

**SUBMISSION BY THE QUALITY4CHILDREN PROJECT TO THE UN CRC DAY OF GENERAL DISCUSSION – GENEVA - SEPTEMBER 16<sup>TH</sup> 2005**

UN CRC 3/3: “States parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform to the standards established by competent authorities.”

*“If you are doing market research on a product you talk to the consumer not the producer!”*

This is a quote from Emmanuel Sherwin, Youth Chair of IFCO, and a member of the Steering Group of the Quality4Children (Q4C) Project. Emmanuel has personal experience of the Irish care system and he and other young people are key members of the Q4C Project. He will be a speaker on September 16 in Geneva.

In March 2004 three organisations, FICE (International Federation of Educative Communities [www.fice-inter.org](http://www.fice-inter.org)), IFCO (International Foster Care Organisation [www.ifco.info](http://www.ifco.info)) and SOS-Kinderdorf ([www.sos-childrensvillages.org](http://www.sos-childrensvillages.org)) came together to realise the Quality4Children Project.

As the European Union expanded to 25 countries with others in the queue or having special EU status Q4C began working with voluntary national coordinators in 32 European countries. The objective of the Q4C Project is:

“Based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the objective of the project is to assure and improve the chances of development for children and youth in out-of-home care by:

- collecting good practices
- developing quality standards
- implementing quality standards
- setting up a European network of people working in practice, youth, representatives of scientific / research community, representatives of social / youth welfare authorities and politicians.”

Q4C aims at formulating, implementing and monitoring standards based on views and good practice experiences of people who are directly involved in and concerned with out-of-home care, such as children and youth, their biological families and care givers. The views of the research community, representatives of NGOs and networks and political decision-makers will also be sought.

In the last year the volunteer national coordinators have been brought together and trained in the use of narrative story-telling research methods. On return to their countries they have formed national teams and conducted interviews with a wide range of consumers and providers of out-of-home child care systems. These have been distilled to extract the main “jewels”. The stories collected have been translated and the quotations in this report come from this work.

In Austria in June 2005 Q4C held its first European Congress “Quality4Children” which was attended by more than 500 delegates from 54 countries. In the many

presentations at this Congress examples of similar work from other countries and continents were shared, together with the plans of UNICEF, ISS and the UN CRC to seek “UN Guidelines for the protection of children without parental care.” Q4C is actively involved with this process and hopes that its research and recommendation will prove valuable in the formulation of such guidelines. Further training of national coordinators took place in Austria and cross-national teams were created to further process the data collected.

In 2006 these cross-national teams will attend an evaluation workshop in Prague. This will be followed by the documentation and publication of quality standards in out-of-home child care, together with an action plan for implementation. In 2007 further activities will look at implementation, ongoing evaluation and further development of quality standards.

This is not a long or scientific submission to the UNCRC. It is an attempt to share basic information on a dynamic project which is attempting to provide informed answers to some of the questions posed for this Day of General Discussion.

Q4C invites you to regularly visit its website [www.quality4children.info](http://www.quality4children.info) and to share your information and comments.

Children and young people tell their stories about their personal experiences in out-of-home child care. Sample of quotations:

*“I have regular contacts with my biological family. My biological and foster families have regular contacts and this makes me happy. They understand and respect each other.”*

*“Now I see that this time (at the foster home) was worth it: I could solve the problems and conflicts I had with my parents: I go home every weekend (...). I have realized that things can be solved by talking”*

*“[...] I have to think about my future and it is overwhelming because I don't know what to do [...] I would like to stay here but I know I have to leave”.*

*“The farmer who owns the youth home [...] offered me a “pig contract”. [...] I was allowed to buy two baby pigs for a modest price and to raise them”.*

*“Through our participation we have the opportunity to form and adopt the house rules”.*