' life situations and requirements also have to be taken into account in planning and impact assessment, and this will lead to more targeted measures, sustainability and efficiency.

Since society develops in a fast and dynamic fashion, child-policy requirements may well have to be updated now and again. That is why it is so important that Länder, municipalities, business and science will monitor the NAP's implementation proactively and evaluate its efficiency. It is only by monitoring and evaluation that the best and most efficient tools for policies fit for children will be sifted out. They are part of the "prospects for a sustainable development toward a Germany fit for children", in which we will also point out further actions to be taken.

In a country fit for children as we want to create it, children and youths are not marginalised, but at the very heart of things. We deem them fellow citizens to be encouraged by us grown-ups to actively represent their own interests. We have therefore included children's and youths' contributions to the NAP "A Germany fit for children" in the appendix. Some readers will have encountered some of these proposals after having read this main text. The Federal Government has included them in the NAP because children's proposals and suggestions, for us, take high priority.

II.

Fields of action for a Germany fit for children

2.1 Equal opportunities through education

Equal opportunities in education for all children and youths: in an age of an emerging knowledge society this is certainly the most important precondition for a country which wants to be fit for the future - and fit for children and youths. More than ever before, access to knowledge and the faculty to learn determine one's chances in life. Equal opportunities means that **all children and youths, regardless of their background, have to be provided with comprehensive access to high-quality education.** To achieve that, all forces in society have to cooperate: politicians involved in educational policies, teachers, associations and institutions but also the families, where both ability and willingness to learn have their beginning.

A society which wants to be ready for the future and to shape future developments needs more and better education. It must be willing to invest in educational innovations. The Federation, Länder, municipalities, social partners and all who are involved in education have a huge responsibility. They are asked to jointly ensure the success of the necessary reforms in the context of their responsibilities. A successful economic, social and labour market policy requires an efficient and sustainable educational policy. That is why the Federation supports the Länder in educational measures although it does not have any direct legislative competence as to their educational policies.

2.1.1 The education system

There is no doubt that the German education system needs extensive reforms. The international comparison of the performance of pupils, conducted in so many a study, has clearly shown that. In core subjects, German children's performance lags behind that of their peers from other industrialised countries. Another finding is even more worrying: hardly any other country shows the same interrelation between social, economic, gender-specific, ethnic, cultural, linguistic conditions and opportunities in life and the education system as does Germany.

No country whose main resource are its children's minds can afford that. Therefore, the Federal Government has made it one of its top-priority objectives **to restructure the hitherto very selective education system and put individual promotion of each and every child to the forefront of a new educational policy.**

We endanger our future if we continue to allow a child's social background to determine its success in the education system and thus its opportunities in life. That is why we have to **raise the level of education for all children**. The key to that is found in the quality of education and child-raising in the educational and child-care facilities. This calls for a different approach: instead of selecting children at a very early stage we need more faith in the ability to learn of each and every child. The Federal Government calls for an educational culture in which all children are equally valued, in which special faculties and competences and individual educational processes are taken into account. The system has to take up this challenge.

High-quality education has to start much sooner and in more individual terms than now, in order to let children develop their fortes. Disadvantages will be identified sooner or can be avoided. **Education, child-raising and child-care have to be regarded as a unit and taken into consideration in educational reforms on an equal footing**. For school education this means to leave behind formalised education's limitations. Instead of merely didactic considerations, the child has to be viewed holistically with all its individual basic conditions. For extracurricular education, especially in children and youth welfare, this means to view imparting education as an encompassing objective and to realise it in welfare work. We have to guarantee the integrative promotion of disabled people wherever that is possible. We have to give children with special needs more education by increasingly ensuring pre-school and school promotion of disabled children and youths.

The educational opportunities of children and youths with a background of migration also have to be improved. The Federation-Länder Programme "Förderung von Kindern und Jugendlichen mit Migrationshintergrund" (promotion of children and youths with a background of migration) is such a contribution.

Successful practical examples reveal that a realisation of a culture of promotion and making demands on children works very well indeed if all participants and professions closely cooperate in teams. **Cooperation with parents** is of utmost importance and opens up a wide field of opportunities. Still, the cooperation between schools and youth welfare has to be improved significantly.

An individual promotion of all children and youths will only be attained if a number of conditions is met. This includes **developing and implementing new ways of an educational dealing with heterogeneous groups**. Educational paths' openness has to be improved. The various areas of education have to cooperate much better than now and thus create the conditions for a promotion of children beyond institutional boundaries. Quality development and assurance have to take higher priority: it is the only way to initiate and evaluate promising measures in time and to manage how they develop.

The PISA studies have shown what empirical educational research can achieve for educational reforms. In future, important educational developments have to be increasingly based upon such an efficient empirical research including international benchmarks .

Measures:

- Federation and Länder are both committed to a strengthening of the rights of children and youths to a promotion from early on and to the establishment of equal opportunities in the education system. This requires a new teaching and learning culture with individual promotion, a more social way of learning, innovative teaching methods, opening schools for extracurricular partners with a stronger involvement of parents and pupils. The Federal Government's investment programme "Zukunft Bildung und Betreuung" (future of education and care) supports the expansion and establishment of full-time day schools and thus attains a better individual promotion of all children and youths and a better learning climate through new forms of cooperation between schools and extracurricular partners.
- The Federal Government intends to systematically strengthen educational research. This includes both research projects on a foresighted support for educational reforms and also a structural reinforcement of research, e.g. through a targeted promotion of up-and-coming scientists.

2.1.2 Education and child-raising within the family

Parents enjoy a constitutional child-raising priority. Moreover, the family is the first and most important place for early-childhood promotion. This entails political consequences. We have to do all we can in order to strengthen families and parents' child-raising competences.

This starts with a better reconcilability of family and working life, especially awaited by women, who still have to opt for either children and employment or career advancement because they still bear the brunt of all child-raising responsibilities. And this despite the fact that never before have women been so well qualified. Our society can not and shall not do without women's qualifications.

A better balance between family and working life is the Federal Government's topmost priority for a restructured and sustainable family policy. The Federal Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth tries to attain this in concert with important societal forces. Business and unions, associations and the Churches work in various initiatives: at the federal level in the "Allianz für die Familie" (alliance for the family), which collects, sifts and recommends concepts; in the municipalities in the "Lokale Bündnisse für Familie" (local alliances for the family).

According to needs and wants, the alliances may focus on different topics, e.g. strengthening child-raising competence, dialogue between parents and educational institutions, informing families about local educational offers etc. But one thing is always at the heart of their projects: to strengthen existing local alliances and networks for families and thus to promote families' stability in different life situations. During the initiative's first year of existence, about 120 alliances were incepted and a service office develops it further free of charge.

After all, education and child-raising requires the parents' support first and foremost. That is why **parents' competences in these fields should be supported by specific services**. Parents with a background of migration, for example, might learn German or get ideas how to promote their children in evening classes or some such events. The most successful measures are later to be made standard after their evaluation, including, rather deliberately, international findings. Parents and multipliers do also get advice and orientation through online offers and letters to parents funded by the Federation.

Furthermore, the Federal Government works hard on **improving the educational and child-raising partnership between parents and educational staff**. Often, parents, teachers and nursery teachers hardly cooperate at all. This is especially detrimental to children of an uneducated background or to immigrants. The Federation promotes pilot schemes to address these target groups and encourage a better relationship between all participants. The "Strukturkonzept Familienbildung" (structural concept family education) in Bremen and houses for children and families akin to the English "Early Excellence Centres" may serve as examples here.

An increasing life expectancy means that these days four generations of one family may well live concurrently, very much in contrast to, perhaps, only three generations a few decades ago. This often prolongs and intensifies the relationships between the generations: today, parents, on average, live concurrently with their children for more than half a century, grandparents with their grandchildren twenty years. Solidarity between the generations in a family is huge. The family network is one of the most important social resources and engines in society and the younger generation is the beneficiary: people between 60 and 75 support children and grandchildren increasingly when it comes to child-care or coping with everyday problems in the family. This assistance is of enormous social usefulness. Parents get material and emotional support from within the family and relief of educational and child-raising burdens. This should be made part of **models of how to more involve the elderly in child-care**.

Measures:

- Within the framework of a sustainable family policy the Federal Government will work toward a better balance between family and working life through appropriate measures which include socially important partners. The “Allianz für die Familie” at the federal level draws up closely defined proposals for a family-friendly corporate culture and staff policy.
- The initiative “Lokale Bündnisse für Familie”, in which municipalities, companies, chambers and unions, voluntary providers, educational institutions, associations, confederations, Churches and initiatives have joined forces to obtain more family-friendly conditions, is supported and expanded by a Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth service office, as is the cooperation with the Länder.
- A broad promotion of child-raising partnerships in schools and child-care facilities and with child minders is supported conceptually.
- Within the framework of a sustainable family policy, close-to-home educational opportunities for parents are developed and supported on a broad basis in order to assist parents in care and child-raising and improve their participation.
- For parents not having been addressed by previous offers in particular, family centres and houses for children are developed and supported as low-level facilities for social and family services from child-care and language classes to educational advice and parents’ education.
- In a pilot scheme on voluntary workers in education and child-raising in day-care facilities, it is also to be tried if the elderly’s competences may not be used at a larger scale (from January 2005).

2.1.3 Early-childhood education and care

Only an **early and individual promotion** will allow children to develop their potentials to their greatest extent. It is then that the cornerstone is laid for a successful educational biography and life-long learning. Nonetheless, in Germany there is not much awareness of the necessity of an early promotion as an independent and public responsibility.

The largest gap in early childhood education and care is the insufficient number of places in day-care facilities— especially when compared with other European countries and primarily in the old Länder. This goes for all areas of public child-care, for the under-threes, but also for the over-six, for full-time day care and for holiday periods or times of illness. This has drastic consequences. A huge number of children are denied promotion. Parents, mostly the mothers, are unable to find any or suitable employment. Especially large families and single parents run the risk of ending up in poverty, with all ensuing results for the economy at large.

The quality of child-care facilities does also fall short of standards in other European countries. Day-care facilities and child minders do not fully utilise all possibilities to promote children. This leaves educational opportunities unused and many children have huge difficulties when entering school. We have therefore to do all we can **to assure the quality of work in day-care facilities, of their providers but also of child-minders and develop it further**. This has to focus on the individual promotion of children. As soon as interested groups at the local level commit themselves to good-quality work for children, child-care gets expanded and quality a boost. This is what is already done by the initiative “Lokale Bündnisse für Familie”. Best practice examples are found especially when voluntary providers, local authorities and companies cooperate. Now, we have to diffuse these examples nationwide.

The enormous demand for reform can be deduced from the country report delivered by the OECD within the framework of the international comparison “Starting Strong”. While the OECD sees some strong suits in the German system, e.g. the conceptual linkage of child-raising, education and care, the organisation also discerns a number of weak points: the system’s financing, the training of nursery teachers, the staff support system and research. The huge lack of day-care places for the under-threes is mentioned as the most drastic deficiency within the system.

The difficult budget situation notwithstanding, the Federal Government has done all it can to push forward the **expansion of day care facilities, especially for the under-threes**. The municipalities receive the necessary funds through financial relief of a different kind. The Federation has set forth the legal framework by enacting the “Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz” (TAG, day care expansion act), having entered into force at the beginning of 2005. In the new Länder, where over recent years there has been a trend of reducing the number of day-care facilities, the provision is supposed to be stabilised at its current level.

Increasing the quality of education and child-raising at the pre-school level is running full steam. With the **development of educational and child-raising plans**, the Länder have taken an important step in qualification for early-childhood promotion. Equally important is the joint framework for education in day-care facilities drawn up by the Conference of Youth Ministers in cooperation with the Conference of Education Ministers. The Federal Government supports this process. One component is the **“Nationale Qualitätsinitiative im System der Tageseinrichtungen für Kinder”** (national quality initiative in the day-care system) initiated by the Federation. It is supposed to be developed further in concert with the Länder. The main intention is to diffuse tools of quality measuring and development and to link these with the Länder’s educational plans.

In some fields, however, entirely new concepts are needed. This applies especially to the promotion of children with a background of migration, who often have difficulties with their command of German. Good linguistic skills are, after all, a precondition and basis for all following learning processes. How language lessons, that is also for children with a background of migration, can be made more efficient is being studied in the project “Sprachliche Bildung” (language education).

New concepts are also needed in creating decision factors for the individual promotion of children. This is based upon the monitoring and documentation of learning processes – hitherto criminally neglected – which are now the subject of the project “Bildungs- und Lerngeschichten” (educational and learning (hi)stories).

Furthermore, the inclusion of voluntary workers is supposed to tap resources for education, child-raising and care in day-care facilities, not to replace nursery teachers but to use new competences, e.g. in natural sciences.

Early-childhood promotion in education will only be sustainable, however, if it is permanent and thorough, which, in turn, means **family, day-care facility and school have to cooperate** closer and jointly ensure that knowledge is acquired successively. The lacking cooperation of educational institutions which we still see leads to partly rather drastic disruptions in the educational biography of children and its interfaces.

Whoever wants to increase and develop the quality of early-childhood promotion, has to **support the staff in their work** first and foremost. Contradicting the trend discernable at some places, this calls for the **advice and support for nursery teachers to be maintained and expanded**. The qualification requirement of child-minders is even higher than that of nursery teachers in crèches and day nurseries. The “Curriculum zur Qualifizierung in der Tagespflege” (curriculum for the qualification of child-minders) developed by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth is a good basis. We ask the municipalities to implement it fully and consistently. Not least it should be undertaken to gradually increase the share of male staff in day nurseries and of male child-minders. Male role models have a positive impact on children’s gender-sensitive socialisation.

Measures:

- The Federal Government will push forward the quantitative and qualitative expansion of early-childhood promotion. A demand-based provision for children under three is supposed to be available in all municipalities until 2010. For that purpose, the Federation will relieve the municipalities of € 2.5 bn p.a. by merging income support and unemployment relief, € 1.5 bn thereof are to be used to expand day care. Complementing this expansion in the old Länder, the Federal Government wants to see the provision in the new Länder stabilised.
- The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth’s qualitative projects – in cooperation with the Länder and providers - will focus on the following issues:
 - Development of integrated forms of language education; concerning children with a background of migration their bilingualism will be taken into consideration (from February 2005).
 - Development of a compendium for a broad commitment by voluntary workers in day-care facilities in special consideration of elementary education and child-raising (from January 2005).

- The Federal Government advises the Länder and providers to improve the advisory structures for day-care facilities and family day care and for the transfer of theoretical findings into practice.
- Within the framework of the Federation-Länder Programme it supports a joint project to improve the cooperation between nursery and primary school drawing upon the Länder's educational plans (from 2005).
- Jointly with the Federal Employment Agency, voluntary providers' umbrella organisations, the Tagesmütter Bundesverband für Kinderbetreuung in Tagespflege (family day care confederation) and the German Youth Institute, the Federal Government launches a qualification offensive for child-minders.
- It advises the Länder to take adequate measures for making the profession of nursery teacher more attractive for men.
- The Federal Government and all who have responsibility are going to check what consequences have to be drawn from the OECD Country Note contained in the study "Starting Strong" from 30.11.2004.

2.1.4 School education

A successful education system is characterised by "promotion and making demands" going hand in hand. In Germany, such a **culture of promotion and making demands** has first to be established, especially in school education. This is shown by the close relationship between background and school performance, where, as we have seen, Germany comes in far behind in an international comparison. The school system is not characterised by equal opportunities but by a high degree of selectivity according to origin and background. This is especially true for children with a background of migration: they have no school-leaving certificate or only a secondary modern school (Hauptschule) certificate at an above average rate when embarking on a career.

Participating children's and youths' opinions

"Since some parents simply cannot afford text books etc, free provision of learning aids should not be abolished, so that every child will have its book in future, too."

The Studies IGLU and PISA have shown that the promotion of all children and regardless of their background seems to work better in primary schools than in secondary schools. No other country in the entire OECD area is characterised by such a lack of equal opportunities. It is especially secondary modern schools in conurbations where learning takes place in a problematic environment. Besides, only a few children with special needs or displaying social behavioural problems are promoted in regular schools.

Participating children's and youths' opinions

“Theoretical lessons are too boring, not many of us listen. We'd rather have practical lessons.”

“It would be better to learn a foreign language early on, primarily English. Perhaps a second foreign language could be made optional so that pupils can make their own decision at an early stage. “

The lessons' quality is decisive for pupils' success in learning. This, in turn, depends upon the quality of the entire educational, child-raising and care system at schools. The following principle should be central: **we have to perceive learning groups' and classes' heterogeneity as a resource and as a chance instead of deploring it as impeding successful educational processes. The Federal Government endeavours to significantly reduce the number of children leaving school without a certificate or without sufficient competences in basic cultural techniques.** We advocate an increased individual promotion of children and youths. This increases the chances of a timely enrolment and reduces the number of children enrolled later or resitting classes, the usefulness of which is very doubtful in any case. Besides, it will also reduce the number of transfers to special schools. In Germany, the number of children with learning disorders or other disabilities being taught in special facilities is still much too high. Only about 13 per cent of these pupils attend integrated schools. This is a very bad performance in international terms. The Federal Government advocates integrated schools for the largest number of pupils possible, while deeming special schools necessary when these provide individual promotion only possible there.

Many measures to combat selectivity have already been initiated. In December 2003, the Länder agreed joint educational standards for the intermediate school-leaving certificate in German, mathematics and the first foreign language, in October 2004 for the secondary modern school certificate in German, mathematics and the first foreign language and for primary schools in German and mathematics and in December 2004 for the intermediate school-leaving certificate in biology, chemistry and physics.

National educational standards **transcending** different types of school and based upon competence models show what schools have to teach their pupils. They are the reference grid for regular national tests (of schools) which provide information about the education system and about further quality assurance measures to be taken plus what is required to establish support and advisory structures for pupils and teachers.

This indicates: educational standards and performance tests related to them are an important element in acquiring regular and reliable information on the quality of the education system and simultaneously to initiate an improvement of the educational quality of learning and teaching by systematic measures. The Federal Government has laid the basis by presenting a scientific report early on. The so-called *Klieme-Expertise* contains precise proposals for a design of educational standards. Wherever the Länder want to raise their school system's quality, the Federal Government will go along with them. We should in concert answer the questions on development, implementation and use of standards that are not yet based upon empirical findings. We support such research projects and hope that these standards will eventually serve an improvement in the individual promotion of children and youths in school classes.

In March 2004, Federation and Länder agreed upon a joint and regular **reporting on education**. Since education determines one's career, in an emerging knowledge society the reporting on education is supposed to cover all education-biographical stretches. It is designed as an institutional and permanent monitoring of the education system and supposed to ensure an internationally applicable, regular and independent national reporting on educational matters. It analyses the "development of competences in pupils' biographies" and is supposed to come up with management knowledge for an improved scientific political consultancy in education. The first report will probably be published in 2006.

