

# Protect the childhood!

## International children's rights day 20<sup>th</sup> November

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One fifth of the European population are children. Today, November 20th, EFPA encourages all member associations to speak up and share psychological knowledge to raise awareness on children's rights and well-being.

In 2013, EFPA established a Task Force on Human Rights to address the ongoing threats to human rights in the world and to more strongly articulate psychologists' responsibilities to do what is within our scope and capabilities to

- Raise awareness of human rights and (risks of) human rights violations
- Prevent human rights violations
- Alleviate the effects of human rights violations

In 1954, the UN General Assembly recommended that all countries institute a Universal Children's Day devoted to promoting the ideals and objectives of the Charter and the welfare of the children of the world. The date 20 November marks the day on which the Assembly adopted the [Declaration of the Rights of the Child](#), in 1959, and the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC), in 1989.

The second principle of the Declaration states that: *"The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him/her to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. In the enactment of laws for this purpose, the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration"*.

This year, 2014, we celebrate the 55th anniversary of the Declaration and the 25th anniversary of the CRC in a world with declining mortality rates, rising school attendance, and increased awareness of children's needs. Still, too many children are exploited, mistreated and deprived the most fundamental needs and rights. Threats to and violations of basic human rights are also threats to human health and well-being. Lack of respect of human dignity, ill-treatment, growing up in hostile environments and separation from the loved ones are at the root of many mental and interpersonal problems. Children carry the burdens of human rights violations done both to their parents and themselves.

Healthy development rests on sensitive care and feeling safe. Adverse childhood experiences put development at risk at all levels, neurobiological, psychological, behavioral and social. Hence, protection of children and promotion of healthy childhoods should be a prime priority to all psychologists. In a professional psychological context we can contribute to defend and strengthen children's rights by actively incorporate the Convention on the rights of the child into psychological practice. Conversely, psychological knowledge can fill the Convention and the central principle of the best interest of the child with theory, evidence and substance.

### Related links:

- General comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration ([http://www2.ohchr.org/English/bodies/crc/docs/GC/CRC\\_C\\_GC\\_14\\_ENG.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/English/bodies/crc/docs/GC/CRC_C_GC_14_ENG.pdf))
- Investing in children: the European child maltreatment prevention action plan 2015-2020 <http://www.euro.who.int/prevent-child-abuse>