

Parents have the right to decide independently and freely on the education of their children

Standpoint - Dr. Albina Neesa
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Dear ladies and gentlemen,

No state or state body can be established without a family. That is why family needs must be taken into account and family justice fulfilled where the European policy can influence families. Such a policy is in the interest of all member states since all states are based, including Germany, on reasons for maintaining its obligation to support families and continuously improve the conditions of family life.

For several years now, in Germany and other countries there has been an exciting debate on creating ways of caring for children up to 3 years of age. It must be possible to better combine family obligations and paid employment – even from the viewpoint of equality. Parents do not need the state to assign them their responsibility but they must have a freedom of choice.

Parents know what is best for their child. Thus, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany repeats something that is valid at all times and all over the world:

“Childcare and education is the natural right of parents and their primary duty”.

And since there are also exceptions, when parents cannot perceive their rights and cannot carry out their obligations, the Constitution of the Federal Republic implements ‘control authority’. Parents have their primary and main responsibility but this is not an exclusive responsibility for raising children. The state keeps an eye over the educational duty.

However, I emphasize once more: priority is given to the choice of parents. And if parents opt for a particular way of educating their children, they are also entitled to the assistance of the Community, so they can, at best, keep their parental duties. Only if and until they are unable to carry their tasks despite “self/help assistance” (i.e. subsidiarity), should the state consider further steps. In the “state community”, there are among state institutions and charities also charity associations and of course citizens providing joint care, thus according to the bible discourse a “fellowman”, who as the well-known “Good Samaritan” assists where needed, without invitation or call.

Under normal conditions, the following applies: parents must have conditions that enable them to decide on their own when they will take care of their children by themselves and will bring up children by themselves, or if they want to transfer care, temporarily, to another party, if they consider this to be correct from the pedagogical viewpoint. The state must not only accept and respect these decision of parents but on the contrary, they must perform the task of (quote) “enabling and supporting in their actual possibilities childcare of the type that parents choose by themselves” (end quote), as formulated by the Supreme German Court, Federal Constitutional Court. And I repeat this statement of the German Constitutional Courts (resolution of November 10, 1998): **“The state’s task is to enable and to support ...childcare in the way that parents choose”**, this statement, in my opinion, is important to other states that acknowledge parental rights.

Thus, states must allow both options. They must make sure good quality day care facilities exist and must establish sufficient groundwork for personal childcare and education of young children.

In my previous conclusions I have emphasized the primary responsibility of parents for the upbringing of their children. From there, I have deduced their right to an independent choice

either to raise and educate their children on their own or through, for example, nurseries for children. In both cases, however, they must be supported by the state and not only if the child is enrolled in a children's facility.

Because education outside the home must be financially supported largely from tax revenues resources must also be ready and prepared for personal education in the home of the parents. Giving privilege to one choice at the expense of the other would not be fair to the primary responsibility and would not satisfy the prerequisites for childcare in the way that parents choose by themselves.

Thus, my request is as follows: Families must have a particular type of a "wage" during the early years of a child's life. However, instead of transferring resources via public finances to day care facilities, they should be available to families. Therefore, parents could have a free choice of when they would, temporarily, leave their paid employment outside their home and care for the child at home and educate the child at home or continue their paid employment and send the child to a nursery. This would adjust the demand for day care facilities and parents would have greater influence on the quality of the services provided.

I would like to emphasize one more thing: Independently of the preferred form of childcare and education, the parent has the primary and final responsibility for childcare and education. Parents are obliged to their children to keep their children's right to education. On the other hand, the state gains from children being raised and educated as personalities responsible for themselves and able to live in society. It is the family that educates and raises an adult citizen, which the state needs for its future. Responsibility for ourselves and solidarity cannot be taught in any other place than our own family.

This primary social cell cannot sustain any damage; the prerequisites that the state builds on cannot be lost. Therefore the family cannot be unilaterally profit-oriented; no parent can pursue, regardless of the needs of the children, any moves towards usable labour forces active outside the home. Families need time to sufficiently anticipate their primary responsibility for bringing up their children. They must, without a drastic drop in their living standard, be able to afford this time. And we must take care that parents do not, when returning to paid employment, consider the negatives associated with finances or career.

In conclusion: We need a family policy that will not only prepare the care infrastructure but will also increase the general ideological and material status of the family. We cannot be indifferent to the future survival of our society.