



Børnerådet

Children's Vision

*Supplementary report to Denmark's
third periodic report to the UN Committee
on the Rights of the Child*

National Council for Children
January 2005

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Preface

The National Council for Children is very pleased to present and submit the children and youth report “Children’s Vision” to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The report was compiled following two conferences that the National Council for Children organised in Køge and Horsens on 22 September 2004 and 7 October 2004 jointly with the two local authorities.

Two conferences at which a total of 80 children and young people aged 13-16 met from 8 am to 4.15 pm. Two conferences at which children and young people spent the day focusing on and presenting their perceptions of what is good – and their suggestions for what could be better for children in Denmark. The children and young people worked with these four themes: *Angry Adults*, *Schools*, *Healthy in Denmark* and *Who Is in Charge Here?* Subjects selected on the basis of input from about 2,000 young people around Denmark. Two conferences brimming with life, activities and commitment – and the children’s joy of being heard and taken seriously.

At the end of the day, the children and young people had refined their thoughts on the problems facing children in Denmark in relation to each of the four themes. And they had formulated clear suggestions for how in their view the problems could be solved. The final products were communicated in four impressive presentations at each conference – and these eight compelling presentations of the children’s visions of what could be improved for children in Denmark were later compiled at the website www.boernesyn.dk. I certainly recommend everybody to visit the site and study the eight presentations, which collectively contains lots of excellent suggestions for strengthening children’s rights in Denmark.

Klaus Wilmann

Chairman of the National Council for Children

I. Introduction

1. This report sums up two children's conferences held in Horsens and Køge in Denmark, at which a total of 80 children aged 13-16 participated. At the conferences, the children were divided into four thematic groups to discuss the following subjects:

- *Angry Adults*
- *Who Is in Charge Here?*
- *Healthy in Denmark*
- *Schools*

Children aged 13 -14 discussed *Angry Adults* and *Who Is in Charge Here?* While those aged 15-16 covered *Healthy in Denmark* and *Schools*.

2. The themes were selected on the basis of the National Council for Children's child panel survey on Children's Rights from August 2004, in which children and young people could articulate how they thought life could improve for children in Denmark. In addition, youth and scout leaders nationwide sent in proposals for themes to debate at the children's conferences. From this pool of excellent proposals, the National Council for Children selected the above themes.

3. At the two conferences, children based their discussions of the themes on their own experiences and two interviews with non-participating children whom they had interviewed before the conference started. The children were to pair off and work on the most interesting, essential and surprising information gathered from these interviews. Subsequently, the information from the interviews was divided into several topics for the children to discuss.

4. Each child also brought a photo illustrating a situation that could be better for children in Denmark. After all the photos had been presented, the children were to decide jointly which photo showed the situation most critically needing improvement in children's and young people's lives in Denmark.

5. After a busy morning of noisy discussions, unanimous priority listings and heart-felt statements, the children communicated their messages in four media productions:

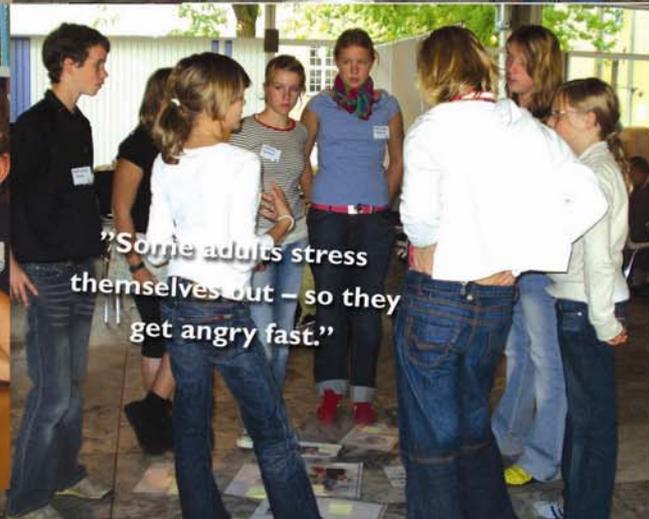
- The children of *Angry Adults* made the newspaper Børne-Posten
- The children of *Who Is in Charge Here?* created a live radio programme
- The children of *Health in Denmark* created the web-site: www.boernesyn.dk
- The children of *Schools* created a TV programme

