



REPORT OF ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN IN 2019

Summary: the highlights of 2019

- The brochure of the Alliance for Childhood European Network Group (AFC-ENG) was enriched and updated. The approach concerning the development of the child and the role that governments and other stakeholders can play in this respect was elaborated and validated by the Partners.
- The brochure was sent to all 751 newly elected Members of the European Parliament (MEP) on 1 September 2019 with the invitation to become a host of the (informal) Working Group on the Quality of Childhood at the European Parliament.
- The Dutch IONA Foundation decided to give a grant of € 20000,- which enabled the organization to employ Chiara Piccolo (Brussels' Representative) for one year on a part time basis to strengthen the presence of the AFC-ENG in Brussels.
- For the first time a fund raising campaign with Charidy was held with some € 5000 of donations.
- The financial situation improved during the year.
- For the first time a concert with children musicians of Sistema Europe was organized on 3 September to celebrate the first day of work of the new European Parliament, thus trying to create a cultural setting for this event and to provide an opportunity for children to participate and to play an active role therein.
- The presence of the AFC-ENG in Brussels was maintained, also thanks to Chiara Piccolo, while Michiel Matthes was mostly working from his home in Amersfoort, the Netherlands. The full work programme for 2019 was executed.
- The presence in the social media was increased and the number of visits to the website was increased by some 20%.

1. Board

25 June : Michiel Matthes, Ruud Bakhuizen and Christopher Clouder held a skype meeting to approve the financial statements of the year 2018 and to approve the Report of Activities of 2018. On 7 October Michiel Matthes and Ruud Bakhuizen have a meeting in Baarn to reflect in general about the Alliance for Childhood European Network Group (AFC-ENG).

2. Council of the Alliance for Childhood European Network Group

Two meetings were held respectively on 4 March and on 5 November 2019 at Troonstraat 194, 1050 Brussels. Both meetings were held in the morning.

3. General Meetings of the Alliance for Childhood European Network Group

General Meetings were held on 4 and 5 March and on 5 and 6 November 2019 at the above mentioned location. In the General Meetings all partners of the Alliance for Childhood are invited. In these meetings the Council presents its plans for the coming period and submits it for discussion and approval.

4. Partners' Day

The AFC-ENG organizes a Partners' Day in the UniOne House, Rue du Taciturne 42, Brussels. The theme of the day: 'Networking for Innovation'. 23 persons participated.

5. Grant from the IONA Foundation in Amsterdam

The IONA Foundation contacted the Alliance for Childhood European Network Foundation that it would be willing to consider making a grant to support the AFC-ENG by enabling it to recruit a person to reinforce the presence of the AFC-ENG in Brussels. During the month of March the application documents were prepared and in April the board of the IONA Foundation decided to provide a grant of € 20000,- for one year for this purpose. With this money Chiara Piccolo was recruited and was offered a one year contract for 13 hours per week from 1 May 2019 until 30 April 2020.

6. Fund Raising Campaign with Charidy

Within the AFC-ENG it was decided to organize among the Partners a fund raising campaign together with a professional organization in New York called Charidy. The format of this organization is to focus the fund raising activity on one day. In our case 10 December 2019 was chosen. A special website was built for this and a little clip to explain the activities of the Alliance was made. On that day € 5200,- were raised.

7. AFC-ENG participates in UPPER Project

Christopher Clouder and Sheena Stewart participated on behalf of the AFC-ENG in meetings of this project. Sheena Stewart was present in the meeting in September in Northampton The project is focusing on 'integrating' migrant children by means of educational interventions and policies but also through the social protection services, families and communities.

8. Working Group on the Quality of Childhood at the European Parliament

The AFC-ENG functions as the secretariat of the (informal) Working Group on the Quality of Childhood (QoC) and it holds its meetings in the European Parliament building. In this context the following QoC Talks were organised in 2019.

5 March 2019

72nd QoC Talk: 'Adolescence as a sensitive period for learning and social-affective engagement' with Professor Dr. Eveline Crone. Host: MEP Arne Gericke.

