



BACKGROUND

A Global Approach to Ending the Institutionalisation of Children: How the EU and the USA can help children in adversity around the world

Round Table
European Parliament (Room A5G315)
14.30 -17.30 Tuesday 8th April
Co-hosted by Claude Moraes MEP and Lumos

About Claude Moraes MEP

Claude Moraes is Labour Member of the [European Parliament for London](#) and Deputy Leader of the [European Parliamentary Labour Party](#) (EPLP).

First elected to the European Parliament in 1999, Claude was the first Asian origin MEP. He was reelected in 2009 where he led the London list. He is currently Spokesperson for the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament for Justice and Home Affairs. .

Claude was previously Director of JCWI, the national migration and refugee charity and Chief Executive of the Immigrants' Aid Trust. Before that, he was a national officer at the TUC, a representative to the European TUC in Brussels, House of Commons adviser to MPs John Reid and Paul Boateng and a CRE Commissioner.

With a legal background, Claude has campaigned, written widely and provided regular media commentary on human rights and migration issues including co-authoring the 'Politics of Migration' (Blackwells, 2003) and 'The European Union after the Treaty of Lisbon' (Cambridge University Press, 2012), as well as organising legal test cases in UK and the European Courts.

About Lumos

Lumos is an international NGO¹ working to end the institutionalisation of children around the world. It works to transform education, health and social care systems for children and their families and help children move from institutions to family-based care. We are a founding member of the UNICEF Global Partnership for Children with Disabilities in Development and the European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care². Over the past five years, Lumos has:

- Supported 12,000 children to move from harmful institutions to families or supported independent living;

¹ Registered in England and Wales as a company limited by guarantee, number 5611912 and as a charity, number 1112575.

² The European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-Based Care (EEG) has produced useful Guidelines and a Toolkit on the use of EU Funds which can be used by the Member States and the European Commission to implement and monitor the reform. www.deinstitutionalisationguide.eu

- Saved the lives of more than 430 children suffering from malnutrition, severe neglect or a lack of access to medical treatment;
- Trained 15,000 social workers, medical professionals, teachers, carers, civil servants and policy makers;
- Helped redirect €367 million and ensure that it was spent on community based services, rather than institutions.

To find out more, visit www.wearelumos.org

About the Global Alliance for Children (GAC)

The GAC is a partnership of 7 US government departments (including USAID), the World Bank, the Canadian government, the Swedish government and a range of major international foundations including the World Childhood Foundation. The GAC was established to implement the Action Plan on Children in Adversity that was developed at the request of President Obama. This Action Plan outlines the strategy for the US government's use of overseas aid to help societies' most marginalised children. The plan has three key objectives:

1. Build strong beginnings – put in place programmes and systems that ensure children under five reach their developmental milestones;
2. Put family care first – strengthen systems that support children to live in their families and end institutionalisation of children;
3. Protect children from all forms of violence and abuse.

The GAC is in the process of selecting 6 countries around the world in which to implement the Action Plan as pilot examples. This means that those countries, if they wish to be involved, will receive greater support to implement their reform programmes for children.

To find out more about the GAC and the President's Action Plan for Children in Adversity, visit: www.childreninadversity.org

Institutionalisation

An estimated 8 million children worldwide live in some form of institutionalised residential care, contrary to perceptions, 90% of those children are not orphans. Research from across the world has demonstrated the significant harm caused to children by such institutionalisation.³ The harmful effects include:

- Impaired early brain development, leading to delayed cognitive and physical development and, in some cases, resulting in the onset of an intellectual disability;
- Attachment disorders, which may result in the development of autistic behaviours, self-stimulation, self-harming, aggression to others or cruelty to animals;
- Poor cognitive processing, resulting in educational under-achievement;
- Poor physical health, including chronic infections; Non-organic failure to thrive;
- Unusually raised anxieties, specifically the fear of being abandoned and the fear of being alone, resulting in nightmares and sleeping disorders;
- Eating disorders; Enuresis;
- Difficulty understanding right from wrong, resulting in behaviour such as lying and stealing;
- Difficulties in forming healthy emotional relationships as adults;

³"Deinstitutionalisation – A Human Rights Priority for Children with Disabilities". Georgette Mulheir Equal Rights Review, Volume 9 – 2012

http://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/err9_full.pdf contains a detailed summary of global research.

- Increased risk of child abuse and neglect; and significantly reduced life chances and, in some cases, life expectancy;
- One study suggests that children brought up in institutional care are 10 times more likely to be victims of prostitution and 500 times more likely to commit suicide;
- Disabled children in institutional care are particularly vulnerable to more severe forms of violence, abuse and poor quality, depersonalised care.

The European Union Response

This year will see the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The events of 1989 exposed one of the most horrific legacies of the communist systems, namely the plight of hundreds of thousands of children living in large institutions across Central and Eastern Europe. Since then, most countries in the region have begun to tackle the issue, but much remains to be done. There is still significant resistance to reform and many countries in the region still believe that some children must live in institutions.

The EU has played a pivotal role in changing attitudes and shifting systems of care and support from institutions to community services. Nevertheless, at the same time, European Union structural funds have in the past been used to renovate and build new institutions. The intentions of this process were good, but failed to understand that institutions cannot provide proper environments in which to raise children. Investments in institution buildings have not resulted in a significant improvement in children's health, development, future life chances and access to rights. For example in Bulgaria in 2007, €140,000 of European Aid funding earmarked for deinstitutionalisation was spent on renovating one institution for children and adults with severe disabilities. In spite of improvements to the building, in 2010, the same institution was the subject of an investigation into high levels of mortality due to malnutrition, which was highlighted in a report of the UN Committee Against Torture. Meanwhile, in one county in the Czech Republic from 2008 – 2012, more than €5.6 million of EU Funds was spent on renovating baby institutions, children's homes and institutions for children and adults with disabilities. In spite of this expenditure, the Czech Ombudsman has since highlighted bad practice and child protection concerns in these institutions.

Since 2009, many partners, including Lumos, have advocated for changes in legislation which would ensure that EU Funds support the reform of the care systems in the Member States and are not used to maintain outdated and harmful institutional models of care. This has resulted in a very major shift in emphasis in how EU structural funds can be used. On 20 November 2013, Universal Children's Day, the European Parliament confirmed new regulations which will mean that countries should use structural funds for deinstitutionalisation and which effectively forbid the use of funds to renovate or build new institutions. This is a welcome precedent that should be extended to the regulations of other funding streams that the European Union uses to support countries elsewhere in the European Region or worldwide. Institutionalisation is harmful to all children anywhere in the world. Europe's overseas development programmes and neighbourhood programmes related to children should all aim to end institutionalisation and should promote the transition from institutional to community based services and supports.

Objective of the Round Table

This Round Table provides an opportunity to share experience and expertise on the international funding of programmes for children. The meeting aims to:

- highlight the major progress which these EU and US initiatives represent;
- explore the need for policy coherence across different funding streams both within Europe and globally and;

- identify how the USA and EU could work together at the global level to further this important human rights issue.

It is hoped that colleagues from the US government, EU structures and NGOs can develop a common agenda aimed at promoting strong beginnings for children, ending institutionalisation and protecting them from harm and abuse.

Georgette Mulheir
Chief Executive
Lumos
12-14 Berry Street,
London
EC1V 0AU
United Kingdom
t: +44 20 7253 6464
e: Georgette.Mulheir@lumos.org.uk
www.wearelumos.org