

PRESS RELEASE

**Launch of the Report Card 7:
Child Poverty in Perspective :
An Overview of Child Well-Being in Rich Countries
EMBARGO:10.00 GMT, 14 FEBRUARY 2007**

IN RICH COUNTRIES CHILDREN'S BASIC NEEDS HAVE BEEN GENERALLY MET BUT THERE IS SCOPE FOR FURTHER PROGRESS IN CHILD WELL-BEING

BERLIN/FLORENCE, 14 February 2007 – The UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre today releases the Report Card 7 which focuses on the well-being of children and young people in the world's advanced economies and provides the first comprehensive assessment.

The six dimensions taken to measure the well-being of children – material well-being, health and safety, education, peer and family relationships, behaviours and risks, and young people's own subjective sense of well-being – offer a picture of the lives of children, and no single dimension can stand as a reliable proxy for child well-being as a whole.

The landmark report shows that among all of the 21 OECD countries there are improvements to be made and that no single OECD country leads in all six of the areas.

"All countries have weaknesses to be addressed" says Innocenti Director Marta Santos Pais, "No single dimension of well-being stands as a reliable proxy for child well-being as a whole and several OECD countries find themselves with widely differing rankings for different dimensions of children's lives."

According to the Report Card small North-European countries dominate the top half of the table, with child well-being at its highest in the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. There is no strong or consistent relationship between per capita GDP and child well-being. The Czech Republic, for example, achieves a higher overall rank for child well-being than several much wealthier European countries. Also no country features in the top third of the rankings for all six dimensions of child well-being.

Pointing out that the Convention on the Rights of the Child calls on all countries to invest in its children "to the maximum extent of available resources", Ms. Santos Pais said that international comparison was a way of testing this commitment - "A country cannot be said to be doing the best it can for its children if other countries at a similar stage of economic development are doing much better – and that's what the league tables are designed to show."

First step

PRESS RELEASE

The Innocenti Report is intended as a first step towards regular and comprehensive monitoring of child well-being across the OECD. Its scope is limited by the availability of internationally comparable data (which means that key areas such as mental and emotional health and child neglect and abuse are omitted). Nonetheless UNICEF hopes that the Report will help to stimulate the collection of more comprehensive and more timely data.

Child wellbeing needs to be addressed by public policies across a broad spectrum of aspects. Given levels of child well-being are not inevitable and show what is possible to do to improve the lives of children.

“All families in OECD countries today are aware that childhood is being re-shaped by forces whose mainspring is not necessarily the best interests of the child. At the same time, a wide public in the OECD countries is becoming ever more aware that many of the corrosive social problems affecting the quality of life have their genesis in the changing ecology of childhood. Many therefore feel that it is time to attempt to re-gain a degree of understanding, control and direction over what is happening to our children in their most vital, vulnerable years. That process begins with measurement and monitoring. And it is as a contribution to that process that the Innocenti Research Centre has published this initial attempt at a multi-dimensional overview of child well-being in the countries of the OECD.” (Innocenti Report Card 7, page 39)

NOTE TO THE EDITORS

The Report Card series present 'league tables' on aspects of child wellbeing in the world's most advanced economies (countries that are members of the OECD) seeking to identify areas where societies could do better in supporting every child to be and become all that s/he can be – over and above generally universal access for every child to basic services in education, health, nutrition, shelter.

Embargoed media materials and copies of the Report Card in English, French, Spanish and Italian are available from the Centre's Innocenti Newsroom:

<http://www.unicef-icdc.org/presscentre/indexNewsroom.html>

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