3 September 2019

73th Qoc Talk: Concert by Children from Sistema Europe to welcome the MEPs on the Simone Veil Square in front of the European Parliament building with the Anthem of the European Union. Host MEP Julie Ward.



Children's concert with Sistema Europe on 3 September 2019 in front of the European Parliament with MEP Julie Ward as host.

3 September 2019

74th QoC Talk: 'Exploring the Sistema approach to making music together as a way of helping children to connect, integrate and flourish' with Marshall Marcus. Host: MEP Julie Ward.

6 November 2019

75th QoC Talk: '100 Years of Waldorf Education: What Inspiration for Society at large?' with Clara Aerts and Margareta van Raemdonck. Host: MEP Helmut Geuking.

Letter to all Members of the European Parliament

The AFC-ENG sends a letter with the new brochure to all newly elected Members of the European Parliament to invite them to join as a host the Working Group on the Quality of Childhood at the European Parliament.

9. 2018-2020 Early Childhood Education and Care Working Group of the European Commission (ECEC)

The AFC-ENG is a member of this Working Group and is represented by Professor Mathias Urban and Helma Brouwers. The group met on the following dates in 2019:

- March 12-13th, second meeting
- September 24-25th, third meeting
- December 12-13th, fourth meeting

Besides the group organized two webinars and two Peer Learning Activities (PLA). The main subjects of exchange and study between the participating countries were staff professionalization and diversity in ECEC. The different countries exchanged their practice and expertise on these subjects, and at the meetings they discussed those and other important

issues in early childhood, as a basis for the final reports with European guidelines and recommendations for early childhood practice. The final report is planned in the beginning of 2020.

Mathias Urban and Helma Brouwers took the initiative to hold a seminar on 13 March 2020 in Dublin on the theme “A Competent System for Professional and Inclusive Practice in Early Childhood Education and Care”. Due to the covid19 lockdown this seminar was postponed.

10. Liaising with the European Institutions

The Transparency Register of the European Commission and the European Parliament was updated in March 2019 for the Alliance for Childhood so that Michiel Matthes and Chiara Piccolo were given a permanent access badge for the European Parliament.

June 25

Chiara Piccolo participates in the conference of the Intergroup on Children’s Rights in the European Parliament in Brussels. The theme of the conference is “Together for Children, With Children”. The event was hosted by MEP Ms. Corazza Bildt, the Chairman of the Intergroup.

July 10

The Finnish Presidency holds a meeting on Education and Culture in Helsinki and Michiel Matthes, being on holiday in Helsinki at the time, delivers at this conference 20 books of the Alliance for Childhood and 100 brochures. All documentation is taken home by the participants.

July 25

Chiara Piccolo is at the European Parliament in connection with the organization of the concert with Sistema Europe, to be held on 3 September.

September 3

Chiara Piccolo organises a Tour Visit at EP for Sistema Europe children and guardians. There are 9 children and 5 guardians.

September 10

The Permanent Representation of Finland to the EU organises an event, together with UNICEF, with the theme: Children Rights in new Technologies. Chiara Piccolo participates in the event. Some MEPs are at the event to deliver speeches. The Child Rights Coordinator of the European Commission Valeria Setti also attended.

October 2

Chiara Piccolo participates at the event “How can the EU support children and families?” organised by Missing Children Europe and hosted by MEP Hilde Vautmans (Renew Europe) at the European Parliament. Attendees are the NGO’s working on the theme of children’s rights.

November 14

Chiara Piccolo participates at the event organised by Eurochild with the theme “Towards No Child Poverty in Europe 2030” at the European Parliament. At this occasion Eurochild presents its report concerning the European Semester Report.

November 20

The Intergroup on Children's Rights in the European Parliament celebrates the 30th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Michiel Matthes and Chiara Piccolo participate in this event.



