

Roles of parents & government in children's education - Prague, Czech Republic

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Prague, Czech Republic—The roles of parents and government in children's education was the theme of an international conference held in the Czech Parliament.

“Where Is the Borderline between the Responsibility of the Parents and the State in the Education of Children?” was convened in the House of Deputies on May 29, 2017, by Hon. Nina Nováková, a member of the Czech Parliament, with the support of the Czech chapter of UPF.

More than 20 participants attended the half-day conference, including representatives of civil society, family organizations, Christian groups, and political parties.

Opening the conference, Hon. Nováková explained that the purpose of this discussion was to protect the family. There have been some clashes over the question of parental responsibility vs. the responsibility of the state, she said. In other words, how can far the state intervene with the rights and responsibilities of the parents in educating their children? As an example, Hon. Nováková mentioned a case when a doctor might prescribe contraceptives to a 14-year-old girl without notifying her parents.

The first speaker, Professor Dr. Harald Scheu from the Law Faculty of Charles University in Prague, spoke about children's rights as being anchored in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Children have the right to have a good and loving, functional and healthy family environment, which the legislature can hardly cover. The European Court does not deal with national legislature, he said—only with the question of whether the rights of parents have been restrained.

Mrs. Lynn Walsh, the co-chair of the UN NGO Committee on the Family, who is also the director of the UPF Office of Marriage and Family Education, spoke about the importance of parents' involvement in their children's education. Parents have adopted the myth that children need other children for socialization, she said, with the result that we have created a friendly society, not a parental society. The prevailing concept is that children should be liberated from their parents as soon as possible. However, no state nor government can substitute for the parents, she said. The parents are the foundation for the education of the whole personality.

Mr. Robert Clarke, the director of European Advocacy at the Vienna office of ADF (Alliance Defending Freedom) International, pointed out that according to the UN, parents have the prerogative to decide the type of education for their children. The state should respect parental rights, he said. Concerning home

schooling, the speaker emphasized that parents should have this possibility. In Germany home schooling is forbidden. The view that the state knows what is best for the child is very dangerous. Mr. Clarke mentioned that the Norwegian Child Welfare Services (known in Norway as Barnevernet) removed five children from a Romanian family without a serious reason. There are more such cases. The education of children is the fundamental right of parents, and the state should respect that, Mr. Clarke concluded.



Mrs. Jana Chalušová from the Parents' Forum gave a brief report about the forum's activities. It is conducting campaigns to wake up parents to be aware of their role in educating children. The forum wants to bring an end to so-called "silent parents."

Mrs. Jana Jochová from the Alliance for the Family said that the family based on the relationship between husband and wife is mostly in danger. The responsibility of parents becomes bigger, the more that harmful influences exist.

When the family does not function properly, various institutions try to replace it with preventive programs. People are losing self-confidence to be a parent, Mrs. Jochová said. The solution is to change the current system and to trust in parents. Mrs. Jochová mentioned that often the people who have no children are the ones who decide about family policy.

In the fruitful discussion that followed, the participants expressed their views and determination to protect the family. In summary, the participants agreed that parents should be responsible for religious and sexual education and that the state should not replace the family in this area. It is important to protect not only the family but also religious freedom, which is an inseparable part of this process.

The series of events on family issues will continue.