The investment programme "future education and care" is a real boost for changes in the learning and teaching culture to better ensure both individual promotion and joint learning by children and youths. Länder and municipalities will receive € 4 bn from the Federal Government to establish and expand full-time day schools based on demand. This programme is the largest educational programme in the history of Germany and puts on track a reform of the education system undertaken by Federation and Länder together. The educational design of these full-time day schools is the Länder's responsibility and is locally supported by regional service agencies within the framework of the programme "Ideen für mehr - Ganztägig lernen!" (ideas to get more – full-time learning) run by the Deutsche Kinder- und Jugendstiftung. Rhythmic all-day concepts linking lessons and extracurricular activities provide much more scope for an individual promotion of pupils and social learning. And not least, parents get the chance of better reconciling family and working life.

By joint programmes like SINUS-Transfer and SINUS-Transfer Grundschule (primary school) Federation and Länder contribute to a qualitative improvement of lessons in mathematics and the natural sciences and to better individual promotion. The Federation-Länder programme for the promotion of children and youths with a background of migration, "För-Mig", focuses on language promotion.

With the Federal Ministry for Education and Science's (BMBF) programme "Schule-Wirtschaft/Arbeitsleben" (SWA; school-business/working life) the Federation, together with the unions and employers, also contributes to an improvement career orientation among pupils up to grade 10.

About 50,000 youths in more than 40 SWA projects in 1,000 schools and 4,300 cooperating businesses have so far benefited from this project. The schools are predominantly those catering for grades 5 – 10, but there are also some fifth and sixth form schools, transition schools and special schools for pupils with learning disorders.

The Federal Government would like to see more male staff teaching at primary schools. A gender-sensitive education can hardly be successful if the proportion of male nursery and primary school teachers remains as low as it is.

Measures:

- The Federal Government supports all efforts to improve dealing with heterogeneous groups in education, especially by the investment programme “Zukunft Bildung und Betreuung” and by various research and development programmes of the Federation-Länder Commission for educational planning and promotion of research.
- The Federal Government supports the Länder with regard to career orientation of pupils through the BMBF programme “Schule-Wirtschaft/Arbeitsleben”.
- The Federal Government will support the Länder in settling difficult issues in the context of development, implementation and use of standards through pertinent research projects.
- The Federal Government advises the Länder to take adequate measures to increase the share of male teachers at primary schools considerably.

2.1.5 Extracurricular education, care and promotion

Children and youths do not develop their competences and abilities at school only. Leisure activities, be they in the cultural arena, politics or sports, are also of huge importance, because they promote positive development, soft skills and social integration. The entire educational debate has to adapt to this fact, and non-formalised and informal educational opportunities should also be discussed broadly.

International and intercultural competences are imparted in international youth exchange programmes promoted by the Federal Government and also the Länder and municipalities. International understanding aside, these also promote individual qualifications and development.

Participating children’s and youths’ opinions

“In order to improve leisure activities at school there should be a social worker, who, incidentally, could also help children and youths to cope with difficult situations.”

Extracurricular education of youth is a pillar of all-day education, care and promotion. It helps to avoid discrimination or to reduce it. That is why local youth welfare offices and schools should work together when it comes to expand full-time day schools. **Youth welfare's and schools' different competences can well be merged to achieve a better provision with full-time day schools meeting children's and youths' needs.** Full-time day schools can become centres for various activities in which various people, institutions and associations partake.

The Federal Government promotes the improvement of socially deprived or economically underdeveloped rural areas through a number of projects and programmes like “Entwicklung und Chancen junger Menschen” (young people’s development and opportunities), “Soziale Stadt” (social town) and a restructuring of the youth migration services.

Measures:

- In cooperation with the Länder and child and youth welfare providers, the Federal Government is going to work wholeheartedly for a consistent decentralised networking of the various projects and measures for an individual promotion of children and youths.
- The Federal Government will make a real effort to sustainably develop the productive cooperation between the various providers of care, education and child-raising and youth welfare work, especially between schools and youth welfare and at the municipal level.

2.1.6 Vocational training

A qualified training is the most important factor for participatory opportunities of young people after they have left school. People without vocational qualification run the highest risk to become a low-income worker or lose one’s job. The Federal Government is therefore committed to see a comprehensive range of traineeships for all youths seeking one.

This is primarily the Länder’s responsibility, which includes that their school system will give all youths adequate qualifications, also those required to embark on vocational training. The Employment Agencies’ job counsellors support youths on their way to their career choice, starting in the final and semi-final year of school. The recently renewed agreement between the conference of education ministers and the Federal Employment Agency is supposed to give this process some new momentum. The Federal Government’s SWA programme supports the efforts made by the Länder.

All these efforts notwithstanding, many young people have no vocational qualification. Among the 20 to 29-year-olds these are currently 1.36 m or 14.9 per cent. With 37 per cent youths and young adults from immigrant families have the highest share of unskilled workers. One of the most important objectives is thus to reduce the number of unskilled youths to below 15 per cent.

The Federal Government's vocational education policy aims at a sound and qualified training for all youths.

Therefore, the "Nationale Pakt für Ausbildung und Fachkräftenachwuchs" (national pact on training and skills) is an important milestone, committing the Federal Government and German business' umbrella organisations, in cooperation with the Länder, to provide traineeships for all youths seeking one. Placement into the dual training system still takes priority, and youths with only fairly limited placement opportunities are also supposed to get the chance of finding a place and embarking on a career.

Business committed itself, over the three-year term, to provide 30,000 new traineeships p.a. on average. In addition, agreed to provide 25,000 places for youths to gain entry qualifications (EQJ). Youths with a rather weak training ability are supposed to get into vocational training by participating in six to twelve-month modules first. With these entry qualifications, youths with limited placement opportunities shall get the chance to get to know parts of an apprenticeable job. The costs for this work placement and a social insurance flat rate are co-funded by the Federation. Businesses will get the chance to get to know these youths better. Youths may show what they are actually able to do, which is, after all, often more than is stated in school-leaving certificates.

The pact has already had an effect: as of September 30, 2004, there was a y-o-y **increase** of 15,300 traineeships. The increase in the number of in-company traineeships is very gratifying indeed. This constitutes a turnaround on the training market. By providing 31,500 places to obtain entry qualifications, business has made good use of the newly developed toll and even exceeded the number agreed upon in the pact. While until December 2004 only 7,200 youths have taken up these EQJ places, it is to be expected that in January and February 2005 some more of the 24,300 free places will be filled.

All partners will continue their efforts over the next two years. It is therefore to be expected that the situation on the training market for youths will see further improvement.

The reduction of youth unemployment is very important to the Federal Government. In comparison with the overall unemployment rate, the unemployment rate for the below 25s was rather low; from 1998 to 2004 it dropped from 11.8 per cent to 9.9 per cent, or 1.8 per cent below the overall rate (11.7 per cent). To avoid another increase, all tools have to be deployed. The youth-specific promotion tools in SGBIII (Social Code, Book III) have a huge positive impact on a successful integration of young people through the promotion of a traineeship or qualifications. In 2003, on average 477,000 youths were promoted (a y-o-y increase of 6.7 per cent).

On January 01, 2005, the Act on the New Basic Level of Social Protection for Job-Seekers (SGB II) entered into force, ensuring that people below 25 years of age will get placed into a job or training immediately after having filed a claim for this basic benefit. Any youth not finding a job or traineeship is supposed to at least be placed in a job creation scheme with qualifying parts. Municipal providers may also offer such schemes.

To achieve an efficient and individual career guidance for job-seekers, the Employment Agencies will implement an adequate guidance ratio: one Personal contact (e.g. a case manager) will be responsible for approx. 75 youths. This very intensive guidance is supposed to improve integration into the regular labour market and avoid getting used to receiving welfare benefits.

For quite some time, the Federal Government has been working on an **easier and successful transition between general schools and vocational training**. This goes especially for youths who need support, e.g. youths from immigrant families. In order to make this transition successful, it is hardly adequate to simply add on some more promotion tools. Much better to fully utilise and link existing means. Above all, any preparation programmes for vocational training, both at school and extracurricular measures, have to be networked and businesses get more involved. We try to help with our 2001 – 2006 programme “Kompetenzen fördern - Berufliche Qualifizierung für Zielgruppen mit besonderem Förderbedarf” (Promoting competences – vocational qualification for target groups with special needs; BQF Programme), whose objective it is to develop vocational training for the disadvantaged structurally and qualitatively and to show unskilled youths new ways to obtain entry qualification and skills.

Since 2004, the youth migration services have increased their efforts to support youths from immigrant families to get into training and jobs. After their nationwide restructuring, the youth migration services now focus on **offering every youth with a background of migration an individual integration guidance**, e.g. by transferring them to the Employment Agencies’ job centres, and on a better networking of local provision. School-age youths with a background of migration may also contact the youth migration services if they encounter problems of integration.

Youths’ different entry qualifications mean a new challenge for businesses and vocational schools. **Youths with learning difficulties need special support**. The Federal Government has provided specific opportunities for youths not yet able to do a dual training to obtain a recognised vocational qualification. This can only be achieved by a better cooperation of unions and employers, schools and businesses and a sufficient number of available traineeships. Recognised qualifications can also be obtained after a training period at a technical vocational school, and this certainly helps such youths to avoid being “stacked” and further frustration. The Federal Government would like to see a better promotion of linguistic skills, knowledge and abilities youths can come up with in training.

Unfortunately, girls still avoid some apprenticeable jobs. The Federal Government thinks this is wrong. It wants to encourage **girls to get training in the promising IT jobs in particular**. It certainly lowers girls' career and advancement opportunities if they concentrate on a small number of jobs in the service sector only.

In a world in which knowledge is outdated before you know it, vocational qualification will not end with a journeyman's certificate. This means there has to be improvement in the conditions for life-long vocational learning.

Measures:

- With the BQF Programme the Federal Government pursues initiatives to structurally and qualitatively improve the tools of targeted vocational promotion of disadvantaged youths with a background of migration. There is a special focus on initiatives and projects which aim at improving pupils' entry qualifications for traineeships and at a further development of training preparation programmes at vocational schools. Training and practical periods are supposed to be included in close cooperation between schools and businesses.
- In cooperation with all who have responsibility, the Federal Government does all it can to provide every youth who is able and willing with the offer of a traineeship.
- The Federal Government partakes in the development of training paths with integrated social education measures to balance deficits in social and learning behaviour.
- The Federal Government supports the development of a system containing qualification modules from apprenticeable jobs in order to better link training preparation and training, to better involve businesses in the training preparation of youths not yet quite up to par and to set off such modules in later traineeships.
- With various projects like the nationwide training project "idee-it" and the nationwide "Girls' Day" the Federal Government tries to interest girls in sunrise jobs like natural sciences and (information) technology hitherto rather taken up by boys.

2.1.7 Teacher training and advanced vocational training

Be it IGLU-, PISA- or any other study: they all agree that thus far the training and advanced vocational training of teachers lacks components dealing with individual promotion. Both nursery teachers and school teachers have to receive the qualification of recognising strong and weak suits among pupils early on.

The Federal Government supports a **fundamental reform of all teachers' training and advanced vocational training**. This is not supposed to be merely didactic, it has to include schools at a more general level. And the increasing independence of schools also means that teachers have to develop new perspectives and competences.

Changes in training have only a medium to long-term effect in practice. That is why a scientifically sound examination and development of measures and basic conditions for the advanced vocational training of teachers is also called for.

Measures:

- The Federal Government will approach the Länder in order to advise them that the training of nursery teachers is upgraded without giving up on practical parts and that advanced training concepts are evaluated and developed further.
- The Federal Government is willing to partake in a convincing linkage of subject-related and educational and didactic training and a linkage of theoretical and practical training and a professional counselling during the first years on the job. The results of the Federation-Länder Commission (BLK) pilot scheme “Innovative Konzepte der Lehrerbildung für berufsbildende Schulen-innovelle-bs” (innovative concepts of teacher training for vocational schools) are a solid basis, especially in their contribution to individual stages of training and in testing the employment of non-teachers qualified in their subject.
- All teachers’ training has to put much emphasis on the following:
 - acquisition of the competences required,
 - the ability to promote individually and in an integrated fashion in all learning processes of heterogeneous groups and
 - the ability to acquire basic competences for teaching German as a second language to children from bilingual families.
- The Federal Government will work on an evaluation and implementation of the results of the BLK programme “Innovative Fortbildung der Lehrerinnen und Lehrer an beruflichen Schulen - innovelle-bs” (innovative advanced training for teachers at vocational schools) on
 - new organisational structures,
 - up-to-date learning cultures and
 - educational concepts for teachers’ advanced training,
 - the preparation for new requirements deriving from an increasing independence of schools and
 - a better professionalisation of job starters.

2.2 A non-violent upbringing

The protection of children against abuse, exploitation and violence is very important to the German public. Parliaments therefore face the task of continually reviewing existing laws. There is a number of authorities, associations and initiatives which look after the victims of violence, also offering advice and support on how to avoid violence in the first place. Nonetheless, there is still much left to do, as can be seen in the children’s opinions when they participated in drawing up this NAP.

Participating children and youths' opinions

“Physical violence is being played down or even glorified in video games or feature films. Emotional violence is not even seen and still a taboo. Violence may even be supported or provoked by gloaters. Extortion and brawls are commonplace at school. In many families there is violence, even sexual violence.”

Thus, to attain the Federal Government's objective to allow all children to grow up without violence more work has to be done. We concentrate on combating various forms of individual violence by people from within the family or the institutional and social environment, on the one hand. On the other, we closely monitor the depiction of violence in the media.

Children do also suffer when living in financial and/or emotional poverty, i.e. external effects arresting their natural development. The Federal Government supports efforts enabling parents to have a sufficient income from gainful employment to raise their family. The basic conditions and ways of implementation are outlined in Chapter 5 “Development of an adequate standard of living for children”.

Sexual violence against children does also exist. However, this issue is not included in the NAP because the Federal Government adopted a separate “action plan for the protection of children against sexual violence and exploitation”.

2.2.1 Violence and neglect in child-raising

Violence in child-raising means emotional and physical punishment, ranging from derogatory remarks and ignoring the child to light corporal punishment, beating up and gross bodily harm, possibly resulting in death. The emotional consequences of parental violence may have a life-long impact on children. In adolescence, such victims become drug addicts at an above average rate, react with anti-social behaviour and more frequently commit criminal offences. This shows that there are also huge social and economic consequences society has to bear as a result of parental violence.

The Federal Government has made the **promotion of non-violent upbringing** one of its basic objectives. The “Gesetz zur Ächtung von Gewalt in der Erziehung” (Act on the Outlawing of Violence in Child-Raising) of November 2000 laid down such a guideline. The campaign “Mehr Respekt vor Kindern” (more respect for children) made this Act known to the public and was supposed to bring home to parents and society at large this very paradigm shift and to raise the awareness of the results of violence in child-raising. Parents were supported in managing conflicts and stressful situations without violence. Therefore, the campaign, which lasted from September 2000 to the end of 2002, was not limited to media spots and posters, it also focused on practical local projects.

The main target group of the campaign were multipliers and parents. The projects included concepts and strategies on the subject of raising children without violence in family education, e.g. seminars etc; in workshops multipliers from family education and counselling got information and insights; letters to parents and flyers for parents were drawn up and educational measures for parents developed and implemented.

But more has to be done. Even though violence in child-raising has been on the decline for years now and most parents deem non-violence an ideal, it has not yet fully disappeared from everyday situations in families.

As scientific findings reveal, parents who were themselves beaten as children are more inclined to repeat that pattern. **Any effective prevention of violence therefore has to start in the family.** Information on the issue has also to take place in day-care facilities and schools.

The right to a non-violent upbringing can only be fully effective, when as many parents, children and multipliers as possible know about it. Thus far, the numbers are 30 per cent for parents, 30 per cent for children and 90 per cent for multipliers. This means that even after the campaign was concluded we still need continuous target group-specific information, advice and support programmes easily accessible by all parents. **A close cooperation between the healthcare sector and child and youth welfare sector is of great importance.** This is the very interface where families displaying violent behaviour and thus normally rather shutting themselves off can be identified. If such families get support, many children may be able to leave the vicious circle of violence. Moral courage in the communities should also be strengthened, violence must not be overlooked, but such parents be taken to task and, if need be, the authorities informed.

The protection of victims should not be forgotten either. Beaten and maltreated children are entitled to full and professional assistance in dealing and coping with the physical and emotional results of their suffering.

Participating children's and youths' opinions

"It is well known that violence experienced by oneself is often taken out on others rather automatically. That is why victims of violence should have access to inexpensive or free discussion groups, self-help groups, therapy etc."

In future, the Federal Government is going to pay more attention to the phenomenon of violence through neglect, which has hitherto not really received it. In such cases, the child does not get sufficient food, clothing and care. Its need of affection and protection is ignored. The child does not get sufficient or adequate stimuli for its development. Such a neglect often leads to social behavioural problems and an arrested physical development. There is the threat of total neglect, mental retardation and infant death. Neglect is much more frequent, according to the most recent data, than physical, emotional or sexual violence, which makes it even more important to focus upon it.

Both in violent child-raising and in neglect of children we see an increasing number if stressful situations do also increase. As will be outlined in Chapter 5, this is why the material resources of families have to be strengthened and the social integration of families be furthered.

The work of governmental authorities for the protection of children and youths is not only based upon an obligation to pursue social work but also on the existential protection responsibility that lies with child and youth welfare to prevent risks and dangers children may be exposed to (cf. Art 1 Para 3 No. 2 SGB VIII). In its bill on the development of child and youth welfare, the Federal Government has put much stress upon this responsibility. In future, the governmental custodianship will be reinforced by federal legislation. Nationwide recommendations by the congress of municipalities and by individual districts and towns will accompany this bill's provisions.

If there is an indication of a child's well-being being in danger, youth welfare has to act *ex officio*. That is the only way to ensure a self-responsible decision on how to prevent such an (imminent) danger: support for the family, for example, or by an appeal at law, the family court in this instance.

That is why the law is supposed to clarify (Art 8a SGB VIII) this procedure to be taken by the youth welfare office. Three possibilities exist. Will the child be better protected when the family gets support (e.g. the offer of child-raising assistance pursuant to Art 27 SGB ff. VIII)? Or does the family court have to be involved with respect to measures to be taken in accordance with Art 1666, 1666a BGB? Or do other institutions like the police or psychiatry have to be informed since these may be better equipped to protect the child? In this risk analysis – as the congress of municipalities set forth – a number of experts have to cooperate. The bill also obligates parents to such a cooperation.

Children and youths from immigrant families growing up in financial and social poverty require special consideration. Studies of the types of child-raising among immigrant parents conducted for the Federal Government's Sixth Family Report do not show a higher rate of violence among migrant families. Nonetheless, there are indications of violence to be found there deriving from the work of counsellors and other studies.

