

“The Role of the Family in shaping Responsible Citizenship”

The 20th November 2014 was the 25th Anniversary of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. This legislation has been recognised by all countries apart from the United States of America, South Sudan and Somalia.

The session was opened by **Hon. Alojz Peterle** who talked about how difficult it has been to include human dignity into the EU Law but after fighting at least 6 times it has been included into the Lisbon Treaty. “The role of family is not welcomed in the house.” He explained that the reason for this was that the terminology “family and human dignity” seem so archaic to some people. He then proposed to start using it so that people can familiarise themselves with it as we cannot live in a society if we do not share similar values.

What does responsible citizenship mean?

Hon. Arne Gericke said that having a responsible citizenship means having the right to:

ACT → DECIDE → CHOOSE

Citizens must be attentive to the legal basis which are related to your actions and be realistic in politics. A responsible citizen takes care of his/her community.

Carolyn Handschin opened with “our responsibility as responsible citizens is to be vigilant against selective interpretation.” The convention does not overrule the role of the parent and should not be used for such purposes. Do we just avoid infringing other’s human rights or shall we create an environment where people are naturally responsible and taking care of each other? Each family member needs to play a dignified role within the family.

She proposed “family-archy” meaning “A system of society in which the family unit is the nexus; parents, children, and extended family members cooperate according to their interdependent roles to enhance each member’s value”. In other words, “my contribution towards the world is where my best comes out”.

Maria Hindingsson- Family is the first place of education, trust and confidence. Role models are essential in education. They lead by example and show the way. The society and family have the duty to protect the child. Child poverty debates do not take into account the family. The majority of children live with their parents. We should talk about family poverty more. Children used as a financial asset. “Are we ambitious enough on the issue to protect children?”

Do we look at the roots of the problem or just the consequences? Are we allocating enough resources? An adult view of sex education is being imposed on children and not respecting their innocence. Children need their parents who are their first educator and these educators need to be supported not replaced.

What does human dignity mean?

A dignified human being is one who shares his or her position to share values. In reports when families are mentioned 11/13 were portrayed in a negative way and this is one of the main problems we are facing. We don't always have to see negative things in life. We must highlight the goodness of family. When we speak about family we should not just talk about children but parents too. The comparison factor should not only be wealth but also the number of children in families.

“Every child has a right to experience a happy life in a family. It's important for children to have parents who open the door for them to the future.”

In conclusion, the audience were asked to “Educate Yourself, Be Proactive, Raise Awareness”. The EU parliament is ready to work with anyone, especially young people who are willing to work to help families become better and happier.