6. Thus, the contents of this report are gleaned from statements and quotations from the two conferences. At the conferences, four clerks wrote down the main topics and quotations from the morning's proceedings on the four themes. In addition, the children's exhibition boards and media productions also provided source material for the report. Thus, the report wording reflects the children's discussions and presentations at the two children's conferences and is based on the children's own phrasing.

7. Journalism student Line Jakobsen compiled the report in cooperation with a group of child editors consisting of seven children from Køge and Horsens. The editors read and edited the report so that wording and meaning corresponded to their messages.



ANGRY ADULTS



II. Angry Adults

8. We usually know why adults get angry and upset. It is because we are not quite doing what we are told or are making too much noise in the classroom, and then scolding may be justified. But we believe that adults sometimes express their anger in a wrong way:

- At worst, adults may hit children
- Adults may patronise and humiliate children
- Adults swear, yell and scold
- Adults are not good at praising children

9. Within the topic of *Angry Adults* we have singled out these four problems as conditions to be improved for children and young people in Denmark.

A. When adults hit children

What is the problem?

10. When adults get angry, they may sometimes hit children. This is just so wrong, because it breaks the child and is illegal. We therefore think adults must learn to control their anger and not take it out on children.

What does it mean?

11. First of all, the law says adults cannot hit children, but it happens anyway. This is not good, because it has serious consequences for the children being hit. We know that adults often hit children because they themselves were hit as kids. But hitting children is still really stupid since the adult harms the child. Getting hit often causes children to make more trouble and start hitting their friends at school. In the worst cases, these children will grow up to beat their own children.

What is the answer?

12. If a child is being hit, the child needs to tell his/her teacher or an adult the child trusts. If the child being hit chooses instead to tell a classmate, the friend must tell an adult, even if this friend has promised not to tell anybody. This is a tricky problem, so you have to be careful when you try to help the child. Adults who hit children should start treatment with a psychologist. There, they must learn to control their anger and not take it out on the child.

13. When an adult is violent and hits a child, you must remember to report it to the police and the social authorities, because the child may have to be removed from the home in extreme cases.

B. When adults humiliate children

What is the problem?

14. Some adults also show their anger by patronising or humiliating children. A teacher can humiliate children in many ways. For example, if a teacher makes fun of a child in front of the class for failing to do his or her homework, or a teacher comments on the lunch of an overweight child. We think it is wrong for a teacher to humiliate children, because it makes them sad.

What does it mean?

15. When adults humiliate children, they do not treat children with respect. Teachers usually humiliate children when others are around, which makes the child a target of fun in front of the entire class. As a child, you just want to leave school and go home, because you feel inferior and made a fool of. If a teacher humiliates a child and makes a fool of him or her in front of the class, it may cause other children to think about bullying. Some students do in fact take advantage of the situation and start bullying the humiliated child.

What is the answer?

16. Adults must respect the child and not make humiliating or condescending remarks. Perhaps adults are unaware that they sometimes humiliate children. So, one solution could be to make an information campaign for teachers, explaining that it is wrong to humiliate children. The problem could also be a subject of a parents' evening or a teachers' meeting where the adults could discuss why it happens and how to prevent it.

17. At teachers' colleges, new teachers should be taught about the problem, so they know from day one that it is wrong to humiliate children.

C. When adults swear, yell and scold

What is the problem?

18. Adults' scolding is sometimes justified - unfortunately. Especially when a classroom is very noisy, and the teacher yells to stop the troublemakers. But we still think there is too much yelling and shouting, which creates a bad atmosphere at home and at school. At school, this means you have no desire to learn the subject at hand, if the lesson always starts with yelling. Often, it also affects the children who are not noisy, and sometimes the teacher yells at the wrong student.

What does it mean?