The First Periodic Security Report from 2001 also mentions this issue. It primarily draws upon studies conducted by the Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut Niedersachsen (criminal research institute Lower Saxony). However, the state of research is not sufficient. We require more research on this matter, also in comparison with socially disadvantaged German youths. Still, it is obvious that better opportunities for young people with a background of migration are the best way to prevent violence.

This is how the Federation's integration programme having entered into force on January 01, 2004 is supposed to work. It helps to reduce immigrant children's disadvantages on the training and labour market.

Measures:

- In 2005, the Federal Government is going to publish a report on changes in the real child-raising behaviour caused by the right to a non-violent upbringing.
- It promotes pilot schemes which support a nationwide introduction of family education programmes with the objective of informing and training parents in non-violent methods.
- The Federal Government supports the development of modules for lessons at school which deal with care for and raising babies and toddlers under development-psychological aspects.
- It promotes the development of training programmes for expectant fathers drawn up by hospitals, associations of midwives, family education facilities and paediatricians in cooperation.
- Existing low-threshold programmes for families with babies and toddlers and special aids like family midwives and "crying ambulances" are supposed to be evaluated and documented as a compendium with the Federal Government's support.
- Länder and municipalities should provide low-threshold and decentralised family education and advice programmes. This should include target group-specific assistance, e.g. for immigrants or families with multiple burdens.
- The Federal Government recommends to the various providers to better network their efforts, especially between the healthcare and youth welfare sector.
- The Federal Government has drawn up programmes which address fathers specifically in order to increase their role in child-care and raising.
- The Federal Government has commissioned studies to elucidate the problem of the neglect of children.
- It advises all responsible authorities to include prevention, early diagnosis and advice of and on violence in child-raising and neglect of children in the training and advanced vocational training curricula for social and educational occupations.
- The Federal Government participates in the comprehensive study on "Violence against Children" recommended by the UN General Assembly in November 2001 on the recommendation of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The purpose of this study is to identify the incidence, nature, extent and consequences of violence against children in special consideration of violence within the family, at school, in custodial homes and prisons and on the streets.

2.2.2 Children as witnesses and victims of domestic violence

Violence between spouses also has a negative impact on children. Their care and upbringing will suffer. The representative study on violence against women in Germany has revealed that about 25 per cent of the women in Germany have at least once experienced physical or sexual violence (or both) by a current or former spouse. In 64 per cent of these cases this led to injuries. As these data show, domestic violence is a huge problem and also affecting many children. The violated spouses are so busy with their own situation that they often fail to see how much their children suffer as well. Even behavioural problems go unnoticed. Boy and girls react differently. Boys run a higher risk of identifying with the violent father, girls rather with their mother. They tend to equate femininity with inferiority, powerlessness and weakness and to behave that way. The afore-mentioned representative study shows clearly that women who experienced violence in their family of origin run a higher risk of ending up as victims of sexual or physical violence when adults.

The Violence Protection Act besides an easier appropriation of the joint flat also contains express regulations on the proscription of contacting, harassing and approaching the victim. It entered into force on January 01, 2002. In addition, as of April 2002 there has also been the Act on the Improvement of the Rights of Children, which takes better consideration of the interests and experiences of children and youths who are affected by domestic violence. On the basis of this Act, a violent parent or third party like a parent's new spouse can be ejected from the flat.

We will stay on this track. **Targeted information** is supposed to raise the awareness of domestic violence having a huge negative impact on children. **Adults prone to violence need support in seeking non-violent methods of conflict management.** But **experts like judges and youth welfare workers also need support and assistance** in order to be able to act in the children's best interests.

In the next step, all experiences made in institutions offering assistance have to be evaluated. Then, it will be discernible what measures should be taken at the local level and what legal provisions may still be required. Again, different target groups need a different approach. Families with a background of migration require specific measures and tools. Assistance for boys and girls also has to take into account the differing gender-specific responses to domestic violence.

The findings of the Wissenschaftliche Begleitung der Interventionsprojekte gegen häusliche Gewalt in Deutschland (WIBIG; scientific monitoring of intervention projects against domestic violence) detailing the significance and the success of the cooperation between individual institutions and authorities in combating domestic violence also with regard to children and youths are very useful.

Measures:

- | The Federal Government has commissioned a study to check in how far the Violence Protection Act has been successful in practice. It is going to be concluded in spring 2005.
- | The Federal Government promotes the development of a parental training for the prevention of domestic violence.
- | It will approach the Länder and ask them to screen, document and make public local facilities addressing parents prone to violence and to expand it further.
- | The Federal Government is going to check how information and advanced training for the legal professions may raise the awareness of domestic violence being a factor in custody and access proceedings. This may include such modules being made mandatory.
- | It is going to draw up and diffuse guidelines for the protection of children in the context of domestic violence which will ensure a participation of these children and their rights as independent persons.
- | The Federal Government advises the Länder and municipalities, against the background of the WIBIG findings, to continue existing coordination projects and networks or
- | establish new ones in order to achieve a better cooperation between all concerned professions, youth welfare and facilities to assist women in particular.
- | The Federal Government will draw up and diffuse quality standards for youth welfare institutions dealing with such problems, e.g. when so ordered by a court or in cases of accompanied access.
- | For services dealing with families with a background of migration, the latest findings on domestic violence will be processed target group-specific and diffused for internal advanced training purposes.
- | The Federal Government is going to check available findings on gender-specific ways of coping with domestic violence with the objective of a development of adequate action guidelines for boys and girls.

2.2.3 Violence among children and youths

There are several manifestations of this problem. In early childhood, children experiment with fights, often countervailing adults' understanding of harmony. However, such forms of conflict management are part of a child's normal development and expand its scope of action. Sometimes conflicts also indicate certain age-specific developments. Other children draw attention to certain problems by acting aggressively.

In late childhood and especially as adolescents, trying out one's strength is a very common and typical phenomenon, as is testing what limits there might be when dealing with adults. The Federal Government takes the view that such age-related behaviour should be responded to in a relaxed and reasonable fashion by adults. If children go too far in this testing, adults should take a stand and stop them. Some occurrences, however, go far beyond a mere test of one's limits and strength. These are cases of children and youths using violence against physically or mentally inferior children, permanent or massive threats or extortion. This calls for immediate intervention. If need be, the criminal law relating to young offenders has to be used. It provides sufficient scope for case-related intervention, e.g. perpetrator-victim compensation.

Findings on so-called juvenile multiple perpetrators have to be made public in an objective fashion. **There is no doubt, however, that for this group of people problem-related measures have to be drawn up.**

All youths suspected or accused of a crime need assistance to improve their position before or at a trial.

Participating children's and youths' opinions

"Continually dealing with the subject of violence, be it at school or in private, furthers insight and self-assurance. To ensure this we demand that the rights of children and information on sexual violence and general abuse should be made part of the curriculum. Here it is also important that children and youths get information on how to deal with such problems, where they can get help and, very important, that they are entitled to get help."

"Many do not even know that what they have to suffer is wrong or that they are entitled to get any help they can. Action days or project weeks at all schools would make sense. One could invite psychologists from advice centres, police officers, victims or members of aid organisations."

Punishment, however, is certainly the ultima ratio. **Preventive measures come first**, e.g. conflict management programmes or class councils. Discussions with children and youths about the rights of children have to include the issue of “violence at school”. To prevent violence, it is also a good thing if children can exert more influence on their school life, as will be described in Chapter 4. Furthermore, the existing **anti-violence programmes** should be used better.

Measures:

- The Federal Government intends to use its PR work to make the assessment of children’s and youths’ behaviour more objective. The media are also supposed to be brought in.
- It is having a module on the information about the rights of children drawn up which can be used at school.
- Within the framework of the conference of the Youth Ministers, the Federal Government will support to make known and used anti-violence programmes nationwide and decentralised in child-care facilities and schools.
- The Federal Government makes every effort to make public the findings on juvenile multiple perpetrators while at the same time developing adequate measures. Particularly youth welfare and legal authorities are supposed to cooperate here.

2.2.4 Media and violence

Since TV and the new media are getting ever more important in the development of children and youths, the Federal Government had to amend the Jugendschutzgesetz (JuSchG, Youth Protection Act) and the Länder signed the Jugendmedienschutz-Staatsvertrag (JMStV, youth media protection inter-Länder agreement), both having entered into force on April 01, 2003. The new legal framework is supposed to protect children and youths against influences harmful to young persons, especially against violence in the media (carrier media and telemedia).

Pursuant to the Youth Protection Act, such morally damaging carrier and telemedia have to be put on the index by the Bundesprüfstelle für jugendgefährdende Medien (BPjM; Federal Review Board for Publications Harmful to Young Persons). Such carrier media may then no longer be made accessible to youths. Legal consequences for telemedia put on the index are laid down in the JMStV. According to this agreement, their diffusion is no longer permitted, unless the operator ensures they are only accessible to adults.

However, national laws only have a national effect. In view of the cross-border use of the Internet, **in this multimedia age children and youth protection has to get internationalised**. Via the Internet, children and youths have access to various illegal and harmful contents, all kinds of violence in particular. The Federal Government thinks that global minimum standards for an effective combat against contents on the net harmful to young persons are necessary. At the international level, it works wholeheartedly for a protection of youth protection and human dignity on the net they deserve.

The possible impact of the media on the behaviour of children and youths is still hotly contested. There is the frequent assertion that violent behaviour is generally promoted by the consumption of the presentation of violence in the media. The Federal Government follows the consensus that it certainly must have an impact when children and youths get the impression from the media that violence is a normal and seemingly accepted way of conflict management. This is especially so when the consumption of violence coincides with stress factors in their social environment. Excessive violence in the media may serve as a catalyst in patterns of identification and action when there is more than one such factor at play.

Governmental youth protection is not sufficient. Legal provisions and voluntary self-control can only provide an external shield against violent scenes. **It is equally important, if not perhaps more so, that children and youths develop their own media competence**. Young people require the ability to deal with media in a self-responsible way and to remain critical of problematic contents. Therefore, the Federal Government has deployed a number of measures to increase parents', teachers' and children and youths' media competence. Schools have an important role to play in this. In addition, continual advanced training for teachers and a networking of educational institutions and youth media protection is also important.

For parents, their children's handling of media consumption has become an important task. **Many a parent needs support in acquiring the necessary media (educational) competence**, which will enable them to restrict their children's media consumption in an adequate fashion. That was the reason for the establishment of the campaign "Schau hin! Was Deine Kinder machen." (Look what your children are doing) as a joint initiative of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, the TV magazine HÖRZU, the telecommunications provider ARCOR, ARD, ZDF and the semi-conductor manufacturer Intel (**www.schau-hin.info**). SCHAU HIN! provides parents with tips and ideas for a dealing with electronic media in a meaningful way.

For a general imparting of media and media educational competence, the Federal Government has ushered in the federal initiative "Jugend ans Netz" (youth to the net), equipping youth facilities with hardware and software. At the youth portal "netzcheckers.de" youths can acquire media competence informally through interactive participation. Workshops on media educational qualification address both youths and staff. The federal initiative links existing tools already imparting media competence on staff and parents.

It is the whole society's responsibility to protect children and youths against harmful influences. **Schools and youth facilities, media and business are asked to accompany children and youths in growing up and to instruct them in sensible media consumption. In the Federal Government's view, the media have to show a more responsible approach than before.** It is in their hands to stem the flood of presentations of violence and thus contribute to a more peaceful society. The report by the working group "Gewaltprävention" (prevention of violence), published on March 27, 2003 and having been commissioned by Länder's minister-presidents, mentions private TV channels' presentation of violence violating human dignity and a free democracy's basic values. Well-known talk shows depicting people's misery and despair are mentioned in particular. They are transmitted during the day and thus also reach young people.

Measures:

- The Federal Government supports the development and diffusion of parents' trainings to acquire media competence.
- It supports institutions in developing target group-specific trainings for qualified staff and complements this through the establishment and consolidation of networks with authorities and institutions of youth media protection.
- The Federal Government has advanced training modules drawn up which relay an adequate insight in the current consumer behaviour by girls and boys for parents and pertinent staff.
- The Federal Government supports the development and diffusion of programmes to promote media competence among children and youths in consideration of gender-specific needs and challenges.
- It will ask private TV stations in particular to develop and implement rules for their children, youth and afternoon programmes which stops violence and disregard for human dignity.
- The Federal Government is going to take steps to close gaps at the European and international level in the presentation of violence on the Internet through international agreements and decisions.
- It will check further possibilities of restricting the consumption of violence by children and youths and implement them in accordance with the results.

2.3 Promotion of health and healthy environmental conditions

The best-possible promotion of health is a central right of all children and youths and an important objective of the Federal Government.

According to the WHO's understanding, health is more than just an absence of illness. Health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. Although a full realisation of this approach is rather illusionary, one should certainly work toward it.

Health is embedded in living conditions. There are many factors at play which determine health and disease in close interaction: individual characteristics and properties, attitudes and behaviour. Added to these are the natural and the social environment changed by humans. Society and politics have therefore the responsibility to shape these factors with a view to the best possible general state of health being achieved.

These days, most of the severe contagious diseases, epidemics and deficiency diseases, which have put at risk the lives of children and youths over centuries, are contained. Formerly untreatable diseases can now be treated at least to some extent. Owing to a combination of several measures, there is only a very small number of annual HIV infections among new-borns. Less than one per cent of all new HIV infections are children, who were infected during pregnancy or delivery by their HIV-positive mother.

However, there have emerged some new medical risks and disorders which we have to focus on when pursuing a health policy fit for children. These include early relationship, regulation and bonding disorders like excessive crying, sleeping and eating disorders among babies and toddlers. Chronic psychosomatic and environmentally induced diseases are on the increase: allergies, but also lack of exercise and obesity, speech and behavioural disorders. Psycho-social dysfunctions are also on the increase – from an early susceptibility to alcohol and nicotine to other drugs, partly youth-specific ones which may reduce a child's quality of life very much. The Federal Government works wholeheartedly for a protection of children and youths against health risks and a reduced quality of life through addictive substances and for information on the hazards. This purpose is served by the "Aktionsplan Drogen und Sucht" (Action Plan Drugs and Addiction) and the "Aktionsprogramm Tabakprävention" (Action Programme Tobacco Prevention) adopted by the Federal Cabinet in June 2003.

To have a better collection of data, the Robert-Koch-Institut is currently conducting a comprehensive children and youth survey.

2.3.1 Environmental pollution

In order to be able to grow up healthily, children and youths need a “healthy” environment. **To retain and recreate clean and natural living conditions is one of this Federal Government’s central objectives**, pursued consistently in all political areas. It has, for example, been achieved that the pollution of natural resources has been greatly reduced. The reduction of lead in the air – and in the blood – alone has reduced the medical problems of uncountable children and youths considerably.

One guideline in the Federal Government’s health policy is the “Aktionsplan zur Verbesserung von Umwelt und Gesundheit der Kinder in der Europäischen Region der WHO” (CEHAPE, action plan for an improvement of children’s environment and health in the European region of the WHO). It was adopted at the 4th Conference of the Environment and Health Ministers of the European Region of the WHO in Budapest in June 2004. CEHAPE focuses on four central planks deemed to take priority in the region. Every participating country is supposed to draw up national children action plans or to include them in existing ones on the environment and health. In Germany, CEHAPE – at the federal level – has been included in the Action Plan Environment and Health, in operation since 1999, and is thus being implemented .

Children and youths – and the creation of an environment fit for children – are also at the heart of the European strategy for the environment and health, „Scale” (Science, Children, Awareness, Legal Instruments, Evaluation), adopted by the European Commission. The thus derived “Action Plan Environment and Health 2004 -2010” was presented in June 2004. The Commission and the Member States are currently working on a precise design of this action plan.

Water, air and soil are polluted by a number of **pollutants**, mostly in low concentrations. To get more **detailed knowledge on the environmental costs among the population**, the Federal Office for the Environment is now conducting a first-time children and youth survey, closely drawing upon the first one by the Robert-Koch-Institut. The studies want to find out how polluted the participating children’s bodies may be and also the degree of the pollution in their homes and drinking-water. Representative conclusions may then be drawn.

Children and youths increasingly suffer from noise and radiation, e.g. traffic noise and exhaust gases in heavily frequented areas. Many residential areas cannot offer children an environment suitable for them. There is not enough room for playing, exercise and experiences. Therefore, the Federal Government shows huge commitment in creating an environment for children in which foreseeable hazards like traffic accidents or pollution are avoided or reduced consistently. Children need a chance of exploring their increasingly larger surroundings and determining what they look like etc. At the local level, this is the responsibility of urban planning, health promotion, environmental policies and children and youth welfare depts.

A number of children do also suffer from social medical complaint which can be put down to the behaviour of their parents and the rest of the family. Passive smoking is one example.

The Federal Government's health policy aims at a further reduction of environmental damage, be it noise, pollutants or tobacco smoke.

Measures:

- The Federal Government contributes to informing parents, children and youths about environmentally friendly behaviour and the links between the environment and health.
- It implements pertinent measures within the framework of its Action Programme Environment and Health, which draws upon CEHAPE's objectives. It takes part in the development and implementation of the EU Action Plan Environment and Health 2004-2010.
- The Federal Government participates in the development of a health and environment indicator system at the level of the EU and in the European region of the WHO.
- It advises the Länder to include a module "children's environment and health" in the training and advanced training curricula of all occupations dealing with children, especially midwives and doctor's assistants.

2.3.2 Health and development promotion

Health and illness are states which are derived from a number of factors closely interwoven. As a rule, a disease means more than just one organ being affected. Therefore, the Federal Government increasingly focuses on **concepts of primary prevention and health promotion**.

With the Deutsches Forum Prävention und Gesundheitsförderung (German forum prevention and health promotion), founded in 2002 on the initiative of the Federal Minister for Health, there is now a national body in Germany in which more than 70 important organisations and institutions including several federal ministries work toward a joint objective: to strengthen prevention and health promotion. This task does also apply to children and youths, of course. A successful health promotion requires an **interdisciplinary cooperation of all remedial and medical professions which are important for children growing up healthily** – from education and child and youth welfare to urban planning and self-help and environmental groups.

To strengthen prevention and health promotion, on February 02, 2005, the Federal Government introduced the **Bill to strengthen medical prevention**, which focuses on primary prevention, behavioural prevention in particular. Children and youths are supposed to train healthy behaviour early on and make it a matter of course. So-called setting projects in nurseries and schools serve such a purpose. The Federal Government hopes to achieve permanent behavioural change and expects measurable effects on children's and youths' health.