The celebration in the European Parliament on 20 November 2019

11. Child Rights Action Group (CRAG) in Brussels.

The Alliance for Childhood is a member of the CRAG in Brussels. The following meetings were held:

Date: 11th January at Eurochild office

Date: 28th February at World Vision Office

Date: 5th September at at Eurochild's office

Date: 5th December at World Vision Office

Chiara Piccolo attended all meeting and Michiel Matthes participated in the meeting of 5 September. For more information please follow the following link:

<http://www.childrightsmanifesto.eu/>. The purpose of this group is to be a platform of all organisations in Brussels that work on the theme of children, childhood and children's rights and to speak with one voice vis-à-vis the Intergroup on Children's Rights of the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Council.

12. The EU Alliance for Investing in Children

The Alliance for Childhood European Network Group is a member of this informal grouping and Shanti George of the Learning for Well-being Foundation, a partner of AFC-ENG, represents the AFC-ENG in this grouping.

The EU Alliance for Investing in Children brings together over 20 European networks sharing a commitment to end child poverty and to promote child well-being across Europe.

At a time when over a quarter of children in the EU face poverty and social exclusion, the added-value of this Alliance is to push for full implementation of the European Commission Recommendation “Investing in Children – Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage”.

The Alliance partners believe the EU policy framework and funding opportunities can catalyse political commitment and policy reform within Member States, thereby improving the quality of life of children and young people in Europe. The website is:

www.alliance4investinginchildren.eu.

The EU Alliance for Investing in Children meetings were limited in 2019, because the focus was on attending the four consultation workshops that the European Commission organized in relation to the Child Guarantee. At the fourth such workshop held in Rome in October 2019, the EU Alliance issued the following Call for Action that was signed by the AFC-ENG in addition to many other members of the EU Alliance.

<http://www.alliance4investinginchildren.eu/a-call-for-action-to-european-union-member-states-for-an-investing-in-children-council-recommendation/>

13. Publications by the Alliance for Childhood in 2019

In the second half 2018 the group worked on an update of the brochure, and this process was finalized in March 2019 and the new brochure was printed in May 2019. On the basis of the new brochure the website was updated.

14. The Alliance for Childhood European Network Group participates in the International Platform of the Alliance for Childhood.

The partners in this group are:

- the Alliance for Childhood European Network Group in Brussels
- the Alliance for Childhood in the USA
- the Alliance for Childhood in the UK
- the Alliance for Childhood in Brazil

Every three to four months a skype meeting is held. In 2019 these meetings were on
18 March

18 June

19 November

Michiel Matthes participated in all meetings. The purpose of this platform is to stay connected, to inform each other on the progress we make, to help each other with contacts, inspiration, sometimes financially, and we build and financed together a website <https://www.alliancechildhood.org/>. Another important reason is to remain aligned philosophically.

In 2012 various people from the Alliance for Childhood group in Brussels participated in a conference in Washington, that was co-organised by the Alliance for Childhood group in the USA.

The founder of the American Alliance for Childhood Foundation Joan Almon died on 14 July 2019 at the age of 74. She was a staunch defender of the cause of children until the end of her life.

15. Website:

The Alliance for Childhood received support from Sivi Talvensola in Finland to keep the website up-to-date. The seven QoC Books have been put on the website and the 80 chapters can be downloaded free of charge.

There were in 2019 2024 visitors of the website from 106 countries who had 2758 sessions and who looked at 6598 pages.

Visitors from the ten most important countries:

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| USA | 416 |
| Belgium | 185 |
| UK | 155 |
| Canada | 122 |
| Netherlands | 119 |
| Germany | 112 |
| France | 110 |
| Finland | 106 |
| Italy | 63 |
| Spain | 55 |

During the year a Facebook page was added to the website and a Twitter page.

16. Secretariat of the Alliance for Childhood

The secretariat was taken care of in 2019 by Michiel Matthes, who was supported from 1 May 2019 onwards by Chiara Piccolo who acted as the Representative of the group in Brussels. The address of the secretariat was Troonstraat 194, 1050 Brussels. Michiel Matthes works mainly in his home in Amersfoort in the Netherlands and Chiara Piccolo in her home in Brussels.

