



## International Workshop

### “A Dog Loving Society: Best Practices and Perspectives”

Vilnius, Lithuania

7 March 2017

#### Educating Children for Dogs

Sean Delmar, Ireland

The president of the Irish Kennel Club **Sean Delmar** presented an educational dogs and children safety programme for schools “ABC - Always Be Careful”.

In Ireland nearly every second household has at least 1 dog, and dogs are 3 times more popular than cats. Though dog ownership has many physiological and psychological benefits for children, it also poses some threats with potential dog bites being one of the most serious ones. Statistically, 160 severe dog bites are registered in Ireland every year, and 120 of them are to children. 80% of children are under 10 years old and 80% are boys. 90% of bites to children are to face and head, most dogs that bite are known by children and incidences tend to happen at home or leisure areas during summer and hot weather. Most bites could be prevented if children were taught safe interaction tips from the early age.

Bearing this in mind a proactive Irish canine organisation – The Irish Kennel Club (IKC) - launched a dog bite prevention campaign with printed media in their magazine and handouts at public events, however, this did not show a desired result. Therefore, school visits with dogs were opted. The project was a great success, however, with some pitfalls related to numerous requirements for volunteers and their dogs and insufficient coverage. As a solution the idea to provide education by means of employing modern technologies that all the schools in Ireland are equipped with was welcomed. School teachers were provided with the background information, a lesson plan, presentation, teacher’s notes suggesting points for discussion, downloadable educational materials, break out materials and games. The material has opened scenarios in order to enable discussion. The program “ABC – Always Be Careful” was piloted in three schools with documented results and highly positive feedback from the teachers.

Ambitions and challenges for the future include introduction of the program and its availability for all primary schools in Ireland, receipt of an official approval of Department of Education to include the program into the national curriculum and expanding scheme into other areas of the curriculum.