19. When adults swear, yell at and scold children, it rubs off on the children. They start to swear, yell and scold others. You can basically get used to constant shouting and yelling, so it stops having any effect. When adults are angry, you get angry yourself. Yelling rubs off and affects the atmosphere in the classroom or at home. Too much noise and shouting also means that we get tired and get headaches.

What is the answer?

20. Instead of yelling, swearing and scolding, adults should sit down with us children and talk about the problems. If parents swear a lot, and it rubs off on the children, the family should sit down and discuss their everyday language. When parents scold, they cannot just say: "because I say so". That is not a good explanation. Children only learn if they get a proper explanation. This is why we prefer to discuss the problem. So before they start scolding, they need to count to ten, take a deep breath and start again.

21. In class, teacher and students could discuss why there is so much scolding and yelling. It helps to talk about the problems, and there is often less scolding and yelling later on. Not just because students behave better, but also because the teacher deals with the problems differently. Since noise in the classroom has become such a big problem and the reason for a lot of scolding, it is not enough only to discuss it once. The class must be focused on the problem for some time, so that the noise does not return.

D. When adults forget to give praise

What is the problem?

22. Adults must become better at praising children. We love to be praised. It motivates us to continue working and learn more. Far too often, adults forget to praise children, which is a shame. This is why we urge teachers to open their eyes and see us students as whole beings with good and bad sides. When teachers give praise they should remember to praise the entire class and not just one student, as it creates a bad atmosphere in the class when one student is singled out above others.

What does it mean?

23. When adults forget to give praise, we are not motivated to keep working and improving. If we are never praised, we do not know where we stand when it comes to our schoolwork. Teachers should become better at praising, because it raises our self-esteem, and automatically makes us better at what we are doing. When a teacher gives praise, a child also feels recognised and respected, so praise means an awful lot to us children.

What is the answer?

24. Adults can become better at giving praise if we children explain how important and nice it is to get praise. Teachers can also attend “praise courses”, where they learn how to give praise and how important it is for a child to be praised. If this does not help, the mayor of the individual local authorities should adopt regulations stating that “in this town we praise children”.



"Teachers should talk a lot more with the bullies. A single talk is no use."

SCHOOL



" Teachers should pay more attention to students – they should know what's going on in the classes."

" Some schools still have maps showing the Soviet Union and west and East."



III. School

25. School takes up a large part of our lives, so it is incredibly important that we enjoy it and feel good when we are there. School has a big impact on our lives here and now, but also a decisive impact on our adult lives. This is why we would like to point out some aspects that could improve Danish children's school lives.

- Bullying
- Better teaching
- Better facilities

A. Bullying

What is the problem?

26. We think that far too many children and young people are bullied at some time in their lives, but what is bullying? It is hard to explain, because what some would consider bullying, others just see as teasing. For this reason, we have agreed that the one being teased/bullied decides when it is no longer fun but outright bullying.

27. Bullying can take the form of physical bullying - where you are persecuted or hit - or invisible bullying where the one being bullied is laughed at, put down or excluded. Invisible bullying is the most dominant and the hardest to get rid of because it is not practiced openly - often teachers do not know.

28. Children can be bullied about many things, like different clothing or hair, or just because they stand out from the crowd and are different. Moreover, in most cases the weak students - those without many friends - are the ones to get bullied.

29. Bullying is important, because it affects not only the person being bullied, but also the entire class. Some children do not bully others but still do not dare to help those being bullied for fear of being bullied themselves. We think that bullies feel bad, so we need to help them too, because they might be feeling rotten about themselves.

30. This also makes the fact that some teachers just ignore the problem and pretend everything is fine a problem. Teachers must simply become better at keeping an eye on what happens in the classes, so they can help solve the problems before they spin out of control. Unfortunately, certain teachers also bully students. The teacher might think he/she is just poking a little fun, but the child feels bullied. A child bullied by a teacher is very vulnerable, because the class is no longer a refuge, and where can the child turn? It is not exactly easy to tell your teacher: "I think you're bullying me", is it?

What does it mean?

