

# The power of families

I was asked yesterday on a radio interview on this congress why this congress was so focussed on the family. What was the need now to strengthen families. I said I think there is a great need of talking about strengthening families at this moment. There is a lot of financial pressure on families now in these times of economic crises; there's a lot of stress in combining work and family life; there are complicated and new arising question in educating your children in this tv- and computer-generation with al the temptations of pornography and violent games; there is a rising rate of divorces whereby in Holland 60.000 children yearly are effected. To think these issues over with specialist around the world seems to be a necessity.

On the positive side: a healthy family has a positive effect on the personal development, social behaviour and development within society for a child.

If family fails, then it will have a negative effect on half of the children involves in divorces, a negative effect on the income level of both parents and it will have negative side effect for society concerning de rise of demand for housing and the appeal on social welfare.

## Role of the government

1. The government should by foremost respect the privacy of families. Sovereignty with its own circle
2. Government should play a supporting role in strengthening the development of healthy families.
3. It should only directly intervene if a child is at risk

Families play a vital role within society, a source of communicating norms and values, developing talent, learning to get along with each other, learning to respect authority.

Although my party highly value the family being one man and one wife with children, the government should take care of all kinds of family life that exist nowadays.

And although my party will not encouraging divorces, the government should take care of composed families from two divorced situations. These composed families also need extra care and advise if requested.

## Good practices:

Our minister of youth and family has presented recently his family policy in which he tries to strengthen family life by:

1. Rising the support that family receive for rising their children, which can amount into 1.000 euro extra per year per family for families who struggle to make ends meet.

2. He initiated the set up of Centres for youth and families, with will give advise on rising children whenever there are questions an difficulties. This with a low threshold.
3. He increased the amount of furlough after the birth of a child from 13 weeks until 26 weeks with a payment of 50% of the minimum income
4. He support social networks via own strength meetings if there are problems within a family. This rather then looking at outplacement of a child to foster parents of an institution.
5. Via homeworking and teleworking en schooltime jobs (jobs which are within the schooltimes of the children), promoting better caretaking of the children also for fathers.
6. To fight child abuse and violence against women within families and promote conflict resolution.
7. If a divorce is unavoidable, it is now obligatory to make a parenthood plan how to deal with the children after the divorce. The negative effect are more and more visible nowadays. Every year in Holland 60.000 children are involved in a divorce of their parents. And one out of three experience negative effect out of it like depression, fear, lesser school results, aggression. We want to empower these broken situations.
8. I also promoted marriage course and pre marriage course of Alfa and the marriage Encouters courses. This aims at better equipping couples who want to get married or are already married or living together in a familysetting to the benefit of the involved children.

In a nutshell these are the main policy measures that the ChristenUnion presented and some are already implemented. This government want to encourage the freedom of choice to combine family life with work. Therefore it is also in discussion with employers who to anticipate to this as flexible as possible.

And beside this we are proud that for the first time in Holland we have a minister of Youth and Family who can coordinate all the policies concerning youth and families. It takes time to sent up a whole new department, and to gain authority as one coordinating minister, but so far so good.

I hope to pick up some of your policy suggestions as well, so I am very happy the organisation arranged this session.

Thank you for your attention,

Joël Voordewind

Member of Parliament of Holland for the ChristenUnion