Developing health consciousness and healthy behaviour is a long-term learning process which starts in the family when children are born. The importance of breastfeeding as the ideal form of feeding, its usefulness for a healthy development of the child and the establishment of a bond between mother and child has still to be pointed out among parents and even qualified staff. Although the Nationale Stillkommission (NSK, national breastfeeding commission) recommends to exclusively breastfeed children until the conclusion of the child's fourth to sixth month, breastfeeding rates including partial breastfeeding are below 50 per cent at the end of the six month. **Therefore, the Federal Government aims at a significant increase in the breastfeeding rate.**

Sufficient exercise, physical activity in everyday life and a balanced diet are important conditions for a healthy development of children and youths. And yet, many girls and boys rather grow up with computer games, fast food and TV. No less than 15 to 20 per cent of all children are overweight due to a lack of exercise and an unbalanced diet and risk medium-term medical complaints and serious illness (e.g. diabetes type 2 or cardiovascular diseases). They frequently suffer from social marginalisation and are disadvantaged at school or on the job. To counteract this trend is an important investment in the future of these children and of the entire society. The estimated costs of diet-related diseases amount to € 70 m p.a. The "Plattform Ernährung und Bewegung e. V." (platform diet and exercise), established in September 2004 by the Federal Government, wants to win over as many people and organisations as possible to combat overweight. Further initiatives by the Federal Government include the Deutsches Forum working group "Gesunde Kindergärten und Schulen" (healthy nurseries and schools).

Moreover, it must not be overlooked that the incidence of eating disorders like anorexia or bulimia is also on the increase. These psychosomatic disorders have also to be prevented first rather than treated later. Since the bulk of patients are adolescent girls and young women, the woman-specific conditions for the development of eating disorders have to be taken into consideration. These include the specifically female ideal of beauty or slimness and problems with their gender role during puberty, linked with specifically female physical and emotional features of development. An early diagnosis of eating disorders is very important.

Diagnostic language tests show an increasing rate of an arrested linguistic development among children of pre-school age. This primarily affects children from immigrant families, in which German is hardly ever spoken, and German children from uneducated families. An arrested linguistic development in almost all cases will lead to problems at school and a higher rate of school drop-outs. **The development of such disorders should therefore be prevented as early as possible. Disorders already having appeared should be diagnosed and treated in time.**

Children learn by bonding with people important to them. That is why teachers at day nurseries and schools can contribute to the promotion of health among children and youths in their function as role models. The Federal Government sets itself the target of **strengthening health promotion in day nurseries and schools.** The focus lies on the promotion of a healthy diet and exercise, on strengthening linguistic and motor abilities and on improving the abilities to cope with stress.

The Federal Government will also deal more intensively with the problem of teenage pregnancies. The Federal Statistics Office's data show a slight increase, not in itself alarming, but to be taken seriously. The birth rate among the under 18s in 2001 increased from about 4,700 to 5,240 and in 2002 to 5,420. At the same time, there was also a higher abortion rate among minor girls – from 4,724 abortions in 1996 to 7,605 in 2001, 7,443 in 2002 and 7,645 in 2003.

The Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung (Federal central office for health information; BZgA) has therefore intensified sex education within the framework of its responsibility pursuant to Art 1 of the Act on Pregnant Women in Conflict Situations in order **to prevent teenage pregnancies**. The objective is an early sex education in co-responsibility of parents and schools.

Measures:

I Promotion of breastfeeding

- ▮ The Federal Government, via the NSK among others, contributes to sustainable information on the importance of breastfeeding being conveyed to parents.
- ▮ It supports the WHO's and UNICEF's 'initiative breastfeeding-friendly hospital' and the NSK's recommendations.

I Lack of exercise and overweight

- ▮ The Federal Government participates in the conveying of information on healthy behaviour and a healthy life-style for parents, children and youths and conducts information campaigns. These focus on the prevention of eating disorders like overweight, anorexia and bulimia.
- ▮ It encourages to include the social environment, i.e. family, friends, peer groups, suburbs, nurseries and schools. The activities of the Deutsches Forum Prävention und Gesundheitsförderung, and here especially the working group "healthy nurseries and schools", and the initiatives of the "Plattform Ernährung und Bewegung e. V.", initiated by the Federal Government, are supposed to be taken into account.
- ▮ The Federal Government is in favour of binding standards for patient training programmes for overweight girls and boys. All important actors are included: cost bearers, medical providers, professional societies, ministries and Länder. The scientific review of these standards is also part of it.
- ▮ It suggests playgrounds fit for children and close to home.
- ▮ The Federal Government supports health promotion and dietary and consumer education to be enshrined in nurseries' and schools' curricula. More exercise and PE are supposed to be provided.
- ▮ Within the framework of the "Nationalen Gesundheitssurveys für Kinder und Jugendliche" (national health survey for children and youths), it partakes in a survey of young people's sports behaviour.

I Language development

- ▮ The Federal Government supports the Länder, municipalities and voluntary providers in the promotion of language lessons in day nurseries and schools.
- ▮ It publishes information brochures for parents on the relationship between native tongue and second language and on opportunities for language promotion.

I Health promotion in day nurseries and schools

- ▮ The Federal Government suggests to conduct health promotion programmes in day nurseries and schools under inclusion of the environment, especially in underdeveloped areas. This includes a healthy diet in full-time day care.
- ▮ It suggests to improve teachers' training and advanced training curricula in terms of prevention and health promotion.
- ▮ It supports innovative pilot schemes and encourages they be networked, e.g. by the Deutsches Forum Prävention und Gesundheitsförderung and the "Plattform Ernährung und Bewegung e.V."

I Intensification of children's and youths' sex education before and during puberty

- ▮ The Federal Government strengthens the sex education of children and youths through a target group and age-group-specific use of media. Multipliers are also addressed increasingly.
- ▮ It supports sex education to be established at day care facilities. Suitable aids for multipliers help to improve the advanced training for nursery teachers and asks for cooperation by the Länder.
- ▮ The Federal Government supports the networking of youth welfare and family welfare to prevent teenage pregnancies.

2.3.3 Prevention, early diagnosis and early treatment of diseases and disorders

The screening of newborns makes for an early diagnosis of serious physical and mental disorders, partly doing irreversible damage during the first days or weeks. In many cases, expert treatment means a normal or at least better physical and mental development. That is why it is the Federal Government's objective to **improve the early diagnosis and treatment of serious congenital diseases and to make possible a comprehensive and integrated care and follow-up treatment.**

Sudden infant death syndrome is the most common cause of death during the first year, disregarding the newborn period. Using simple preventive methods at home may reduce **the risk of sudden infant death syndrome:** parents should, for example, make sure that the baby lies on its back, does not inhale tobacco smoke and the bedroom temperature is not too warm.

Excessive crying, sleeping and feeding disorders are among the most frequent problems in early childhood. If these are diagnosed and treated early, long-term and cost-intensive treatments at a later stage may be avoided. After birth, parents are often on their own and do not know where to get qualified help. The Federal Government's policy thus aims at an **early diagnosis and treatment of so-called relationship and regulation disorders.**

Early diagnosis examinations for children and youths are an important tool for prevention and a timely treatment. And yet, participation in these early diagnosis examinations (U1 to U9 and J1) starts to drop in the second year. The Federal Government aims at **a further development in the provision of early diagnosis examinations. Above all, it has to be ensured that as many parents as possible make use of the examinations,** especially U7 to U9, J1 and among risk groups.

The vaccination rate concerning diseases to be avoided by vaccinations is not sufficient. The **Federal Government therefore aims at an increase in vaccination rates, to 100 per cent if possible.**

Children and youths increasingly suffer from psychological disorders like angst, depression or compulsive behaviour. Self-mutilation and suicide attempts are on the increase. An early identification of psycho-social risk factors in the family, in the social environment and the child's personality's development is the basis for any early interdisciplinary intervention. The **Federal Government wants to make a contribution to reduce psycho-social risk factors through an early and ensured identification and intervention.**

About a third of all youths consumes alcohol on a regular basis at an age of 15 years, that is before the legally required minimum age. There are new dangers on the horizon through the increased supply of so-called alcopops. Early regular consumption of alcohol can lead to physical, mental and psycho-social development disorders and to an addiction – much faster than among adults. The law is unequivocal: in pubs, shops or in the public at large, drinks containing spirits (the so-called alcopops among them) may not be sold to children and youths below 18 years of age. Consumption is not allowed either. The same goes for other alcoholic drinks like wine and beer, but with a minimum age of 16.

To prop up the existing regulations in youth protection and to make it harder for children and youths to get hold of alcopops containing spirits, the “Gesetz zur Verbesserung des Schutzes junger Menschen vor Gefahren des Alkohol- und Tabakkonsums” (Act on the Improvement of the Protection of Young People Against the Dangers of Alcohol and Tobacco Consumption), enacted in July 2004, provides for a special tax levied on alcopops containing spirits and for an obligation to label. The additional revenues will be put at the disposal of the Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung for preventive measures. On July 01, 2005, the Federal Government will submit to the Lower House a report on the effect of the Act on the consumption of alcohol by minors. **In addition, it plans information campaigns to reduce the consumption of alcohol.**

A consumption of alcohol during pregnancy and the breastfeeding period can cause the child severe damage. **Therefore, the Federal Government uses targeted information to make pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers do without alcohol.**

Girls and boys start smoking at an ever younger age. Every third 15-year-old youth consumes cigarettes. Partial advertising bans and industry’s “self-restriction” notwithstanding, tobacco is not only marketed by mere product advertising, but by conveying a positive image. The advertising messages so attractive to youths stress non-conformity, fun, liberty, eroticism and holidays. Many children are exposed to health risks through an early experience of smoking in the family and passive smoking, partly even when still unborn.

Participating children’s and youths’ opinions

“It is much better for children when public areas and closed rooms children cannot withdraw from, are declared non-smoking zones, e.g. cars. After all, passive smoking is not only a health hazard, it also entices you to smoke yourself sooner.”

“Otherwise, there should be health warnings on cigarette packs saying “Smoking is even more dangerous for children than it is for adults “. It should be written in large, perhaps highlighted letters, so that every adult gets the message.”

Smoking in public is forbidden to youths under the age of 16. **The Federal Government wants to keep youths from smoking through information.** In its Youth Protection Act, it has also prohibited the sale of tobacco to this age group. From January 01, 2007, tobacco products may only be sold from cigarette machines if these are put at places inaccessible to youths of under 16 years of age. This inaccessibility has to be ensured by technical devices or continuous supervision.

The Federal Government also works for a reduction of tobacco consumption and smoking during pregnancy and breastfeeding and a higher age of starting such consumption. Adults have to be told to do without smoking in the presence of children and youths.

Measures:

I Screening of newborns

- ▮ The Federal Government supports an expansion of the screening of newborns in accordance with latest scientific findings.
- ▮ It suggests safeguarding and expanding a comprehensive and, if need be, interdisciplinary care and follow-up care.
- ▮ The Federal Government contributes to a targeted and proper information of parents.

I Early diagnosis and treatment of relationship and regulation disorders

- ▮ The Federal Government suggests target group-specific preventive measures.
- ▮ The Federal Government suggests the development and implementation of integrated early diagnosis and preventive concepts to be realised during ante-natal preparation and follow-up care.
- ▮ The Federal Government supports the establishment of low-threshold advice and counselling services, also for high-risk families.
- ▮ Based upon the research on the existing advice services for young parents, the Federal Government will examine a possible implementation of a nationwide baby-hotline with transfer to the nearest emergency facility.
- ▮ It suggests advanced vocational training for qualified staff and a promotion of networks in the field of early diagnosis and the treatment of relationship and regulation disorders and parents-child therapy.
- ▮ The Federal Government is committed to family education programmes being aligned to post-natal advice for parents.

I Early diagnosis examinations

- ▮ The Federal Government supports a review and demand-based augmentation of child early diagnosis examinations, especially services for risk groups and information on the purpose of early diagnosis examinations under better use of existing structures. This includes, above all, public health services, day-care facilities and schools.
- ▮ The Federal Government will undertake more efforts to increase parents' use of such early diagnosis examinations through the existing range of information.

I Vaccination

- || The Federal Government continues its information campaign on vaccination as a preventive measure.
- || It suggests to include the vaccination register in the electronic health card.

I Psychosocial disorders

- || Within the bounds of its authority, the Federal Government supports better opportunities for an early recognition of psychosocial risk factors in families, the social environment and the psychological development of young people in order to reduce the incidence of such disorders through an early intervention.
- || Psychological disorders have to be diagnosed and treated early. This calls for:
 - low-threshold and timely access to demand-based psychiatric and psychotherapeutic assistance for children and youths,
 - an expansion of qualified diagnostic and therapeutic services,
 - qualified advanced trainings for dealing with suicidal tendencies under inclusion of medical institutions, schools, youth welfare facilities and parental advice centres,
 - interdisciplinary regional networks for crisis intervention and the treatment of psychological disorders.

I Alcohol and nicotine prophylaxis

- || The Federal Government develops further youth-specific information campaigns on the dangers of alcohol and tobacco consumption. It checks how far the protection of non-smokers may be improved on a broad basis.

2.3.4 Prevention of accidents

The accidents statistics reflect how much a child's environment has changed over the past decades. Public spaces for playing around have become smaller and fewer, as a result children have less exercise, in turn have more accidents at home and during leisure activities. On the other hand, there were fewer road accidents involving children. **The Federal Government wants to reduce the number of accidents at home, during leisure activities and road accidents which involve children.**

Measures:

- The Federal Government contributes to safeguarding nationwide information for parents, children and youths on age-typical accident risks.
- The Federal Government supports a stronger emphasis on the preventive effect of sports and exercise.
- The Federal Government suggests conducting programmes that advise children in a suitable way on how to deal with risky situations.
- The Federal Government enters into agreements with industry confederations on technical accident prevention and certification labels.
- It supports an expanded and safe network of cycle tracks.
- The Federal Government contributes to legal provisions being enacted, which will give municipalities more flexibility in creating restricted speed zones.

2.3.5 A hospital care fit for children

The main problem is that about 40 per cent of hospitalised children stay in wards for adults, where they do not necessarily get the right medical and psychosocial treatment. Co-hospitalisation and presence of one parent is not always possible. Besides, there are not enough out-patient diagnostic or therapeutic services available.

Participating children's and youths' opinions

"It is also very important that hospitals are made fitter for children, i.e. individually equipped play rooms with various games etc. on offer, colourful rooms, activities for children above 9 years of age. In addition, doctors and nurses dealing with children should attend educational courses to be better equipped to deal with children's needs."

The Federal Government's health policy aims at hospital care fit for children, i.e. specially equipped paediatric wards. This should include improved opportunities to co-hospitalise one parent for medical reasons and a strengthening of **children's and youths' rights as patients**.

Measures:

- The Federal Government supports the maintenance and creation of sufficient and specific capacities for children and youths in hospitals.
- The Federal Government works for an inclusion of the particularities of full or partial in-patient treatment fit for children through the calculatory participation of paediatric wards and hospitals in the case-based lump sum.
- Concerning improved opportunities to co-hospitalise one parent in cases of in-patient treatment if necessary for medical reasons, the Federal Government uses the cooperation of the Länder's bodies responsible for hospital care.

- It contributes to the information of parents about children's rights and needs in paediatric wards.
- The Federal Government suggests the introduction of a complaint system in paediatric wards.

2.3.6 Pharmacological therapy

A pharmacological therapy for children and youths is mostly based upon scientific research on adults, whose findings cannot be simply applied to children and youths ("Children are not little adults").

Since often drugs tested on children and youths are not available, drugs which are not approved for this age group have to be used. This requires legal regulations. **The Federal Government supports an increase in the number and quality of clinical pharmacological studies on children and youths.** That is the only way to achieve more security among paediatricians and child and youth psychiatrists when prescribing drugs.

Measures:

- The Federal Government supports measures to assess the efficacy and harmlessness of drugs currently used on children without prescription drug approval.
- A special examination of the administration of drugs to children during the approval procedure is currently prepared in European legislation. A commission at the Bundesinstitut für Arzneimittel und Medizinprodukte (Federal institute for drugs and medical products) has already been laid down in German law for approval procedures in Germany. Special programmes run by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research promote the clinical study of drugs on children (Paednet).
- The Federal Government supports advanced medical training for paediatricians and child and youth psychiatrists in pharmacological therapy.

2.3.7 Integration of disabled children and youths

Disabilities are not always recognised in time. Besides, disabled children and youths cannot always fully utilise their talents. There are special problems in the transition to secondary schools.

The Federal Government wants to contribute to an early recognition of disabilities and to support the integration of disabled children and youths in all spheres of life.

Measures:

- ▮ The Federal Government supports the maintenance and expansion of existing integrated care and promotion structures for children with complex chronic diseases.
- ▮ The Federal Government reviews and, if need be, amends all relevant acts and implementing regulations with a view to an integration of disabled children.
- ▮ It supports federal professional organisations and associations which try to improve the integration of disabled children.
- ▮ The Federal Government will continue to support a nationwide hearing screening of newborns as a free service paid for by the statutory health insurance in concert with the Gemeinsamer Bundesausschuss (joint federal committee).

2.3.8 Intercultural competence

Girls and boys grow up in a society of various ethnic and cultural influences. Habits and customs are also increasingly distinguished by social, cultural and religious aspects. This extends to the respective understandings of health and illness. Whoever treats children with a background of migration has to have both the knowledge and the willingness to take this into account. **We have to impart more intercultural competences in the remedial and medical professions' training and advanced training.**

Measures:

- ▮ The Federal Government welcomes universities' use of the opportunities provided by the licensing regulations for doctors to train intercultural competences.
- ▮ The Federal Government welcomes the review and possible amendment of the pertinent regulations on the training and advanced training and
- ▮ the increased recruitment of staff with relevant experiences.

2.3.9 Networking

Since health is defined holistically, there is a close relationship and much interaction between the fields health, urban development, environment, education and youth welfare. Therefore, children and youths will benefit from a better cooperation here. This applies to individual cases but also to the development of comprehensive strategies and services. Such a cooperation should also include self-help groups, environmental and health associations and environmental, urban and regional planning.

Measures:

- ! The Federal Government suggests the establishment of round tables for the health of children and youths at the local level in the context of its youth health days.
- ! It suggests an interdisciplinary training and advanced training on the health of children and youths, especially in socially deprived areas.
- ! The Federal Government recommends to support parents' self-help groups.

2.3.10 Available data and monitoring

For a targeted planning in health promotion we need sound knowledge. The “national health survey for children and youth” with the three modules motor activity, mental health and children-environment survey is a huge effort to improve on the available data. At a second level, studies would be adequate which deal with hitherto neglected issues and give more insight into cause and effect. **The Federal Government deems a permanent health reporting necessary.** To be more precise: we have to survey data on the physical, mental, emotional and social aspects on a regular basis. New health risks require fast qualitative and quantitative studies. **Furthermore, the Federal Government supports active monitoring.** All objectives and measures in the field of children's and youths' health have to be constantly reviewed and updated. A sophisticated system of political consultancy for children's and youths' health could be in order.

Measures:

- ! The Federal Government examines whether the surveys included in the aforementioned national survey should be conducted on a permanent basis.

2.4 Participation of children and youths

Children and youths are entitled to participate. They have to have the chance of expressing their interests, desires, hopes, fears and problems wherever these may be relevant: within the family, at school, in the nursery, in housing and urban planning and in the societal debate about our commonweal's future.