31. We think all children should feel good both at and away from school, but bullied children have a really tough time and are hurt deep inside. When you are bullied, it is also hard to feel good about yourself, so you end up having low self-esteem. If a child is bullied throughout his/her school life, he/she may suffer serious harm, because a person whose self-esteem has been crushed will have a hard time being with other people and making new friends. At worst, bullying can lead to suicide, because the victim simply cannot see any point in living.

32. Sometimes, the victim begins to bully others in turn. Perhaps because he/she needs revenge somehow or because that is what gets him/her through the school day.

What is the answer?

33. Luckily, a lot can be done to stop bullying, but this requires sincere efforts in which the victim, bullies, classmates, parents and teachers solve the problem together. Everybody has to be involved, because it affects everybody. But you always need to be cautious; some problems may be so private as to be no one else's business.

34. But it is always a good idea to bring the bully and his/her victim together to discuss why it is happening. Bullies must explain why they are bullying, and their victims must explain what happens to them emotionally when they are bullied. This gives bullies the chance to see that what they are doing is wrong. In addition, the class must be involved so that everybody is aware of what bullying does to someone and joins together to stop the bullying. Everybody has to understand that in a way you are also bullying by just watching instead of stopping the bullying. This is a matter of taking responsibility for the welfare of others, and of us children learning to accept each other, no matter how we are.

35. The parents of the victim and the bullies should also be involved. This could be arranged by having them meet to discuss the problem both with and without the children present. In addition, the parents of the entire class should meet to discuss bullying, so they know it is happening and what can be done to stop it. If a teacher is bullying a student, the child must try to tell the teacher and make him/her aware of it. If this does not help or the student finds it difficult to tell the teacher, the child must contact his/her parents or another teacher. Together, they must sit down to discuss the problem and in this way agree on a solution.

36. We think that all schools should set up a Bully Patrol, which is a group of students helping to stop bullying. Often, the students know who is being bullied before the teacher does. And if a group is responsible for stopping the bullying, they can intervene more quickly and easily to solve the problem.

B. Improved teaching

What is the problem?

37. There are a lot of good teachers who make learning interesting and fun. These are the teachers who are really interested in their subjects. Unfortunately, there are also a lot of bad teachers who are unable to bring quality into their teaching. We agree that much teaching could be improved. Far too often, the teacher speaks the entire lesson instead of allowing us children to discuss and try things in practice.

38. Unfortunately, there is also far too much noise in the classroom, mostly because the teacher has no control of the class, because the children have no respect for the teacher. Maybe the noise also occurs because the teaching is boring. But sadly the noise often interferes with the teaching, which is irritating for the students who are not noisy.

What does it mean?

39. When teaching becomes dull and boring, you do not learn as much as you should. The fact that a class is taught as a single, general whole also means that some students find it incredibly difficult and others incredible easy. As a result, nobody really benefits from the teaching. Noise in the classroom is another reason why you learn less than you should. First of all, the teacher has to spend

time quieting down the class, and, secondly, it can be incredibly difficult to concentrate in a class that is constantly noisy.

What is the answer?

40. Teachers might improve teaching by making it more varied, so that it is always exciting and challenging. They need to be open to new teaching methods, so we are not constantly taught in the same manner. At the same time, they should also try to target teaching at the individual student, leaving space for academically weak and strong children alike, so that every student in the class gains more from the teaching.

41. This is also why we think different teachers should be trained to teach different age groups. Teaching might also be strengthened if the teacher discussed with students how to approach the teaching in a way that makes it enjoyable for all to participate. In addition, the teacher should inform students about the syllabus and the requirements they are to meet, so we as students better understand the teacher's choice of method.

42. Teachers and students must jointly stop the noise, so it ceases to ruin the teaching. The issue is to create joint respect for each other, not just between teachers and students but also between students, so those making noise stop.

C. Improved facilities

What is the problem?

43. Old books, no books, photocopies, outdated maps, uncomfortable chairs, tables falling apart, too small rooms and unappealing restrooms and locker rooms. Many schools are simply not very nice places to be, because everything is old and out-dated. Schoolyards could also stand a makeover. They lack colour and playground equipment. All the saving cuts must stop!

