**EU ‘Play Day’ to strengthen focus on children’s development**

**Today the European Parliament hosts a debate among experts on how best to provide children with the opportunity to play and develop. The LEGO Group participates as the company believes play is a key factor for the development of creative skills.**

Billund, Brussels, 28th of May, Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, member of the European Parliament has initiated today’s EU debate which focuses on investing in Europe’s future by taking play seriously. With a special focus on the importance of play Mrs. Bildt and the Toy Industries of Europe (TIE) have gathered participants from various institutions; public, private and non-governmental institutions to discuss and improve the general understanding of the importance of creativity and play in children’s development.

A recent survey show that 93% of parents believe that play is essential for child development. However, in 2013 the United Nations highlighted the fact that despite the recognition that children benefit from playing, their opportunities to do so is increasingly under pressure.

It is the first time that “Taking Play Seriously” is on the agenda at the ‘Play Day’, which is planned to be a regular occurrence hosted by Anna Marie Corazza Bildt. The event is supported by the members of TIE, one being the LEGO Group which also has play and creativity as core values.

Jørgen Vig Knudstorp, CEO of the LEGO Group explains:

“The event today is very important; it highlights the negative consequences of a lack of play for children and underlines the importance of the interaction between play and learning in the educational system. We believe it is a challenge that needs responses and opening up a broad discussion on potential solutions is a crucial first step in addressing the challenge.”

He adds:

”We are in the business of play – and in our cultural DNA we have a ‘Play Promise’, taking play and children very seriously. It is our belief that in order for children to develop their creative skills and get the best outset for a rich educational and future life - playing - among other things with construction toys - can be a beneficial contribution. We believe that playing with LEGO bricks stimulates children’s learning abilities, and I think that you cannot learn without playing and you cannot play without learning.”

This opinion is shared by many others. A recent report highlights that ([*http://www.importanceofplay.eu/IMG/pdf/infographic\_-\_final.pdf*](http://www.importanceofplay.eu/IMG/pdf/infographic_-_final.pdf) *)* 82% of parents think that play is necessary to stimulate their child.

Not only parents hold that belief. Dr. David Whitebread, Senior Lecturer in Psychology and Education at the University of Cambridge, UK, has looked into the parameters which have a negative impact on children’s opportunity to play. His research is a contribution to the ongoing debate and also for the EU event. One of the major causes he states in the report “The importance of play” from 2012:

“Children’s play is under threat because of increasing urbanization, the increasing stress of family life, and changes to the educational system”.

These findings direct the responsibility onto both parents and governments. His guidance towards legislators and governments on an EU and global level is in strong favor of providing frameworks and structures which support children in their access to quality play experiences:

“Any society wishing to fully benefit from its potential would be wise to provide quality children’s play opportunities,” Dr. David Whitebread states in the report.

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Read the Importance of Play report: <http://www.importanceofplay.eu/IMG/pdf/dr_david_whitebread_-_the_importance_of_play.pdf>

For the full day program of the EU ‘Play Day’ visit: <http://www.importanceofplay.eu/>

Follow the LEGO Group on Twitter via: [twitter.com/LEGO\_Group](https://twitter.com/LEGO_Group)

Follow the event on Twitter via: #takingplayseriously

Sources/Downloads:

Info graphic: <http://www.importanceofplay.eu/IMG/pdf/infographic_-_final.pdf>

The importance of play – report from 2012: <http://www.importanceofplay.eu/IMG/pdf/dr_david_whitebread_-_the_importance_of_play.pdf>

The LEGO Group

The LEGO Group is a privately held company based in Billund, Denmark. The company is still owned by the Kirk Kristiansen family who founded it in 1932.

The LEGO Group is engaged in the development of children's creativity through playing and learning. Based on the world-famous LEGO® brick, the company today provides toys, experiences and teaching materials for children in more than 130 countries. The LEGO Group has approximately 12,000 employees, and it is the world's third largest manufacturer of play materials.