Their rights of participation are enshrined in many institutions and bodies – as we deem it adequate for a working democracy.

Society is dependent upon children's and youths' potentials. If they are taken seriously, this may improve a lot of planning and decision-making processes. The Participation of children and youths is one benchmark of our society's sustainability.

Participating children's and youths' opinions

“Children and youths should have the opportunity of participating at the political level so that their needs are better taken into account. “

More than ever politics these days faces the task of involving people in opinion-forming and decision-making processes. The youth studies of the past decades have shown that the existing structural conditions in Germany are insufficient and not fit for youths. Children and youths are frustrated about the institutionalised political arena, which they deem ossified and untrue to their lives. However, these studies also reveal a huge willingness to a commitment in projects. Democracy is still approved of; a solid basis for changes.

Society and politics have to have a rethink together: we need a more open approach to children and youths. We have to accept their participatory rights as a natural part of our democratic culture and this acceptance has to find expression in practice: realigned structures and a realigned balance of power between the generations.

2.4.1 Basics

2.4.1.1 Legal framework, forms and structures

Participation in the public domain requires a legal framework. Concerning children and youths, this is laid down in the UN Convention on the Rights of Children and, above all, the Child and Youth Welfare Act (SGB VIII), and the Länder's regulations on participation in day nurseries and schools. In some Länder, the participation of children and youths has been enshrined in the municipal ordinances. Such regulations also exist at the federal level. Municipal development planning, for example, has to provide for the consideration of young people's social and cultural needs.

Forms of participation can be systematically broken down into five types:

- participation by youth associations, e.g. by youth rings,
- representative forms like children's and youth parliaments and school councils,
- open forms like children's borough assemblies, surgeries and local council conferences, youth forums,
- project-related forms like future workshops, workshops, activating surveys in actual planning and decision-making processes,

! commissioners, full-time or voluntary adult representatives acting on behalf of children and youths in administrations or in political decision-making bodies.

To strengthen participation by youths, some people demand that the voting age be lowered. Whether a lower voting age for general elections is a suitable means is hotly contested even among those it concerns. Voting is often deemed a merely symbolic act by children and youths which does not give them any real participatory power. Others feel they are asked too much. **Politics should therefore provide children and youths with greater participatory powers in discussions and decisions in their immediate surroundings**, and this as often as possible, not only on election days. Such an approach would build trust.

Children's and youths' needs often change faster than political institutions recognise. Therefore, the legal basis and the forms of participation are in danger of being perceived as outdated. **The Federal Government wants to modernise participatory rights.** It evaluates all experiences made at all levels. Its objective is to provide such rights in a methodically adequate fashion: for boys and girls, for children and youths of all levels of education and ethnic backgrounds, and also for disabled children and youths.

It is gratifying that the participation of young people has steadily increased over the past few years and is rather a matter of course now. However, there is some uncertainty as to what forms are adequate for what issues. So, it is rather a question of how than if, and of the quality of participatory processes, e.g. in structure, procedure and results. How can it be legally guaranteed that the results are actually implemented? What methods of participation are suitable for what age-groups? What educational guidance should it take? The models of participation can be adapted to requirements in various ways. **Still, we have to develop binding standards for participation.** Compliance with these standards will then be the benchmark for adults' acceptance of the participation of young people.

The young people aside, all political levels and representatives from the practical field and providers, day nurseries, schools and child and youth welfare also have to be involved in the development of these standards.

Measures:

- The Federal Government has the objective of enacting binding regulations on the participation of children and youths in all matters at the federal, Länder and municipal level affecting them directly. It develops tools for an evaluation of the implementation of participatory rights and opportunities. It will organise a process to develop quality standards, general standards first, followed by quality management standards for all spheres of life, including guidelines for their realisation and for educational institutions and child and youth welfare facilities in particular.
- The Federal Government regularly reports on the participatory opportunities of children and youths in its children and youth report.
- It will use the participation of children and youths as a kind of monitoring device for the implementation of the NAP “A Germany fit for children” and the UN Convention on the Rights of Children. Adequate means will be developed and implemented jointly with NGOs.

2.4.1.2 Information

Participation in political decisions will only work if the actors know their own and others’ rights. This means: **children and youths have to know what participatory rights they have and how they can exercise them at the local and national level.** The more politics will address various target groups’ specific needs and situations, the greater the information campaign’s success will be.

Participating children’s and youths’ opinions

“Adults also have to deal with children’s and youths’ ideas. Children and youths have to learn to express their opinions, to respect the opinions of others, to manage conflicts and to settle for compromises. This will only work if children and youths from all social backgrounds are to be involved.”

“There has to be more information on politics at school so that one can form one’s own opinion at elections. Children’s rights have to be included in the Länder’s curricula to inform all children about their rights.”

Adults also have to know about young people’s rights and opportunities, not only parents but all staff dealing with children: nursery teachers, school teachers, social workers and in the legal system. Better knowledge is the best way to achieve a more open-minded attitude towards children’s and youths’ participatory rights. Staff dealing with children should thus get the chance in training and advanced training to qualify for the implementation of participatory processes.

Measures:

- The Federal Government will inform children and youths about their participatory rights and opportunities in suitable media regularly, age and gender-specifically.
- It will work toward an examination by the political levels responsible in this area in how far the UN Convention on the Rights of Children, the rights of children laid down in German law and especially participatory rights may be included in school, university and advanced training curricula.

2.4.2 Fields of participation

2.4.2.1 Family

Usually, the family is the first place where children experience their rights and opinions being taken seriously. In contrast to earlier decades, parents now grant their children participatory rights in many issues discussed by the family. This should be supported. Many parents need encouragement and advice to let children and youths determine their everyday life themselves. **Parents' educational competence with respect to participation is supposed to be strengthened by specific services.**

There is an entitlement to child-raising assistance if parents are not able to cope with it alone. In such difficult life situations in particular, children and youths should make the experience that adults do not ignore them when taking decisions. There is hardly any other decision which intervenes that much in the individual life of children and youths. **Therefore, the Federal Government aims at an improvement of the participation of children and youths in this assistance planning procedure.**

Measures:

- The Federal Government will include aspects of children's and youths' participation as a criterion for the promotion of family education measures. It will work towards Länder and municipalities adjusting their family promotion programmes in that sense.
- The Federal Government supports the documentation and development of suitable forms of participation within the family, especially methodical approaches for the participation of younger children.
- The Federal Government supports a number of initiatives and nationwide further education measures for the participation of children in child-raising assistance decisions.

2.4.2.2 Educational institutions

Day nurseries and schools are central to a child's socialisation and education. In these institutions, children of different genders, social backgrounds and ethnic origins live side by side. That is why **in day-care facilities and schools participation has to**

be experienced and learnt, and accompanied by qualified teachers. Nurseries and schools should become places where democracy is learnt.

The current debate about education is a real boost for more participation in educational institutions, because it shows that learning is an active and self-managed process. Successful learning processes thus require a chance for self-determination and active participation. Two central planks of the NAP have therefore to be considered together: **education needs more participation – and – active participation furthers education**. As a result, we not only need methodical approaches based upon these principles, but also a new educational attitude. **Educational institutions' standards of education and quality have to include the interrelationship of education and participation as a guiding principle**.

In day-care facilities, the concept of participation was introduced as early as the 70's. In more recent times, forms of participation like children assemblies were tried with considerable success and the children showed real competence under guidance. Nonetheless, in many facilities there is a lack of awareness that there are various aspects of everyday life which can be codetermined by children and how this may be encouraged by age-specific methods. We therefore have to put more emphasis on a consistent implementation of participatory opportunities.

The same applies to schools. The current manifestation of codetermination at schools is deemed rather inefficient in terms of educational democracy. While it provides for formal participation in administrative matters, it does not have any real influence on school reality. Therefore, **more efficient participatory opportunities in schools have to be created**. These will fully come to life if they coincide with respect for and appreciation of pupils. Real participation will lead to an identification with the school by all concerned. It will improve the learning and school climate and contribute to an efficient prevention of violence and xenophobia.

Good schools do no longer deem themselves places of learning only. Imaginative head teachers often join forces with youth welfare and schools inspectors, mayors, business people and parents in order to turn schools into lively centres that offer a range of services and opportunities. This often makes pupils see what quality monitoring means. The Federal Government supports this kind of school development and encourages better cooperation, with child and youth welfare in particular. Turning schools into full-time day schools provides special opportunities, both in terms of available time and space. It is the child and youth welfare offices' task to bring in their experiences and approaches.

Measures:

- Concerning day-care facilities, the Federal Government will work towards
 - the Länder including participation as a promotion perspective into educational and child-raising plans if they have not already done so,
 - the providers being obliged to enshrine the Participation of children as a quality criterion in concepts and guiding principles of day-care facilities.
- Concerning schools, the Federal Government will
 - push forward school development programmes focussing on participation via the Federation-Länder commission for educational planning and research promotion,
 - suggest to the Länder that learning and reflecting on participation experiences will be included in the canon of national standards of education as one educational objective.
 - In its domain, it will provide for the UN Convention on the Rights of Children, the rights of children to be laid down in German law and especially participatory rights included in advanced training curricula.
- It will work toward other political levels doing likewise and will report on the implementation process regularly. A first report will come out at the end of 2006.
- In the interest of evaluation, the Federal Government will see to the implementation of participation in day-care facilities and schools becoming a regular feature of educational reporting.

2.4.2.3 Child and youth welfare work

In extracurricular youth education, it is children and youth associations that support children and youths in developing and expressing their specific needs and interests. Youths commit themselves to joint projects in associations and clubs, deal with issues, learn together and settle conflicts. Such associations help and support children and youths in personal matters or on personal problems.

There is a huge variety among these children and youth associations in accordance with their creed, educational approaches and youth-political programmes. Plurality and independent values are an essential feature of their work.

Child and youth welfare work offers a lot of participatory opportunities. In youth associations and voluntary child and youth welfare work facilities, girls and boys can express their own specific interests and discuss them. Youth associations have the mission of expressing and representing such interests. Voluntary child and youth welfare facilities and permanent projects of mobile work provide children and youths with a background of migration with special opportunities. No formal thresholds means a better articulation of interests and needs as well as societal participation.

The Federal Government will support children's and youths' ability to organise themselves. This will enable them to publicly discuss their questions, ideas on amendments and preferred forms of participation independently and effectively. They need funds they can manage themselves. This is one of the Federal Government's contributions to their better development of opportunities to act, which, in addition, they can mould as they see fit and without them being incorporated in the hierarchical adult world at that.

Measures:

- The Federal Government works towards public funding of projects which enable children and youths to make their own decisions on resources.
- It supports a permanent establishment of youth-specific information platforms, promotes the development of youth-run groups, associations and confederations and the organisation of discussion forums.

2.4.2.4 Municipalities

In many municipalities, the participation of children and youths is commonplace. The 90's saw a number of innovative methods, structures and, more in general, a greater awareness of its usefulness. Local councils and administrations have recognised that children and youths have a positive influence on planning processes in the municipalities.

However, participation in municipalities is often restricted to a few areas like laying out playgrounds or youth centres. There is still a lack of courage and will to implement a more comprehensive participation in rather disputed matters like urban planning, development plans, traffic and public transport or environmental issues. Adults' willingness to share decision-making processes with children and youths can certainly be increased. **We need better and more refined procedures to make children's and youths' interests and needs find better expression in political decision-making processes.** Children and youth parliaments or forums, already existing in a number of municipalities, are a good approach.

Participating children's and youths' opinions

"We need the establishment of children's bureaux and children's and youth parliaments with the basic funding provided by the government. Children's bureaux have the function of listening to the interests and needs of children and youths and to diffuse the rights of children. There should be one such bureau in every municipality in order to have all children have access to them. They should be networked at the national level."

"There should be a youth parliament in every major town, the purpose of which is to make youths experience democracy proactively. These parliaments' task should be to be able to form an opinion on a current topic in a committee and to present it to the local administration. It should not be forgotten that children are children and not too much should be asked of them."

The youth welfare committees in the municipalities bear a huge potential of hitherto unutilised opportunities with regard to a participation of children and youths in matters concerning them.

Measures:

- The Federal Government will approach the Länder to ask them to promote participation at the local level by taking adequate measures and using the whole range of forms of participation for the whole range of local issues.
- The Federal Government supports the development of approaches which increase the direct impact of children and youths in youth welfare committees.

2.4.2.5 Länder, Federation, Europe

Political participation should not stop at the local level. Although very young people are rather interested in their immediate surroundings, adolescents also pay attention to political developments in their Land, in Germany and in Europe. Many a Land has taken this into account in their own programmes and activities.

The Federal Government has the objective of accompanying these efforts by its own programmes and to make them successful. **We want to get young people and adults into political decision-making processes, strengthen existing forms of participation and develop and try new ones.**

This is what “Projekt P”, a joint initiative by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Deutscher Bundesjugendrings (Federal German youth ring) and the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Federal centre for political education), is all about: to promote real political participation by children and youths all over Germany and to make Germany fitter for children and youths. “P” means politics and participation, and children and youths participate in the project’s development, planning and realisation. They shall learn how to express their viewpoints effectively and in public and shall be encouraged to become active on a permanent basis – from the local level up to the federal level. Political commitment by youths is supposed to go beyond individual projects and lead to a higher degree of commitment and responsibility. Another objective is to raise the risk and responsibility awareness among the participants when it comes to political decision-making.

At the European level, the European Commission, since the presentation of the white paper “A new verve for Europe’s youth”, emphasises the promotion of the participation of children and youths in Europe. The Federal Government supports this by various measures for a better and more effective participation in Germany. This also applies to the implementation of the “European Pact for Youth”, which is deemed a partnership between EU and young people, based upon an extensive participation by youths, the European Youth Forum and youth organisations.

Measures:

- Until the end of 2005, the Federal Government will give new momentum to the participation movement by Projekt P at the federal level as well.
- The Federal Government is going to ensure a qualified preparation and follow-up of European and international conferences under participation of children and youths, including an evaluation and a publication of the results.
- The Federal Government will support the initiative of the “European Pact for Youth” and, together with the European Commission and the European Youth Forum, monitor the implementation within the framework of the Lisbon strategy.

2.5 Development of an adequate standard of living for children

The material conditions in which children grow up have a huge impact on their future progression. They also determine their prospects in life and social integration as adults.

Although the Federal Republic of Germany is among the rich countries of this world, there is still too a high a number of children growing up in precarious financial conditions. When in this context the term “child poverty” is mentioned, this is not an extreme and life-threatening poverty. In accordance with the EU Commission’s definition of poverty it rather means that children are deemed poor when they and their families have so little material, cultural and social means that they are excluded from the way of life and thus the socialisation regarded the minimum standard in the country they live in.

Huge financial transfers to families notwithstanding, approx. one out of seven children is affected by this relative poverty, foremost in two types of family: single parents and couples with three or more children. Insufficient care for and social exclusion of children are particularly manifest when income poverty lasts for years. Social marginalisation and an unhealthy diet and behaviour aside, bad housing conditions are also a factor. Many parents, without gainful employment for years, have huge difficulties in supporting their children’s school education, which is, after all, the key to better prospects in life. Here is what the participating children and youths deem an adequate standard of living:

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“A normal, adequate standard of living means that children and youths have enough to eat and a roof over their head, but also that they have a regular daily routine, i.e. going to school, leisure activities, sports, activities with the family and friends. In such a routine, parents will set limits, care for their children and respect them. They will give them the opportunity to develop freely and support them. This is the case in most families. However, there are also families or parents who feel that dealing with children is too much for them. Such parents should get assistance because every child is entitled to an adequate standard of living.”

Ensuring an adequate standard of living for all children is one of the Federal Government's central objectives. With its social, education, health, employment and economic policies it intends to fight the causes of child poverty and to provide new opportunities to get out of life situations under threat of poverty.

2.5.1 Orientation and management responsibility

To provide and preserve an adequate standard of living for all children is a task for society at large. It requires joint efforts by the Federation, Länder and municipalities and not least by business. The fight against child poverty requires nationwide uniform benchmarks.

Measures:

- Against the backdrop of the Nice objective “mobilisation of all actors” agreed between the heads of state and government, the Federal Government will intensify its cooperation with other governmental and non-governmental levels within the framework of the Nationaler Aktionsplan gegen Armut und soziale Ausgrenzung, NAP' incl. With the series of events “FORTEIL - Forum Teilhabe und soziale Integration” (forum participation and social integration), started at the end of 2004, civil society will be able to join the NAP process to a larger extent. The strategic approach in the NAP'incl. 2003-2005 of also strengthening social integration of children and youths will be developed against the backdrop of the many different experiences made thus far and the prospects for a successful fight against poverty be improved through a networking of the approaches.
- The Federal Government will support a proper allocation of responsibilities among Federation, Länder and municipalities in preserving or creating adequate standards of living.
- In this context, the Federal Government supports nationwide benchmarks for the definition of an adequate standard of living.
- Further, the Federal Government is going to examine to what extent pertinent legislative processes could include an impact assessment with regard to children's and youths' life situations.

2.5.2 Labour market

When children and youths suffer from temporary or permanent income poverty, this is normally due to their parents' income poverty. Poverty is usually based upon the interplay of a number of factors: a lack of opportunities of gainful employment, insufficient child-care provision, low level of education, a lack of housekeeping and financial competence and an insufficient command of German. The increasing rate of separations and divorces involving children will become a risk factor if the persona and financial cutbacks cannot be managed and the former family balance is, perhaps, turned into a single parent imbalance.

There is an above-average rate of poverty among single parents because they are more frequently unemployed and their maintenance entitlements are often too low or remain unpaid. In the old Länder there are not enough flexible and full-time day-care facilities for children which single parents in employment are usually dependent upon. But the low income in jobs typically taken by women also makes it harder to earn a reasonable livelihood through gainful employment. Therefore, the Federal Government is committed to creating basic conditions making it easier for mothers and fathers to take up a job. The necessary efforts to expand child-care facilities have already been outlined in Chapter 1.

Measures:

- The Federal Government will increasingly promote education and qualification measures and reintegration programmes to improve parents' access to the labour market.
- The Federal Government promotes in-company breaking-in periods for people re-entering the labour market.
- The Federal Government supports a family-orientated flexibilisation of working hours and organisation and a family-friendly corporate culture.
- It promotes the integration into the labour market of groups of people with problems.
- With the Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz (TAG; Day-Care Expansion Act), the Federal Government creates the conditions for the development of a demand-based provision of child-care.

2.5.3 A secure livelihood

If there are children in the household, these may increase the known risks of poverty – be it a low income, a low level of education and training, unemployment, separation or divorce. Especially for large families or single parents, one income alone is not always enough to avoid the additional drawing of income support or some such benefit. Usually a part-time job or a job in the low-income sector does not suffice to feed a large family.