What does it mean?

44. Pretty simply, if you sit in an uncomfortable chair at a rocking table, you cannot concentrate. Instead of focusing on the teaching, you focus on the uncomfortable chair, which completely consumes your attention, and then you do not learn much. Muscle and back pain come from uncomfortable chairs and tables.

45. Old and tattered books - missing a couple of pages - are not quite as motivating as new and appealing ones. Far too often, photocopies are handed out, which easily get lost, that is if the teacher even remembers to make enough of them. In general, many teaching tools are broken, so the projects you were starting on get cancelled. You do not learn much from that!

What is the answer?

46. Schools need more money to buy new books, chairs and tables, so we can be motivated to learn much more. Restrooms and locker rooms must be renovated and stop being so unappealing. Once the money is given to renovate schools, teachers and students must remember to treat the new things well and with respect. In that way, the new school material will have last longer, and our education will be better.

47. The inferior school facilities should be discussed in the local councils and in school boards, and together they should find a solution to the problem and obtain more money for schools.



"Getting started on a healthy living is hard, because you feel good as it is."

HEALTHY IN DENMARK



"You have to choose whether you want to live a healthy life."



"When you think of sweets, crisps and cokes, you think of having a good time."

IV. Healthy in Denmark

48. We want to live a healthy life, but sometimes unhealthy habits prevent us from doing so. The result is that far too many children become obese, because they eat unhealthy foods and never exercise. Children in Denmark should live healthier lives, so we will focus on:

- Obesity
- Unhealthy food
- Too little and too much exercise

A. Obesity

What is the problem?

49. Too many children in Denmark are overweight, which causes big problems not only for the overweight child but also society. Obesity may hinder a child's development, so we think it is a key problem to tackle.

What does it mean?

50. If you are already overweight as a child or outright obese, it may affect your self-esteem, which for some children gets lower and lower the more their weight increases. Low self-esteem can also lead to depression, and some children start comfort eating. In addition, obesity can cause many different diseases that make it hard to have a good life.

What is the answer?

51. To prevent children from becoming overweight, we must step in before the situation gets out of hand. Parents are responsible for helping overweight children to control their weight, but everybody around the overweight child must also support and help him/her get started. The overweight child can lose weight through healthier food and more exercise, so the school, the local authority and the central government need to provide information on how to eat healthy food and offer good facilities for exercise.

B. Unhealthy food

What is the problem?

52. Obesity is often caused by unhealthy food which is all too easy to come by. There are restaurants everywhere with cheap junk food for sale. Even school canteens sell unhealthy food, because it is cheaper than healthy food. The local bakery or service stations are also sources of sweets and pastry. We know that we are responsible for our own lives and for what we eat, but it may be difficult to control when temptations surround us. In addition, it is probably a good, old-fashioned Danish habit that hanging out together has to involve sweets and pastry instead of healthy snacks.

What does it mean?

53. As mentioned, too much unhealthy food may result in obesity, which leads to other diseases. But fatty and unhealthy food may also reduce our concentration when we are at school, hurting our learning abilities. Therefore, we need to live healthy lives.

What is the answer?

54. You can get rid of your old, unhealthy habits by changing your food habits. When, for example, you want to have a good time, you do not need to eat sweets, crisps and pastries. Instead, you can prepare a delicious bowl of fruit cut into beautiful, appealing pieces. It should contain not only apples and pears, but also more exotic fruits like pineapple, plums and strawberries.

55. The school lunch shop should also set an example for how to eat healthy food. So out with the pizzas and sweets and in with healthy sandwiches and salads. Parents and we children need to be better at packing appetising lunches, which can then be put into a clean fridge at school to stay fresh all day.

56. Often a family's finances determine how healthily they live. This is why we suggest that the state lowers VAT on healthy and organic foods so they will be cheaper. At the same time, VAT on sweets, crisps and pastries should be increased. It should, for instance, be cheaper to drink organic milk than chocolate milk and juice.

