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European Scientists Lead the Way in Helping Children with Language Disorders

COST Action A33 is organising a conference on the results stemming from the research its participants have undertaken on Specific Language Impairment.

Two children in every classroom across Europe suffer from Specific Language Impairment (SLI) – an inability to construct and understand normal sentences. This is costing Europe more than 250 billion euros a year or 1% of its GDP. Scientists from 25 EU countries and beyond, covering 28 languages have now come together in a European-wide initiative to help these children.

A conference entitled Let the Children Speak: Learning of Critical Language Skills across 25 Languages will take place from 22 to 24 January 2010 at the Wellcome Collection Conference Centre in London. It sets out to promote the results of this initiative and provides a common platform for assessing and remediating children with SLI. It will look at commitment from member countries to put language and communication skills at the top of the agenda for investment in research, education and health.

A unique team of experts from across the EU - politicians, educationalists, health specialists, scientists and parents – will set out to address the challenge of SLI. On 22 January 2010, participants can listen to testimonies from an adult living with SLI and a parent whose child has this disorder.

“Language is a key skill children need to succeed in education and later in life. Without this skill, the potential of our children is lost,” says UK Professor Heather van der Lely, Vice-Chair of COST Action A33 and affiliated Professor at Harvard University.

“Most children acquire language without effort at an early age, but many encounter difficulty in acquiring their first language. Migration and multilingualism seem to be making things worse in identifying language skills in young children. So it’s likely that the number of children is increasing but nobody had the tools to diagnose SLI or to help them,” she adds.

The conference is supported by the COST office and several charities and institutions including: The Wellcome Trust, UK, I CAN, Association for ALL Speech Impaired Children, Centre for Developmental Language Disorders and Cognitive Neuroscience, Department of Language and Communication Science, City University, London, Birkbeck, University of London and Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.

Information

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