The Federal Government supports the maintenance of the socio-cultural bread line of children, especially in families in the so-called precarious income sector. Their children's livelihood alone should not make families dependent on unemployment benefit II and income support pursuant to SGBII.

A sustainable family policy must prevent the poverty and social exclusion of children and families. It will help to cope with the side effects of exclusion and deprivation. To achieve this, families need better material and social resources. Their abilities and competences have to be strengthened.

In the past decade, family policy primarily focused on the expansion and improvement of financial transfers to families. Despite a difficult budget and economic situation, the Federal Government has continued to improve the financial position of families through financial benefits and tax measures, especially by increasing child benefit and tax allowances. While the benefits paid out in the context of family burdens equalisation in its broader sense (child benefit, child-raising benefit, maintenance advance payments, student grants) reduce families' relative income poverty substantially, these are not enough. They do not suffice to fight poverty and exclusion or to promote families with more than one child or gainful employment by women. That is why the Federal Government ushered in a paradigm shift in family policy. Now, the Federal Government focuses on an efficient family-friendly infrastructure of education and care, measures for the labour market integration of women and a better reconcilability of family and working life.

Beyond a consideration of constitutional requirements in family tax law, our policy aims at a more targeted financial support for families. One example is the introduction of an income-based child premium of €140 per child as of January 01, 2005, limited to 36 months. In combination with a child benefit of €154 for the first three children and €170 for any additional child plus housing benefit, this covers a child's livelihood. The child premium is paid to low-income parents who are able to cover their own maintenance but not their children's and would thus in future be dependent on unemployment benefit II. The child premium reduces child poverty. In a first step, about 150,000 children and their families will not be dependent upon unemployment benefit II.

Measures:

- The Federal Government examines a further development of the child premium as a tool of combating in the afore-mentioned sense.

2.5.4 Family

PISA and other studies have proven once again that our children's opportunities to embark on a successful career are to a very large extent determined by their social background. As has been outlined in the chapter "Equal opportunities through education", this calls for an early promotion of children. Still, **strengthening families** is equally important – after all, this is the place where children are being socialised and moulded according to their role models.

Families in precarious life situations need special support. Therefore, there is a family-policy programme to prevent poverty, funding targeted education projects and municipal activities preventing poverty until 2005. This includes networking the various services provided for single parents to take up a job and programmes for the management of daily routines and the integration of family households of foreign origin in poor or precarious life situations. As far as possible, household and family-related education programmes are based on demand.

In the municipalities, a family's living conditions are shaped by jobs, housing and surroundings and social infrastructure. In the Federal Government's initiative "Local alliances for family" various partners, from local councillors and administration, businesses, chambers, unions and the churches to associations, confederations and initiatives, join forces to create a more family-friendly climate. That is why the Federal Government expects results from such local alliances' agreements and measures on a better reconcilability of family and working life or an improvement of child-care facilities.

Whoever wants an adequate standard of living for their children, needs the opportunity to get into gainful employment. This is not least businesses' responsibility. Local alliances for family are forums **for coming up with a more family-friendly working life.** That is why the Federal Government welcomes companies', chambers of industry's and commerce's or handicrafts' commitment in a number of local alliances. Furthermore, in cooperation with German business' umbrella organisations a "Monitor family-friendliness" was drawn up, which shows which family-friendly staff policies are feasible and effective.

Child poverty cannot only be fought with money. Often, the development chances of children from families in precarious situations can be better improved if parents are well trained, counselled and strengthened in dealing with their children. **Many parents need more competence in caring, raising and educating their children.** More details can be found in chapters 2.1 and 2.2.

There were also interesting proposals made at the children's conferences:

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“For parents with a regular income and not enough time it would be helpful to develop activities which improve the relationship between parents and children, e.g. family festivities and family days. These activities could mean discounts for amusement parks etc. Parents should be able to take leave and spend these days with their children. For parents who cannot look after their children after school and cannot afford professional child-care there should be child-care facilities or child-minders like pensioners or housewives who would like to do voluntary work with children in the afternoon.”

“Children who are weak at school should get special support. These children are dependent upon private and homework tuition to improve their performance. Such costs should be paid by the school or the state, not the parents. Another idea to improve children's performance at school is that pupils assist pupils, a kind of school-based tuition exchange. And no costs would be incurred at that.”

Measures:

- The Federal Government will continue to support the expansion of low-threshold family centres for social services, particularly for parents hitherto not having been reached.
- The Federal Government also approaches the Länder and municipalities to ask them to expand the provision of parents and family education programmes including debt and insolvency counselling.
- The Federal Government strengthens its cooperation with unions, business organisations and companies in an “alliance for the family” with the objective of realising a modern work organisation, family-friendly and flexible working hours, a family-conscious staff policy and family-friendly services plus in-company child-care facilities. The issue of “a family-friendly working life” will be transferred to the corporate and local level through the advice and networking within the framework of the initiative “local alliances for family”.

2.5.5 Prevention of poverty

Poverty and all its ensuing social and societal consequences is often concentrated in conurbations and certain residential areas. The Federal Government is very committed to the preservation or creation of a spirit of joint responsibility and social cohesion in these quarters. The Federation-Länder programme “underdeveloped boroughs – social town” has been in existence since 1999. However, such programmes only show sustainable results when people are not only promoted but there are also demands made on them. To improve the living conditions of children and youth one must give people the opportunity to get active in their surroundings and develop perspectives worth living for.

The Federal Government therefore has the objective of introducing the prevention of poverty as a guideline in all social, education and health policies' fields of action.

Detailed proposals can be found in foregoing chapters, e.g. education of parents in chapter 2.2 and early diagnosis examinations for children in chapter 2.3.

Measures:

- The initiative “Local alliances for family” makes local best practice examples public through the regular choice of one “alliance of the month”, action days and events on networking, through information and publication.

2.5.6 Basic data

Preventing and fighting child poverty is only possible when discriminating data on the state and development of boys' and girls' living conditions are available. Targeted municipal planning decisions can only be made on such a basis. The objective should be to be able to document and compare social inequalities and developments in material resources, health, education, housing and societal participation reasonably in a timely and continual fashion.

Measures:

- The Federal Government examines whether with the commissioned data module system on the living conditions of families and children for municipalities a high-quality and comparable municipal family reporting will be made feasible. The data module system is supposed to cover the areas income, livelihood, health, education, housing and participation with regard to children and families.

2.6 International commitments

The final document of the Second Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Children from 2002 stresses the joint global responsibility for children and youths. The Federal Government has also committed itself, as a signatory, to not only work for children and youths in Germany but also internationally. Without this international perspective, this NAP would be incomplete.

As the following facts and figures on successes and challenges in international development will show, global action is more important and necessary than ever:

In many developing countries, half the population is under 16. The enormous efforts of the international community to improve the situation of children at a global level have borne fruit:

Over the past 30 years global infant mortality has dropped by half. Never before have so many children been able to attend school. And never before have so many children received vaccination against possibly mortal diseases like polio, measles or tetanus.

But there is a different speed of progress in different regions. One third of the 2.1 bn children and youths worldwide still lives in abject poverty. They have to get by on less than US\$ 1 per day. Neither have they enough to eat nor access to clean water, not to mention adequate medical care or education.

All literacy campaigns notwithstanding, 113 m children of primary school age do not attend school, foremost so in sub-Sahara Africa, where school attendance stands at only 59 per cent. The rate in Latin America and the Caribbean, however, has risen to 94 and 97 per cent respectively. In a number of countries, girls are still sent to school at a much lower rate than boys.

Millions of children live on the streets or are exploited economically and socially. Their protection rights and human rights are ignored or violated, be it through physical or emotional violence, war, being forced from home, migration, traffic in humans or sexual violence.

Children are the future – this is also true for underdeveloped countries. Peace, equal participation and economic development are also based upon an intelligent promotion and training of children and youths.

2.6.1 Reducing poverty and realising the rights of children

For the Federal Government, the most important international commitment is a significant reduction of poverty. In the main, its actions are based upon the Millennium Declaration adopted at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000. It commits the international community to a special protection of children, including children in emergency situations like escape.

Part of the Millennium Declaration will later take quantifiable, binding objectives and action requirements, the so-called Millennium Development Goals. All development goals take account of the promotion of children, implicitly or explicitly.

The Millennium Development Goals

All 189 UN member states have committed themselves to

1. eradicate abject poverty and hunger,
2. provide basic education for all,
3. promote equal rights between men and women and to strengthen the role of women,
4. reduce infant mortality,

5. improve mothers' health,
6. combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases,
7. ensure a sustainable ecological development and
8. establish a global development partnership until 2015.

Another point of reference for the Federal Government is the "action programme 2015" on the global fight against poverty which was adopted by the Federal Cabinet in April 2001 and describes the German contribution to the Millennium Declaration and the achievement of its development goals.

The action programme 2015 aims at an improvement of the living conditions of children, e.g. **basic education, medical care incl. combating HIV/AIDS, the abolition of child labour and the participation of children and youths in the political, social and economic development.**

To fight the structural discrimination of girls and women is a central plank of this action programme. All measures and projects in development cooperation have to meet this requirement not only during the planning stages but also in their implementation (see section 2.6.3).

Human rights are an integral part of the Millennium Declaration. It was drawn up in the spirit that the fight against poverty and a promotion of and compliance with human rights are mutually supportive measures.

Besides, the human rights approach means that the people concerned feel included in the achievement of the development goals and can co-shape them as well. This is also the basis of the "Entwicklungspolitische Aktionsplan für Menschenrechte 2004-2007" (development policy action plan for human rights 2004 – 2007).

Therefore, the Federal Government also supports the strengthening of the rights of children in the interest of fighting poverty. Children's and youths' human rights are not only protected by the UN Convention on the Rights of Children, but also by a number of other agreements also supposed to enable them to develop their potential and their participation in society.

The Federal Government also deals with the global sexual exploitation of children. In 2003, it drew up and published the action plan "Schutz von Kindern und Jugendlichen vor sexueller Gewalt und Ausbeutung" (protection of children against sexual violence and exploitation). This NAP can therefore do without an outline of such measures.

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"To attain all the objectives and to improve the situation of children in developing countries on a sustainable basis, the poorest countries have to be released from debts."

Large debts mean poverty is here to stay. This is to be fought by the initiative "Heavily Indebted Poor Countries" (HIPC).

This initiative ties debt relief for the affected countries to the condition that poverty in the country has to be reduced, the strategy for which to be outlined in a so-called “Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper” or PRSP. Its concept and implementation is one precondition for loan conversions within the framework of the expanded HIPC-Initiative (HIPCII) and for further access to loans granted by the IMF and the World Bank. The PRSPs have become the basis of bilateral and multilateral development cooperation with low-income countries (LICs).

In its development cooperation, the Federal Government will stress that the PRSPs are, to a larger extent than previously, to take into account the needs and interests of children and youths.

Measures:

- In its talks with the IMF, the World Bank and in bilateral and multilateral negotiations with partner countries, the Federal Government will exert a positive influence on the participation of poor parts of the population. This includes children’s and youths’ rights organisations. It will be seen to a better consideration of other conventions on the rights of children.

2.6.1.1 Secure funding of a sustainable development fit for children

A global and sustainable improvement of the situation of children can only be achieved by comprehensive political and economic reforms. The poor countries have to make efforts of their own. **The funding community has the responsibility to make available sufficient means for development measures.**

Funding issues found new momentum at the Monterrey International Conference on the Financing of Development in March 2002. The conference’s objective was to find a basis and new approaches for the mobilisation of sufficient financial means for an implementation of the Millennium Declaration’s development goals. It was the first time that developing and industrialised countries have agreed upon a global partnership covering the entire range of raising financial resources.

There is a consensus that both groups of countries are expected to improve the basic conditions for such a mobilisation. Official development cooperation plays an important role here. If these funds were to be reduced it would have serious consequences for the poorest countries and especially for young people.

Participating children's and youths' opinions

“Over the past decades the Federal Government has entered into many commitments whose implementation is very important for children in developing countries in particular. Germany has committed itself to pay 0.7 per cent of the gross national product to developing countries. This has now to be done. Especially children in war zones need our support.”

The Federal Government is still committed to the UN objective to use 0.7 per cent of the gross national income (GNI) for overseas development programmes. The intention to spend 0.33 per cent of the GNI on such programmes, reiterated at the Barcelona European Council on March 16, 2003, is a first step on this way.

The Federal Government is open-minded with regard to public-private partnerships in overseas development. These projects have to meet development policy objectives. Private capital used in the fulfilment of governmental tasks can be very useful, e.g. in healthcare or infrastructure like transport, construction or water supply projects.

The Federal Government is of the opinion that the enforcement of human rights is primarily a matter for the states. The observation of human rights has to be reflected in national law and its consistent application. Still, the Federal Government would like to see **business joining in voluntarily**, as it is done by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's Global Compact presented at the World Economic Forum in February 1999. This Global Compact's objective is to increase the cooperation of the UN, business and other groups in society and to thus forge new alliances for central objectives of the UN. Companies joining his compact are to voluntarily comply with ten principles derived from UN objectives on the protection of human rights and social and environmental standards. Concerning the protection of human rights, the companies are asked “to support and respect the internationally declared human rights in their domain” and to make sure “that they do not become implicated in the violation of human rights”.

The UN General Assembly resolution “On the way to global partnerships”, introduced by Germany and other EU partners, is based upon the same concept of voluntary cooperation. It stresses the importance of a voluntary cooperation between the UN and various civil society actors for the success of development cooperation. It acknowledges the Global Compact's exemplary role for the private sector's contribution to an achievement of the objectives of the UN.

Moreover, the UN human rights bodies including all stakeholders discuss the framework and legal status of all existing initiatives and standards on the responsibility of transnational companies with regard to the observation of human rights (including the standards drawn up by the UN Human Rights Commission's sub-committee) with the objective of improving these standards and work towards their implementation.

Measures:

- In view of the improvement of the situation of young people in developing countries, the Federal Government will continue to be committed to increase the share of Germany's GNI spent on overseas development to 0.33 per cent until 2006.
- The Federal Government will continue to promote voluntary self-commitment by companies like it is done in the Global Compact.

2.6.1.2 Basic global economic and trading conditions fit for children

A development of poor countries is inconceivable without a just economic order and trade system. This is one of the main objectives of the Millennium Declaration. No one would doubt that a successful reduction of poverty is also dependent upon an opening of markets in the industrialised countries and NICs and structural reforms of the world trade system.

The Federal Government thus highlights the World Summit on Children's final document's appeal to the international community for a better communication and coordination between the large multilateral organisations like the UN, the World Bank, the IMF and civil society. It should also be considered that a simultaneous bolstering of the internal markets, which entails export-promoting measures and supports the poorest countries in their structural trade reforms, would benefit children directly.

The call for a better coordination between the multilateral organisations is also contained in the WCSDG's report. This World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation was established by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The report was published in February 2004 and explicitly welcomed by the Federal Government. It contains the demand for decent work for all and a positive concept for an adjustment of the current process of globalisation and has the objective of declaring employment and decent work for all to be achieved by economic growth a global target. This includes core labour standards and a prohibition of child labour. These standards are supposed to become part of a broad agenda for development.

Measures:

- The Federal Government will continue to support a better coordination and communication between the World Bank, the IMF and UN bodies including the ILO in order to achieve an effective accompaniment of the social consequences of globalisation.
- It will insist on the World Bank and the IMF to contribute proactively to a strengthening of the rights of children. They should review and document their activities as to the economic, social and cultural rights but also the protection and participatory rights of children in their reporting and monitoring.
- As first step, the Federal Government will mention in its report on its human rights policy in foreign relations precise measures working towards a better coherence of objectives in its cooperation.

2.6.1.3 Basic education

The promotion of basic education is a central plank of the Federal Government's development cooperation. Promotion of the education of girls is a key factor of sustainable development since it provably improves not only the girls' situation but also the next generation's.

Participating children's and youths' opinions

"In order to improve the lot of children in developing countries it is necessary that all children receive school education. The objective set in New York to introduce compulsory school attendance over a period of 15 years can only be attained through financial support given by the industrialised countries like Germany."

Measures:

- The Federal Government is going to increase the funds for bilateral development cooperation in basic education to approx. €120 m p.a.
- The new concept of basic education in development cooperation will be continuously introduced into the international debate on poverty reduction strategies.
- The priorities of basic education will be set in favour of the poorest countries on the basis of PRSPs. The level of education of girls and better educational opportunities for marginalised children have topmost priority.

2.1.1.4 Protection of working children

Participating children's and youths' opinions

"In addition, the fight against traffic in children and child abuse (child soldiers, child prostitution, child labour) and relief organisations are to be supported."

The Federal Government proactively contributes to the fight against the worst forms of child labour in particular. It participates in the implementation of the ILO's minimum age convention 138 (IAO). It supports the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), which has existed since the 90's. This programme is supposed to enable receiving countries to draw up national programmes on the elimination of child labour and to implement them. The ILO convention 182 on the "prohibition and immediate measures for an elimination of the worst forms of child labour" has been co-initiated by the Federal Government itself.

We also take very practical steps if this seems appropriate. The Federal Government has worked towards and precipitated the labelling of carpets not manufactured by children.

It still has the objective of eliminating the worst kinds of child labour. This calls for convention 182 now finding expression in development cooperation. This requires a differentiating approach which takes into account that the causes, forms and effects of child labour vary a lot.

Measures:

- The Federal Government will continue to insist that the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child will cooperate with the ILO's body regularly with respect to the implementation of conventions 138 and 182 and will also review any progress having been made.
- Initiatives developing alternatives to child labour in the sense of convention 182 in the export sector will continue to be funded and politically supported by the Federal Government, e.g. in labelling non-child-labour or fair trade products.

2.6.1.5 Children in armed conflicts

In at least 36 countries children are victims of armed conflict. About 6 m children have been injured over the past 10 years, 2 m have lost their lives. In 2002 alone, 2,650 children were killed by treading on land mines. Civil wars have made 13 m children and youths displaced persons within their own country.

One of the most serious violations of the rights of children is their use as child soldiers. According to estimates, about 300,000 children are enlisted in armies and armed groups and forced to commit atrocities.

The role of girls is a special problem since they are often sexually abused in armies or paramilitary units.

An increased protection of children in armed conflicts and the fight against the use of children as soldiers is still an important objective of the Federal Government. As early as at the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children, the Federal Government of the time declared the minimum age of 15 years for child soldiers too low. It therefore signed the “optional protocol on the convention on the rights of children regarding their participation in armed conflicts” containing significant improvements as early as 2001. Meanwhile the law on the optional protocol has been published in the Federal Law Gazette and the ratification document been deposited at the UN’s EOSG. There now have to follow steps in international development cooperation to achieve real progress.

