



What can we learn from the situation of the families in Europe?

Launching of a new publication with the outcomes of the European Expert Group Meeting held in Brussels (6-8 June 2012) on the main topics for this celebration.

*Speech by Mrs.
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President of IFFD*

An IFFD Briefing at the United Nations

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Conference Room B - North Lawn Building - United Nations - New York

Distinguished Delegates and Authorities,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

As the organizer of this Side Event, I am glad to represent here the International Federation for Family Development and to get the chance to thank you for your presence and the commitment it shows in favour of families in Europe and in the whole world.

I want to thank especially Mrs. Renata Kaczmarek, the United Nations Focal Point on the Family for her presence here today and for all the work she has been doing during the past years.

As you probably know, our Family Enrichment Programs started back in the 1960s and are based on the case method, which applies the concept of participative methodology. This helps us to avoid patronizing or stigmatizing, but also to help parents to build their own tools and face their task in their own way, the way their children need. Our experience tells us that this is also very useful:

- to motivate fathers to get involved in an actual co-parenting education,
- to show grandparents their right place and
- to prevent conflicts in the same way as modern health systems are able to improve quality of life by preventing diseases before they actually appear.

Each year, more than 500 courses are conducted accounting for approximately 18,000 participants as well as over 600 events encompassing another 34,000 attendants. The Family Enrichment courses and activities directly benefit over 50,000 people annually in 65 countries on the five continents.

All this background was considered by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations when they decided to approve the reclassification of consultative status, from Special to General. We don't see this new status only as a honour, but more as a duty, as the responsibility of contributing even more to the work of United Nations, with our know-how and experience and with the voice of so many thousands of families from all over the world, in a constructive way that makes easier the building of a more human and fair society.

I also want to confirm once more our strong will to support United Nations in the preparations for the 20th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family and every initiative to promote the role of family in society and, particularly, the vital mission of parents in child rearing throughout the World. In doing so, we totally support the United Nations General Assembly in its decision

“To celebrate the anniversary of the International Year of the Family on a 10-year basis and further invite Governments to begin preparations for the upcoming twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014 and use the anniversary to advance family policymaking”,

as the Resolution 59/111 proclaims. And we also put into practice today the conclusions of our last International Congress, which included

“To encourage and promote the fulfilment of the mission of the United Nations Programme on the family, in particular regarding promote the integration of a family perspective into policymaking at the national, regional and international levels and support family research and diagnostic studies.”

In response to this and other relevant General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions, the International Federation for Family Development and the Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development, together with the United Nations Focal Point on the Family, organized several events in Brussels last May hosted by the EU Committee of the Regions and convened as part of preparations for the Twentieth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, coordinated by the International Institute for Family Research - The Family Watch.

A raise awareness meeting was held on the 5th June, with the participation of speakers from the European Parliament, the European Commission and the OECD, among others.

Then, a European Expert Group Meeting took place during the following three days, in which 26 experts and observers from 15 countries discussed about family-oriented policies and strategies aiming mainly at the topics suggested for this Anniversary and learned about different good practices from different locations in Europe.

The primary objective of this meeting was to provide UN Member States and other stakeholders with expert opinion and recommendations regarding the three topics suggested for this Anniversary. Experts dealing with various aspects of family policy have been invited from a broad geographical distribution to participate in the meeting in their personal capacities.

But there was also an explicit intention in giving Europe this priority and considering its outcomes as especially valuable. The vast family experiment that has been conducted in this continent for the past 40 years can show all the rest of the World results that should be considered, in order to take advantage of the positive and avoid the negative ones.

The final report of the Expert Group Meeting, as well as expert papers, have been used as an input to the 2012 Report of the Secretary-General on the preparations for and observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. All the outcomes have also been published in this book we are presenting today and have inspired the Declaration of the Civil Society on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family that will also be presented today.

We will also be organizing raise awareness events in different cities of the 5 continents. Each event will consist on a presentation of the International Year of the Family. Cities as Warsaw and Paris in Europe, Lagos and Nairobi in Africa or Santiago de Chile and Sao Paulo in America have already a fixed schedule for them, and we will try to keep adding others during the next months. We are also planning to organize a North America Expert Group Meeting in May 2014, taking advantage of the infrastructure of the World Congress we will have the previous week.

IFFD will also implement international communication projects to promote the family perspective among governments and international bodies. We have also created a web site where all this information and the rest of documents and initiatives regarding the twentieth anniversary are included or linked to: www.family2014.org. Through the members of the Federation and many others NGOs and entities in the five continents, we aim to raise awareness of this twentieth anniversary and the opportunity it brings worldwide.

I am convinced this is the best issue in which we can invest our efforts for a better future. Your presence here today and your support confirms this conviction, so let me thank you once more very much for it before I leave the floor to Ignacio Socías, director general of The Family Watch and director of International Relations of IFFD. He will explain in more detail what are the contents and goals of the Declaration.