57. To promote health, the local authorities could distribute free fruit once monthly, reminding us to live a healthy life.

58. Together, parents, teachers and we children must make sure that we live healthily and change our old sweet-eating habits. However, we would like to say that sweets, crisps and junk food taste great, and it is alright to eat them sometimes, just not every day.

C. Too little or too much exercise

What is the problem?

59. We exercise far too little at and after school. That is dreadful! Exercise can be lots of fun and a good way of playing and learning. The problem is that in school we have very few physical education lessons and they are often very boring - we always do the same things - perhaps because there is too little time. In addition, it is too expensive to go to fitness centres or other sports where you could exercise. In contrast, some children are pressured into doing sports at elite level. Children who are pressured to do them might have problems.

What does it mean?

60. Your body and mind benefit from exercise. As a child, you burn a lot of energy, and you also strengthen your body while it grows. As an adult this helps you avoid problems with, for instance, your back or your knees. Too little exercise also causes some children to become overweight, because they simply do not move enough. This is a shame because overweight children usually find life hard - we know that for a fact!

61. Elite sports can be hard on a child when sports clubs and parents push the child to extremes. It may be a lot of fun at first, but if all your time is spent on sports or playing the piano for that matter, your life has room for nothing else. You lose the chance to be with your school friends and be a part of your social environment, because you have no time. Many children are unable to cope with elite sports in the long run, and that stresses them.

What is the answer?

62. Physical education teachers must offer fun and exciting teaching that is also varied, so that not only the students who are good at soccer benefit from the teaching. There must be something for everybody. In addition, schools should earmark more hours for physical education, so that we exercise regularly, but also so we have time to do something more fun and exciting. More annual school sports days would be cool, or if entire days could be used for exercise, then we could really accomplish something.

63. In addition, the state or local governments should subsidise various sports and make it cheaper to take dancing lessons or belong to a fitness centre.

64. Students, teachers and parents could also meet to discuss how we persuade more children to exercise. We believe that more information and attention on exercise would make more children active. Not just because it is good for them, but also because it is fun.

65. When a child engages in sports at elite level, it is incredibly important for the trainer and parents to listen to the child. The parents have a duty to intervene when the child no longer seems to be enjoying it. If they fail to see the child's lack of enthusiasm, the class teacher must support the child by contacting the parents and the trainer to discuss the pressure they are putting on the child.

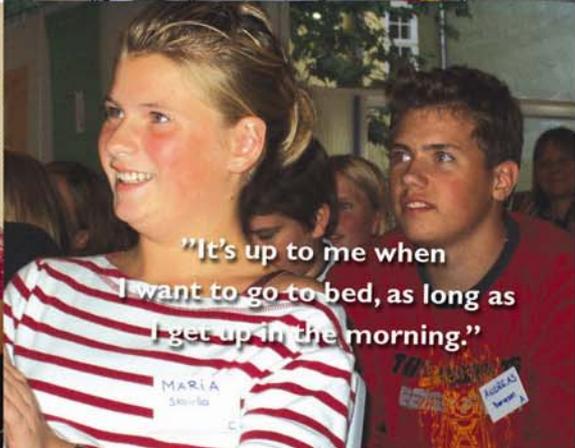


"It's alright for adults to set limits, just not too many."

WHO IS IN CHARGE HERE?



"If you want to be a rock star and your parents think you should become a lawyer."



"It's up to me when I want to go to bed, as long as I get up in the morning."

V. Who is in charge here?

66. We would like to have more influence on our own lives both at school and at home with our parents. We realise that it is good for children to have parents and teachers who make decisions and set limits, but we would still like to be heard and taken seriously. We have opinions about the things we do and what happens around us. This is why we should be consulted when adults make decisions that affect us. Therefore, we would like to focus on more co-determination in relation to:

- School
- Home

A. At school

What is the problem?

67. We go to school every weekday, so we think we should be able to influence what happens at school. We would like to have more co-determination in teaching, school design and layout, the school lunch shop, meeting hours and where we should go for school camp. It is a problem that we are not involved in the school's decisions, because we feel ignored. Especially since many of the decisions have to do with us children, so we should have a certain degree of co-determination.