Measures:

- The Federal Government will support a protection of children in armed conflicts within the framework of its UN membership and its work in the UN Security Council.
- The Federal Government will contribute to arresting and bringing to justice the people responsible for violations of the rights of children, especially for displacements, massacres and the recruitment and deployment of under-18s.
- The Federal Government will continue to participate in measures for the protection of minors in crisis and conflict zones. It supports the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflicts in trying to win support for the special interests and needs of children in war within the UN system and the international community and to remind them of the implementation of appropriate measures for their protection and rehabilitation.
- Members of the Federal Armed Forces in peace-keeping and international missions shall get advanced training in the issues of the violation of the rights of children and especially concerning the risks children are exposed to in armed conflicts.
- In the EU, the Federal Government works towards an intensification and improvement of the EU work for children in armed conflicts pursuant to the EU guidelines on children in armed conflicts and their implementing action plan.
- Within the framework of bilateral development cooperation, child soldiers, boys and girls, are increasingly considered a target group of their own, requiring targeted measures.

2.6.1.6 Combating HIV/AIDS

The immune deficiency disease HIV/AIDS also affects a growing number of young people. The bulk of fatalities are girls and women. More than half of the 14,000 people daily infected are younger than 25 years. The number of AIDS orphans under 15 years of age has now

risen to 14 m, 11 m thereof living in southern Africa. That is why the UN Secretary-General demanded activities to reduce the HIV infection rate among 15 – 24 year olds until 2010 by 25 per cent globally.

Enormous funds have been raised over the past few years. The EU has made available a total of US\$ 3.2 bn to the Global Health Fund to Combat AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM).

The Federal Government is very committed to combating HIV/AIDS. It will contribute about € 300 m until 2007. That is an enormous contribution to the planning security in combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis.

Measures:

- Within the framework of bilateral development cooperation, the Federal Government annually spends an average of € 90 m for measures (information, education, an expansion of the health care system) against HIV/AIDS in its partner countries.
- Until 2007, the Federal Government will contribute a total of approx. € 300 m to the GFATM.
- During the implementation of the agreed projects in combating HIV/AIDS, the Federal Government will monitor to what extent poor or single children, girls in particular, who have lost their relatives through HIV/AIDS are being considered in the funding measures and whether the benefit from these measures directly.

2.6.2 Children as refugees

At the end of 2004, about 40 m people tried to get away from war and human rights abuses, about half thereof children. Especially when children are separated from their families during their flight it becomes much more likely that they become victims of violence and exploitation. While the bulk of DPs remain within their country, many seek refuge in neighbouring or far-away countries like Germany.

The internationally most important refugee protection convention, the “Convention relating to the Status of Refugees”, also called Geneva Convention on Refugees, equally applies to both adults and minors. Children are exposed to various forms of persecution. If become refugees in Germany, this has to be taken into account when their status as refugees is being determined.

The Federal Government reiterates its intention to grant child refugees and children adequate protection and humanitarian help in the protection of their rights during the asylum proceedings. This commitment derives from Article 22 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children. We acknowledge and respect this right of children, regardless of the presence of their parents or other people looking

after them. This has to be reflected in the decisions of the authorities and in jurisdiction. **It has to be constantly reviewed whether minors' special need of protection is sufficiently taken into account in Germany. Recognised child refugees and other foreign children are entitled to being granted the same opportunities as German children.**

Measures:

- The Federal Government will examine to what extent humanitarian help for national and international relief organisations for the alleviation of the situation of refugees takes into account the special needs of protection of children.
- The Federal Government will examine whether a study on the number and life situation of child refugees will be commissioned in 2005 which covers aspects like accommodation, granting youth welfare assistance and access to education and training.
- The Federal Government will support a clearing procedure for all unaccompanied children and youths seeking refuge. The bill on the development of child and youth welfare does already provide for an initial provision for minor refugees within the framework of youth welfare offices' custody proceedings. The clearing is also supposed to clarify whether a return to the country of origin is possible without the child running any major risks, whether an organised family reunion in a third country is possible, whether an application for political asylum should be filed or a right to stay for humanitarian reasons might be suitable.
- The Federal Government will work towards 16 – 17 year old single foreign children being put into the care of a guardian as soon as possible after their arrival in Germany and pursuant to applicable laws. The afore-mentioned bill provides for the obligation of a legal guardianship for unaccompanied children and youths immediately after the youth welfare office has provided custody.
- The Federal Government will support children and youths getting age-based accommodation, including 16 – 17 year old unaccompanied minors.
- The implementation of the entitlement of recognised child refugees and other foreign children with a right of abode to youth welfare and education or training will be supported by appropriate initiatives and free access to the labour market.

2.6.3 The situation of girls

There is no country in the world where full equal rights between the genders would have been realised. With regard to the specific situation of girls in developing countries we find a lack of access to basic social services including reproductive healthcare for girls. Girls have a higher mortality risk, suffer from learning difficulties and development disorders. They have no equal access to school education and vocational training, which means that

in some countries almost two out of three illiterates are women. For the simple reason that they are girls they are exposed to neglect, physical violence, mutilation or forced into marriage.

The deeply embedded discrimination against women has to be overcome.

Internationally binding regulations have been laid down by both the Convention on the Rights of the Children and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. These are the guidelines for Germany's development cooperation.

The Federal Government is convinced that the situation in the developing countries can be improved by more basic and vocational education for girls in particular. Vocational training for girls has a number of positive results. It means a lower infant and maternal mortality, lower fertility rates, a higher level of education, higher productivity and a more ecological behaviour.

Genital mutilation of girls is a special kind of discrimination. From the Federal Government's point of view, information and PR may help to overcome this problem. Our PR work is addressed at experts and we cooperate with NGOs. In Germany, genital mutilation of women and girls is a punishable offence, this provides extensive protection.

Measures:

- The Federal Government will increase its efforts to create better equal opportunities between the genders and an participation of girls through qualitative measures of social integration, gender mainstreaming and specific projects against gender-specific discrimination.
- The Federal Government will continue to update and adjust its information policy on genital mutilation of girls including its publications. Within the framework of development policy measures, it will continue to fund and politically support measures to combat genital mutilation in West Africa in particular.
- The Federal Government will ensure the protection of girls having fled to Germany in fear of genital mutilation.

III.

Prospects for a sustainable development toward a Germany fit for children

The National Action Plan “A Germany fit for children” is both a conclusion and a beginning. On the one hand, it concludes a heated discussion. On the other, it will initiate an implementing process. This implementation requires intensive monitoring and new momentum all down the line if we want to exert a positive influence on our children’s lives in any sustainable way.

For that purpose, we also need to make this NAP widely known. The present NAP can be accessed via the internet, and it will also be published in an appropriate manner – fit for children, that is.

Furthermore, the Federal Government will establish a procedure which will facilitate its management and implementation. This applies to both the monitoring and analysis of the ongoing activities (monitoring) and the overall review and evaluation of the results (evaluation).

In this, the Federal Government will include tried-and-tested structures and tools of “child policies” in Germany. All actors participating in the implementation of the NAP will thus also perceive monitoring as one of their responsibilities and be committed to it. Monitoring and evaluation will include:

- The Federal Government will propose to the Conference of Youth Ministers and the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der obersten Landesjugendbehörden (working group of the supreme Land youth authorities) to regularly discuss the implementation of the NAP. This should include the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children since there is a strong connection between the Convention and the NAP. This might provide the opportunity to make the rights of children a prior issue in those Länder consultations in which the Federation is also much involved.
- The Federal Government intends to use the children and youth reports for monitoring and evaluation.
- The Third Country Report on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children, due in 2009, will also include an evaluation of the NAP’s results. Thereby, the Federal Government follows a recommendation contained in the World Summit on Children 2002’s final document.

I In 2007, the Federal Government will convene a conference, including NGOs, with the objective of stock-taking of and updating the NAP. For that purpose, the Federal Government is going to present an interim report on the implementation of the NAP. Over the next few years, the implementation should also include a discussion of tasks which might improve the situation of children but hitherto have not been included in the NAP:

I Withdrawal of the statement on the UN Convention on the Rights of Children

The Federal Government has noted that the statement delivered to the UN back then and in agreement with the Länder has negative effects on our foreign policy and hinders the domestic discussion about the rights of children. It therefore continues to ask the Länder for a withdrawal of the statement and thus also follows the concluding remarks of the UN Committee on the Second Country Report.

I Inclusion of rights of children in the Basic Law

In the eyes of children rights organisations in particular, an expressive mentioning of the rights of children in the Basic Law would strengthen the implementation of these rights in constitutional reality and also raise adults' awareness of children's interests and needs. The Federal Government does not avoid this discussion but would like to point out that children are extensively protected by the Basic Law as it is. They enjoy the same basic rights adults do. In addition, Article 6 obligates parents to care for and raise their children, monitored by the state and society.

I Individual right of complaint concerning the UN Convention on the Rights of Children

An individual right of complaint is basically a suitable instrument to increase the legal position and legal awareness of the people concerned. It can also increase the contracting states' willingness to implement their commitments. The Federal Government will examine the possibility of the introduction of such a right.

It is part of the NAP "A Germany fit for children" to pursue these afore-mentioned matters over the next few years. The necessary debate should include all societal forces.

IV.

Children's and youths' findings for the NAP "A world fit for children"

Children and youths participated in the development of the NAP "A Germany fit for children". The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth asked the „National Coalition zur Umsetzung der UN-Kinderrechtskonvention in Deutschland“ (National Coalition for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children in Germany), which is part of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Jugendhilfe (youth welfare working group) to organise this participation.

At three children's conferences and a concluding event at which the children met with the Federal Minister, Renate Schmidt, and members of the steering committee, the children drew up a text which deals with all the NAP's topics. You will find this contribution in this appendix.

Children's and youths' findings for the National Action Plan "A world fit for children"

Results of the concluding event, which took place in Berlin from March 06 to 08, 2004.



Foreword

The contracting states' commitment to draw up NAPs "for a world fit for children" included the participation of children and youths!!

"Children and youths are citizens with many faculties and able to contribute to a better future for all. We have to respect their right to express their opinions according to their age and maturity and to participate in all matters affecting them." (final document:9, p. 6)

The National Coalition's central office assumed the responsibility of organising three regional conferences for children and youths at which they then drew up their demands for a German NAP "For a world fit for children". These conferences took place rather contemporaneously with the committee sessions of adults who had been asked by the BMFSFJ to prepare a draft NAP for Germany.

Between 15 and 20 children participated in each of the three-day sessions, which took place in Cologne, Magdeburg and Nuremberg in the form of writing workshops.

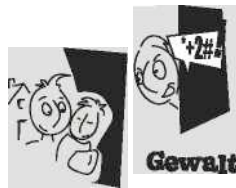
These children worked hard on the NAP's six main topics education, health, violence, Participation, standard of living and international commitments



Beteiligung



Health



Gewalt



**Internationale
Verpflichtungen**

Lebensstandard

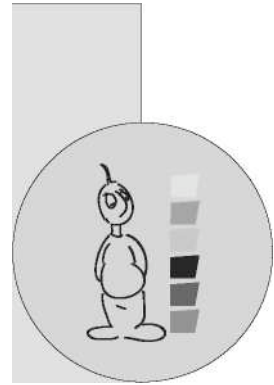
Their findings are documented in the following.

From March 06 – 08, 2004, we convened a concluding event in Berlin where the children had another opportunity to discuss their findings of the previous conferences in a larger group and to compare them with those of the adults from the steering committee, who had also been invited to the regional conferences.

On Monday, 08.03.2004 the approx. 50 participants' collected findings were handed over to the Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Mrs Renate Schmidt, with the accompanying request to take them into consideration in the NAP proper and that children and youth will be able to participate in the NAP's implementation!

Many, many thanks once again to all participants for their committed and result-orientated cooperation!

Kirsten Schweder and Claudia Kittel
National Coalition



This summary was prepared by:

| | | | |
|--------------|------------|----------------|----------|
| Anniko Marie | Hölzer | Hannover | 15 years |
| Mona | Pokern | Hannover | 16 years |
| Nils | Eggersgluß | Walsrode | 11 years |
| Ricardo | Rengsdorf | Walsrode | 14 years |
| Astrid | Beling | Langenhagen | 15 years |
| Priscilla | Peter | Bruchköbel | 18 years |
| Alexandra | Unger | Karben | 17 years |
| Frederik | Düpmeier | Karlsruhe | 16 years |
| Dominique | Hitz | Regensburg | 19 years |
| Konstantin | Stern | Berlin | 17 years |
| Pascal | Kleiner | Fluorn-Winzeln | 14 years |
| Sarah | Rasch | Köln | 12 years |



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Results of the concluding event

(Summary of the results of the three conferences) pages 08-21

Education pages 08-11

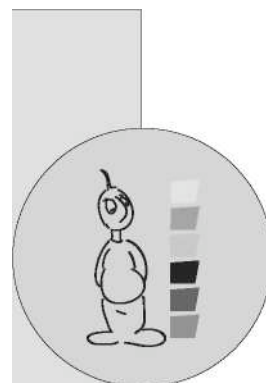
Violence pages 12-14

Health pages 15-16

Participation page 17

Standard of living pages 18-20

International commitments page 21



These findings were drawn up

in Cologne from November 08 to 10, 2003, by:

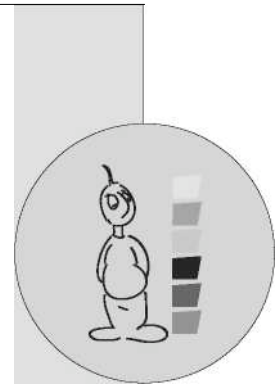


| | | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------|----------|
| Jana | Ahlbrandt | Köln | 17 years |
| Marian | Bremer | Melle | 12 years |
| Kathrin | Hebestreit | Witten | 16 years |
| Kai Karolin | Hüppe | Herne | 14 years |
| Julia | Klocke | Herne | 16 years |
| Lisa | Matzkowski | Witten | 15 years |
| Robin | Pullem | Köln | 11 years |
| Sarah | Rasch | Köln | 11 years |
| Saskia | Schulenburg | Köln | 15 years |
| Konstantin | Stern | Berlin | 17 years |
| Jasmin | Teufert | Köln | 12 years |
| Max | Thoma | Witten | 17 years |
| Markus | Weidner | Herne | 15 years |
| Carina | Weitz | Herne | 17 years |

In Magdeburg from November 28 to 30, 2003, by:



| | | | |
|--------------|------------|-------------|----------|
| Astrid | Beling | Langenhagen | 15 years |
| Nils | Eggersgluß | Walsrode | 11 years |
| Melanie | Fleischer | Zappendorf | 12 years |
| Lisa Sophia | Haen | Bargdeheide | 12 years |
| Felicitas | Heitmann | Bargteheide | 13 years |
| Anniko Marie | Hölzer | Hannover | 15 years |
| Christian | Jarzyna | Magdeburg | 18 years |
| Pascal | Kaun | Rostock | 15 years |
| Franziska | Kircheis | Zappendorf | 12 years |
| Patrick | Knobbe | Magdeburg | 16 years |
| Kathrin | Lüdemann | Rostock | 16 years |
| Jonas | Mehmke | Walsrode | 16 years |
| Enrico | Müller | Zappendorf | 16 years |
| Matthias | Pelzer | Magdeburg | 16 years |
| Christoph | Peter | Köllme | 16 years |
| Mona | Pokern | Hannover | 15 years |
| Christopher | Raack | Magdeburg | 14 years |
| Ricardo | Rengstorf | Walsrode | 14 years |
| Sandra | Röhl | Rostock | 12 years |
| Niklas | Weber | Walsrode | 11 years |



In Nuremberg from January 23 to 25, 2004, by:



| | | | |
|-----------|----------------|----------------|----------|
| Frederik | Düpmeier | Karlsruhe | 16 years |
| Clemens | Harnischmacher | Schramberg | 12 years |
| Cornelia | Harnischmacher | Schramberg | 12 years |
| Dominique | Hitz | Regensburg | 19 years |
| Pascal | Kleiner | Fluorn-Winzeln | 14 years |
| Anna | Meinhard | Dormagen | 10 years |
| Max | Napierala | Schramberg | 13 years |
| Priscilla | Peter-Wimmers | Bruchköbel | 18 years |
| Sebastian | Schott | Dormagen | 9 years |
| Ellena | Schubert | München | 18 years |
| Canan | Thiel | Dormagen | 9 years |
| Alexandra | Ungar | Karben | 17 years |
| Janis | Uttenweiler | Schramberg | 11 years |
| Lara | Uttenweiler | Schramberg | 12 years |
| Julia | Wegener | Dormagen | 10 years |
| Florian | Weisensee | Dormagen | 10 years |
| Hanne | Zündorf | Dormagen | 9 years |



Education

_ More personal school reports

Reports are much too impersonal and only refer to school performance. It would be better to include teachers' opinions and findings. In case of illness it may happen that a pupil cannot attend school for quite some time and has to catch up on the lessons fast. If you can't manage that, what used to be an easy test becomes a difficult one. At the end of the school-year, no one will ask how you got the bad result. By having more information on the pupil, an employer might find out more about their character and behaviour on the job.

_ More practical lessons

Most pupils are bored by theoretical lessons, that's why they don't listen closely. There should be more practical lessons and then what you learn will also stay in your mind.

This would include experiments, documentary films and reports. Pupils would be more interested and it would have a better effect than dry lessons.

_ More teachers

At many schools, there are simply not enough teachers and therefore not all of the subject material is conveyed properly. This has an effect on pupils' grades.

Especially when teachers take sick leave there is a real gap since there is a shortage of competent teachers. Lessons will simply not take place. It's certainly in the interest of pupils to recruit a larger number of teachers, especially at primary schools, in order to ensure a good school education.

_ Promotion of foreign children

Foreign refugees or immigrants should be promoted as early as possible, especially in Germany. Special German lessons for foreigners should be provided by all schools. Pupils should not be overtaxed but promoted.

Schools should address the issue of promotion: Refugees have to be told from the very beginning that they need to be promoted to be able to lead a successful life in Germany.

_ Advanced training for teachers

In future, teachers should have the opportunity of advanced training and to exchange views on different teaching methods. At many schools, the subject material is not taught the right way, which means pupils don't get it.



Teachers should adjust their methods to their pupils' individual capacities and teach neither too fast nor too slowly. The newly acquired knowledge should be taught in a comprehensible fashion so that weaker pupils will also be able to follow the lessons. Teachers should therefore listen to their pupils and address their needs and implement their suggestions.

_ Foreign languages

A foreign language should be learnt as early as possible. English should come first since it is one of the most important of all spoken languages. Perhaps there should be an optional second foreign language, so that pupils can learn to make their own decision early on. Of course, English should not be taught excessively when compared to German spelling, for example, which should take priority. This should be coordinated with secondary schools to ensure these implement changes in the curricula in the interest of their pupils.

_ Applications at school

Applications are very important, especially for those who have just left school. Therefore, such important subjects should be addressed again and again. After all, many pupils don't even know how important an application will turn out to be. These lessons should also include tests to be passed for being recruited, since rather simple things like logic or the rule of three are often forgotten or not practised. Since this is so important for the future of children and youths, it should certainly be considered.