17. Activities of AFC-ENG with Partner Organisations

The Alliance for Childhood group has some 30 partner organisations and is itself member of various organizations that share the same vision and goals as the AFC-ENG such as Eurochild, the EU Alliance for Investing in Children, the Child's Rights Action Group of NGOs in Brussels (CRAG) and the European Policy Centre (EPC), and a partner in the International Council of the Alliance for Childhood and of the Learning for Well-being Community.

Other meetings and conferences in 2019:

January 7

Michiel Matthes travels to Brussels to have a job interview with Chiara Piccolo, who has reacted to a vacancy announcement within the AFC-ENG.

January 14

Michiel Matthes has a meeting with Daniel Kropf, Chairman of the Learning for Well-being Foundation in his office in Amsterdam.

February 6

Michiel Matthes travels to Brussels to be part of the launch of the election campaign of Frans Timmermans, who will be the Spitzenkandidat of the European Socialist Party for the elections of the European Parliament in May 2019.

February 15

Michiel Matthes has a meeting with Ignaz Anderson, the Director of the IONA Foundation in Amsterdam. This foundation provides grants to initiatives that aims at spiritual, cultural and social development.

March 7

Michiel Matthes has a meeting with Acerta, the organization in Brussels for the salary administration of the AFC-EN Foundation to prepare the ground in case Chiara Piccolo could be recruited.

March 13

Michiel Matthes participates in a conference of the Nexus Institute in Amsterdam with Bernard-Henry Lévy about the European culture.

April 3

Michiel Matthes participates in the Community Day of the Learning for Well-being Foundation. It takes place in the Institut Bruno Lussato & Marina Fédier in Ukkel. On this day the foundation launches its new initiative called Act2gether.

April 25 and 26

Michiel Matthes is in Brussels for various administrative matters concerning the foundation and he attends a meeting of the CRAG, held in the office of Eurochild.

May 20 and 21

Michiel Matthes and Chiara Piccolo participate in the conference of the Child in the City Foundation in Antwerp. The theme was 'Children in the sustainable city'.

May 27

Chiara Piccolo meets Liz Gomez and Irene Bertana from COFACE for a bilateral meeting in order to talk about potential areas of cooperation. COFACE is the umbrella organization in Brussels with more than 50 member organisations in 23 Member States of the EU and it represents more than 25 million families in Europe.

June 11

Michiel Matthes and Chiara Piccolo have a meeting in Brussels with the Learning for Well-being Foundation and the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education to attune to each others' activities. A similar meeting is held on September 25 with the same participants.

October 24

Michiel Matthes participates in a meeting organized by the European Policy Centre with Jean-Claude Juncker, the departing Chairman of the European Commission as a key-note speaker. Host of the meeting: emeritus Chairman of the European Council Herman van Rompuy.

November 7

Michiel Matthes participates in the conference organized by ECSWE with the theme 'The art of education: Empowering our children to shape their future'. The conference was organized on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Waldorf education. Many other Partners of the AFC-ENG attended this conference, which had over 200 participants.

At the end of 2019 the AFC-ENG had the following Partners:

Alliance ELIANT, Brussels
ARGE-Erziehungsberatung und Fortbildung (AT)
Beweeg.nl, The Netherlands
Briony Vanden Bussche, Belgium
COPE Children of Prisoners
ECSWE (BE)
EMDR Europe
EPA (European Parents Association), Belgium
European Foundation for the Care of Newborn Infants (EFCNI), Germany
Familienforum Havelhöhe GmbH and Emmi-Pieler Haus e.V. (DE)
The Foundation for Social Welfare Services, Malta
Haukkala Foundation, Finland
Higher Institute for Family Sciences, Belgium
IASWECE (SE)
Idee Kids vzw, Belgium
Korczak Foundation (NL)
Learning for Well-being Foundation, The Netherlands
Le Furet, France
Legambiente, Italy
NIVOZ (NL)
Sistema Europe, Austria
stART International e.V. (DE)
Stichting FEMI (NL)
The Experiential Education Project (BE)
Verein mit Kindern Wachsen (DE)