What does it mean?

68. Children have good ideas about how schools could improve many things, but when we never get asked, we do not feel any particular responsibility for what happens at school. Our schools should have more confidence in our opinions and how we think things should be done.

When the teacher decides everything that is going to happen, we are less motivated than when we are consulted. Physical education is, for instance, often boring because we always do the same things.

69. The expensive and unhealthy offers at the school lunch shop turn us off from buying anything. It is also really annoying that such unhealthy food is on sale when we know that many Danish children are already overweight or will become so. Similarly, we would like to have a say in where our school camp will be, since we are the ones who will be going. As mentioned, we have lots of ideas and wishes, which should be met as much as possible. It is always much more fun to go somewhere you have picked yourself instead of just having the teachers decide.

70. The school always decides what time we have to be at school. It would be nice if we were asked about such things. There are good and bad things about coming to school later in the day, but perhaps we could together find a solution that is better for us all. When we are heard, we feel that we are taken seriously and respected, so we should be involved in the school's decisions because they are relevant for us.

What is the answer?

71. The key point is that adults should put more trust in us children and believe in our ability to help decide what happens around us. Teachers should meet with students and discuss what is happening at their schools. At least, teachers will then know what we want. Schools could introduce more democracy in the classroom when, for instance, teaching and school camps are to be decided. In addition, school councils should have more influence so, for instance, they can help improve the unhealthy school lunch shops and participate in discussions on school meeting hours. The school should generally agree on a co-determination policy that includes us children.

72. If a town has a children's council, it should be involved in local council discussions about schools and therefore also us children. We find it very important that decisions are not made over our heads, but that we are involved in the debate so the adults know our viewpoint.

B. At home

What is the problem?

73. We think that it is absolutely fine for Mom and Dad to decide over us, of course they should, after all they are our parents. But we need to be included in the decisions, and told why they were made, and to know that we have been heard. But in some areas, our parents should back off and leave the decision to us. This is especially true when it comes to areas such as hairstyle, the way we dress and our taste in music. They are private matters to us. We also want to decide ourselves how our rooms should look and how to spend the money we earn. And some children also find it irritating that they cannot personally decide whether they want a pet. Mom and Dad should also involve us more in matters of holidays. Far too often, they decide where we are going without asking what we are interested in.

What does it mean?

74. Parents need to respect that we would like to pick our own clothes. We have our own styles, and we have to wear them. This also applies to our hairstyles. We do not mind talking with our moms and dads about it, but they must realise that it is our hair and our clothes. If they start making other demands, we stop feeling that they listen to and respect us the way we are. After all, clothes and hair are external things; they have nothing to do with whether you are a good person.

In the same way, parents must learn that our rooms are our rooms. We are the ones living there. They can give advice and good ideas about decoration and cleaning, but must accept that our rooms are private. And it is really nice to have your own room where you can be alone without sisters and brothers - or parents.

75. When we children are left out of family decisions like holiday destinations, we feel they are not listening to our needs. We do not like decisions made without us, because that makes us feel excluded and not taken seriously.

76. Many children really like pets, but parents often say no because they think/know they will end up taking care of the animal. But a pet is a good friend, and if we think we are responsible enough to take care of an animal, we should be allowed to have one. If you make your own money, you should, of course, also be allowed to decide how to spend it. Be it on pets or clothes. It is our money.

What is the answer?

77. Fortunately, many parents are good at listening and discussing our choices. But instead of deciding which clothes we should wear and what colour our hair should be, they should respect our choices. These are very private matters.

78. If our parents do not accept our choices, we could try discussing it with them and get them to understand how important it is to us. Our class teachers could also focus on the subject and involve our parents so they know how important this is to us. It is crucial for children and parents to understand each other well, so they do not waste time fighting about things like clothes and hair. In the same way, parents must involve their children when they make decisions concerning the entire family - such as holidays. It is not because we always want to be in charge, we just want to be consulted on matters that also concern us.