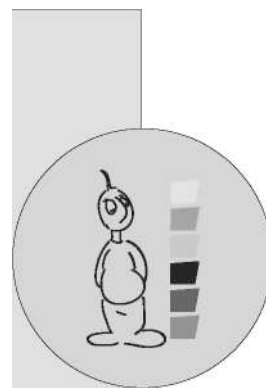
_ Full- time day school

This issue is currently hotly debated. In some Länder, full-time day schools are abolished, others establish them.

| PRO+ | CONTRA- |
|--|---|
| _ homework tuition | _ a bad school could well be |
| _ extracurricular working groups | _ a bad full-time day school as well |
| _ social workers | _ less leisure time |
| _ opportunity to try completely new educational concepts | _ possible shortage of teachers |
| | _ does not fit current German school system |
| | _ repeated changes in performance and appraisal ordinances etc. |

_ School evaluation

An evaluation of lessons by teachers and pupils should point out to pupils certain problems in dealing with each other and to teachers how to possibly improve lessons.



_ Free provision of teaching aids

Since many parents cannot afford to buy text books etc. for their children, the free provision of teaching aids should not be abolished so that all children can have their own text book.

_ Social workers

To improve leisure activities at school, there should be one social worker at every school, if possible. They could also help children and youths to cope with difficult situations.

_ School sponsoring

To improve or consolidate the financial situation of schools, there could be advertising in the floors or class rooms. These means could then be expended on the schools' equipment. However, it would not be all right if the state then relinquished its responsibility.

_ Renovation of schools and their equipment

In many schools, there is not enough space or furniture/equipment fit for children, e.g. for their breaks etc.. In addition, pupils should be able to feel safe at school.

_ Updated teaching and learning aids

Since at many schools, teaching and learning aids are still hopelessly outdated, these should be updated. Furthermore, pupils should have the opportunity to use the Internet for educational purposes. And text books should be printed on recycled paper.

_ Information on politics and the rights of children

There has to be better information on politics so that one can make one's own decisions at later elections. The rights of children have to be included in the Länder's curricula to get everyone informed about their rights.

The most important thing is that this information has to be exciting and taught in an interesting way, either by qualified speakers (adults who know about the rights of children) or children who have prepared themselves.

Activities on that issue could include: project days on which the entire school deals with the rights of children (prepared material could be exhibited at school) or creative work with pupils, e.g. role plays, working groups, making available pertinent brochures (drawn up by children, if possible) and information on services to contact if a child has a problem (e.g. abuse of children or violence in the family).



_ Travel expenses paid for fifth and sixth form students

Travel expenses should also be paid for fifth and sixth form students.

_ Standard curricula

There should be a uniform education system in all Länder to facilitate exchanges on success or failure of and in curricula and to improve education all over Germany.

_ Reducing the size of classes

The size of classes should be reduced in all Länder, not increased. This would make for a better learning climate and teachers can address pupils more individually.

_ Promotion of highly gifted and weak children

Highly gifted children have to be able to fully utilise their potential through promotion. But weak pupils also have to get special tuition to provide them with equal opportunities.

_ School uniform

This issue has been very contested for a long time. 44 per cent of all pupils wouldn't want to wear a school uniform, but 34 per cent might do so, according to a survey by the Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk.

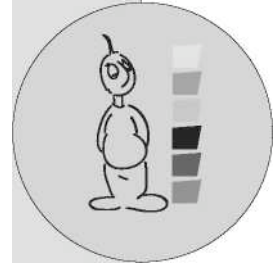
PRO +

no visible social distinction

CONTRA -

no opportunity to display one's taste in clothing

There could also be a dress code so that all pupils look about the same but still can develop their own style.



Violence

– We encounter violence every day
without being aware of it.

Physical violence is played down or, in video games or feature films, even glorified. Emotional violence is being ignored and sexual violence is still a taboo. Violence is supported by ignoring it or even provoked by gloaters. There are incidences of extortion and fights at school. In many families there's violence and sexual violence, kept secret of course.

Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of Children states that no child may be exposed to any kind of violence! This calls for preventive measures. Every child has to be informed of its rights and adults of their obligations. After all, children whose self-esteem has been destroyed and who grow up without a sense of trust and security will suffer from the physical and emotional consequences all their lives.

That's why from nursery age onward this work should start with playful education, e.g. comprehensible theatre performances or picture books/cartoons fit for children. Some organisations (terre des hommes) and advice centres (Zartbitter, Wildwasser) provide aids for all age groups. If children find some things disgusting or nauseating, this should be respected and children encouraged to be able to say NO!, e.g. if a child doesn't want to sit on its uncle's lap or not kiss him.

It is also important to inform children where they can get trustworthy assistance and advice. But more work has to be done.

A continual dealing with the issue of violence, e it at school or privately, increases one's insights and self-assurance. To achieve this we demand that the rights of children and information on sexual violence and abuse in general be included in the curricula. Again, it is important to inform children and youths where they can get help and, above all, that they are entitled to get help.

Many children don't even know that what has been done to them is wrong or that they are entitled to receive help. It would be appropriate to have action days/project weeks on these issues at school. Psychologists from advice centres, police officers, victims or aid organisations' info groups could also be invited to attend.

These preventive measures are much cheaper for the government than all the costs incurred by trials and the counselling of perpetrators and victims.



_ Sexual violence

To free this issue from taboos, children and youth would welcome it if in future youth magazines (e.g. Bravo, Sugar) were to report on it as well.

After all, children and youth have a sexuality of their own. Every child has the right to develop its own sense of the body and a sexuality which corresponds to its age and ideas.

We also deem the law a deplorable state of affairs. Why do victims of sexual violence have to wait one or two years to get treatment?!

Further, families also need contacts or services to be able to cope with such situations.

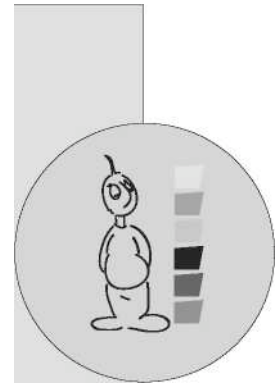
The range of punishment of up to five years imprisonment provided for in the Criminal Code we think is too low. Nonetheless, imprisonment should include counselling and therapy to achieve a successful re-socialisation.

_ Non-violent upbringing

This involves both groups: children and those who raise them: Children have to be told that no one is entitled to beat them or injure them in any other way. Again, theatre performances and picture books are appropriate means.

To be sure, there are conflicts in any family, in some more, in others less. People raising children who experience difficulties or problems with their children should be able to approach counsellors in order to avoid violence. It is also known that experienced violence is often taken out on others rather automatically. Therefore, there should be free or inexpensive discussion groups, self-help groups, therapies etc. for victims of violence. This is the first step to prevent them from taking out their own experiences of violence on their children. This vicious circle has to be broken. People have to get rid of thoughts along the line "a box round the ears has never done any harm".

More attention has to be paid to emotional violence, since this is easily ignored or overlooked. Emotional violence includes mobbing, extortion, threats etc.



_ Prevention of conflicts

Conflicts occur when a number of people meet. This also happens at school. In order to settle such conflicts in a non-violent way, time has to be available. We would therefore welcome one extra lesson in the normal timetable (school council lesson, class assembly, a 'time for us' lesson).

Classes or the entire grade may elect a conflict manager who could be approached in case conflicts arise. It would also be appropriate if classes could attend courses on the prevention of conflicts and conflict management.

In addition, we need more leisure activities to keep children and youths "off the street". This includes the maintenance of keep-fit trails and cycle tracks. After all, it is a well-known fact that sport is ideal to release aggression and excessive energy.

_ Racism/right-wing violence

Preventive measures here call for an elimination of prejudices against people for reasons of their origin, colour of skin, religion, appearance, diseases etc.

From our own experience we can tell that at our schools there is still a lot of prejudice and teasing. That has an impact on the mood in the school yard!

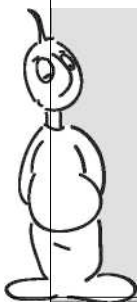
To settle this problem there is the project "Schule ohne Rassismus, Schule mit Courage" (a school without racism, a school showing courage). In order to be awarded the title "A school without racism", 70 per cent of all pupils, teachers and other staff have to sign and comply with the set rules. The school is thus also committed to organise action days and project weeks on the subject, to deal with it in lessons and to sensitise its pupils.

_ Violence in the media

Children have to be protected against violence in the media (Computer-Ego-Shooter, websites glorifying violence).

Parents should install spam and web-filters and pay attention to what websites their children visit.

TV does also show violent scenes. Parents and other family members should take care that their children observe minimum age recommendations.



Health

_ Drugs:

There should be a general prohibition of cigarettes. Unfortunately, this isn't possible for a number of reasons. It is much better for children when public areas and closed rooms children cannot withdraw from are declared no-smoking zones, e.g. cars. After all, passive smoking is not only a health hazard, it also entices you to smoke yourself sooner.

Otherwise, there should be health warnings on cigarette packs saying "**Smoking is even more dangerous for children than it is for adults.**" It should be written in large, perhaps highlighted letters, so that every adult gets the message.

It should, of course, be possible to refit cigarette machines so that you would need an ID card to access or to prohibit machines in general so that you could only get cigarettes in shops and by showing your ID card. Something like is that is in the pipeline, albeit only from 2007.

In addition, there should be a campaign "**drugs damage your health and lead to death**". There should also be such education at nurseries and schools (in grade 1 and 4, about one lesson per week).

At the regular health check-ups, children should also be examined for drugs, but it should be taken care that this doesn't deter their attendance at these check-ups. Early preventive measures on addiction and drug abuse should be increased.

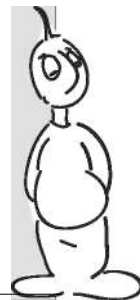
_ Food/ a healthy life:

Food containing unhealthy additives like artificial colouring should be labelled and their effects be mentioned. Such labels should be large and easily comprehensible.

GM food has to be labelled in particular so that all children get the opportunity to have a healthy diet. Penal fees for companies not labelling such products have to be high. Since many children enjoy fast food now and again, this should be monitored and checked carefully. Children should be informed about the findings to the largest extent possible.

Research subsidies should also be aligned to the objective of a more healthy environment, e.g. research on cars using water vapour or rape-seed oil.

In addition, measuring ozone concentration and regulations on exhaust gases should also take account of the health of children.



_ Medical drugs:

Children should be entitled to free medical drugs if needed.

All children, be they German or not, their parents rich or poor, should be entitled to free medical care at the point of need. Parents with more than one child from socially deprived families should not have to pay the €10 charge per quarter when visiting a doctor. Part of this charge paid to the health insurances should be used for the medical treatment of children.

It is also important that hospitals be made fit for children: individually equipped play rooms with a number of games etc., colourful rooms, activities for children above 9 years of age. In addition, doctors and nurses dealing with children should visit educational courses in order to be better equipped for dealing with children.

For children, there should also be workshops etc, which would make them forget their illness and to enable them to cope faster. The hospital diet should also be "fitter for children".

If you feel well in hospital you are not only not afraid of doctors but it also supports recuperation.

_ Parents' (or legal guardians') responsibility

Parents have to take care that children are taken to the doctor when taken ill, have enough to eat and drink and grow up in hygienic surroundings. Parents are also responsible for the right clothes at the right time of the year.



Participation

Children and youth should have the opportunity to participate at the political level in order to achieve a better consideration of their needs.

Adults have to reflect on children's and youths' ideas, and children and youths have to learn how to express their opinions, to respect the opinions of others, to manage conflicts and to settle for compromises. This will only be achieved if children and youths from all social backgrounds are included.

A precondition of Participation is that children and youth are taken seriously by adults. Many want to get committed but lose interest because they can see no changes or are stopped in their tracks by inflexible rules. Their ideas and suggestions should be implemented as soon as possible lest they get frustrated by prolonged bureaucratic procedures.

Children have their very own ideas about how their surroundings should be shaped. It is therefore important to involve them in urban planning decisions (play grounds, leisure centres, restricted speed zones, design of school yards).

This calls for children's bureaux and children's and youth parliaments with the basic funding paid by the state. The children's bureaux have the function of listening to children and youth, to represent their interests and to diffuse their rights. There should be one such bureau in every municipality, linked nationwide.

There should be one youth parliament in every major town with the purpose of facilitating a live and active experience of democracy. This parliament's task is to form an opinion on a current matter in committee and then present this to the local administration.

It must not be forgotten, however, that children are children and not too much demands should be made of them.



Standard of living

_ Part 1: The problem

A normal, adequate standard of living means that children and youth have enough to eat and a roof over their head, but also that they have a regular daily routine, i.e. going to school, leisure activities, sports, activities with the family and friends. In such a routine, parents will set limits, care for their children and respect them. They will give them the opportunity to develop freely and support them. This is the case in most families. However, there are also families or parents who feel that dealing with children is too much for them. Such parents should get assistance because every child is entitled to an adequate standard of living.

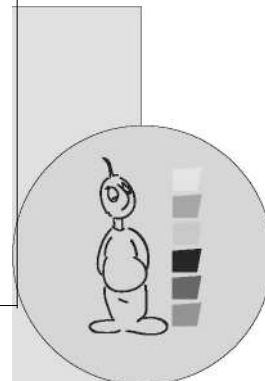
There are many reasons for this:

- ? single parents
- ? parents have social problems, i.e. financial problems or addiction
- ? parents cannot afford leisure activities fit for children, e.g. homework tuition, visiting events or membership in a sports club
- ? or parents give their children too much leeway for their age or don't respect their children's opinions and needs.
- ? Many parents don't have enough time for their children because they work.

Such parents should get help, since every child is entitled to an adequate standard of living.

_ Part 2: The solution

For children living in a broken-down family there should be an alternative to being raised in a home. There should be a programme to find out whether parents can secure their children's livelihood or are willing to get assistance. For parents with a regular income and not enough time it would be helpful to develop activities which improve the relationship between parents and children, e.g. family festivities and family days. These activities could mean discounts for amusement parks etc. Parents should be able to take leave and spend these days with their children. For parents who cannot look after their children after school and cannot afford professional child-care there should be child-care facilities or child-minders like pensioners or housewives who would like to do voluntary work with children in the afternoon.



Leisure activities should be cheaper. Many parents can't afford their children's visits to the cinema, library cards, private tuition or membership in a sports club. Sport is especially important for children, since there they get to know their strong points and weaknesses and have to act as a team. Unfortunately, sports clubs charge too high a membership fee, so socially deprived families can't afford it. Therefore, sports initiatives should organise free events to address children from poor families.

Adolescents like to go to cafés or youth discotheques, also expensive. It might be a good idea if the local council were to provide abandoned facilities to serve as youth centres. Electricity and water might be paid by sponsors and voluntary workers could staff them.

Children who are weak at school should get special support. These children are dependent upon private and homework tuition to improve their performance. Such costs should be paid by the school or the state, not the parents. Another idea to improve children's performance at school is that pupils assist pupils, a kind of school-based tuition exchange. And no costs would be incurred at that.

In a youth centre as we would like to see it all children and youths can spend their spare time together and in a meaningful way, regardless of their nationality, religion or social background.

In these centres, there should be events and groups organised and monitored by qualified full-time social education workers. Youths should get the opportunity of organising and running their own groups and events to promote social cohesion. Nonetheless, there has to be one contact available in any case.

If possible in terms of funds and rooms, there could be an Internet café accessible by all. There should also be a wide range of activities in order to address all groups (e.g. snooker, darts, perhaps a café and meeting place).

The federal budget should include an item for children and youth work. It should be possible to apply for funds directly.

To ensure that existing children and youth groups/projects can be further developed and new youth centres will be established, there should be a youth lump sum, i.e. a fixed sum available for these undertakings paid out regularly.



To be able to provide good out-of-school activities, there should be various working groups on arts, sports and natural sciences in order to additionally promote pupils.

There should be a regional network of associations, youth groups, municipalities and youth centres to develop an ideal cooperation. This would facilitate a communication platform on which associations, youth groups and youth centres can exchange their views and advertise their activities to provide children and youth with a real choice.

Homeless children need shelter and food. Every child is entitled to "proper" clothes so that is doesn't have to be ashamed at school, for example.

Public buildings and road traffic have to be suitable for the disabled to achieve a better social integration.



International commitments

Over the past decades the Federal Government has entered into many commitments whose implementation is very important for children in developing countries in particular. Germany has committed herself to pay 0.7 per cent of the gross national product to developing countries. This has now to be done. Especially children in war zones need our support.

_ Health

To make preventive measures even more efficient, there have to be funds for medical care, including vaccination to contain and eradicate diseases, a supply of drugs and information campaigns on HIV/AIDS, circumcision and hygiene. In addition, the fight against traffic in children and child abuse (child soldiers, child prostitution, child labour) and relief organisations are to be supported..

_ Education

In order to improve the lot of children in developing countries it is necessary that all children receive school education. The objective set in New York to introduce compulsory school attendance over a period of 15 years can only be attained through financial support given by the industrialised countries like Germany.

_ Environmental protection

It is generally important to protect the environment jointly with all countries. After all, environmental pollution doesn't respect borders. A globally healthy will also prevent diseases and poor living conditions in Germany.

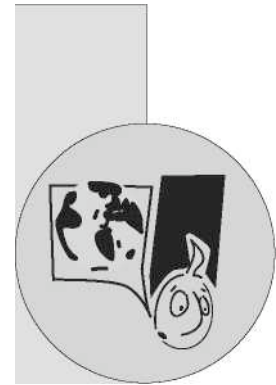
The Federal Government should increase its cooperation with other countries and make available the technology required for the use of so-called renewable sources of energy (like, wind, sun, water) instead of nuclear or coal-fired power stations.

_ Debt relief

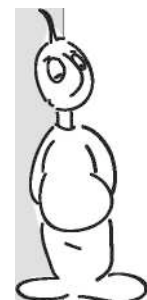
To attain all the objectives and to improve the situation of children in developing countries on a sustainable basis, the poorest countries have to be released from debts.

_ Withdrawal of reservations

All reservations about the UN Convention on the Rights of Children have to at last to be withdrawn if we want to achieve equal rights for all children. Child refugees, for example, should be entitled to asylum, counselling and education and training until they become of age.



**internationale
her leisten zukönnen**





Imprint

Publisher

National Coalition für die Umsetzung
der UN-Kinderrechtskonvention in Deutschland
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The National Coalition is funded by the Federation's
children and youth plan.

Imprint

Published by:

Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth

11018 Berlin

Germany

www.bmfsfj.de

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The original brochure "Nationaler Aktionsplan für
ein kindergerechtes Deutschland 2005-2010" is available through
the Federal Governments' Stationery Office

This version:

January 2005

Design:

KIWI GmbH, Osnabrück

This PDF is part of the Federal Government's PR.

It's free of charge and not for sale.

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