



Bambini in Europa
Barn i Europa
Børn i Europa
Children in Europe
Dzieci w Europie
Enfants d'Europe
Infância a Europa
Infancia en Europa
Infância na Europa
Kinder in Europa
Kinderen in Europa

MEDIA RELEASE

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Conference talks up benefits of multilingualism for children

A special Children in Europe conference will today examine how services for children can support and nurture linguistic diversity.

In My Own Words: Supporting and promoting the linguistic diversity of young children in an increasingly multilingual society, held today and tomorrow in Donegal, Ireland, will address the rise of multilingualism and the issue of children's language learning in rural communities.

The conference is a collaboration by Donegal County Childcare Committee, Border Counties Childcare Network, Children in Northern Ireland and Children in Europe.

Bronwen Cohen, chief executive of Children in Scotland, the English language publisher of Children in Europe, said: "Language promotion policies are seldom aimed at young children, despite the fact that it's precisely this age group that is most open to different languages. From an early age young children should be encouraged to learn from and absorb linguistic diversity around them."

Europe now has a rich diversity of languages: 23 official languages, over 60 regional minority languages and hundreds of immigrant minority languages.

Language learning is recognised as being important for identity, culture and economic success. But these same reasons can put different languages, and those who speak them, into different hierarchies, leaving minority language speakers feeling isolated and devalued.

Dr Priscilla Clarke, executive director, FKA Children's Services, Australia, who will

be speaking at the conference, said that language hierarchies could have a profound effect on children's learning.

She said: "The devaluing of children's home culture and indigenous language can result in a loss of feeling of self-worth, loss of intimacy and the ability to build relationships, and, crucially, loss of motivation for learning."

The international array of speakers at the conference will also include Nichole Leigh Mosty, from Mulaborg pre-school, Reykjavik, Iceland.

Pat 'the Cope' Gallagher TD, minister of state at the department of health and children, will close the event.

The conference will discuss: advocating for children's linguistic rights; models for promoting early bilingual experiences; supporting identity, diversity and language in the early years; creating user-friendly language learning environments; and supporting indigenous and minority languages in increasingly multilingual societies.

The event follows Children in Europe's successful conference, *In My Own Words*, held in Edinburgh in June.

The conference is held at Jackson's Hotel, Ballybofey, Co Donegal, Ireland, today (6 December) and tomorrow.

For more information, visit www.childreninscotland.org.uk/eur

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Notes for editors:

- *Children in Europe* is a joint publication by a network of magazines in 11 languages across Europe. The focus is on services for and work with children from birth to ten and their families. The English language issue of the magazine is published by Children in Scotland simultaneously in eight languages twice a year, in March and September. www.childrenineurope.org
- Children in Scotland is Scotland's national children's agency, bringing together voluntary, statutory and professional organisations and individuals to improve the lives of Scotland's children and their families.