

The Implementation of the UNCRC in Estonia

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The importance and impact of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

- Human rights – child rights (1924,1959, 1989)

“Children are not only the future but also the present”

- The most widely ratified human rights document – 194 countries, US signed
- A “common language” – rights based approach
- Impacting national legislation, court procedures, policies and practice
- 3 Optional Protocols – additional issues
- 17 General Comments – explain and focus

The monitoring role of the UNCRC Committee

- Reporting obligations of the State
- Alternative – shadow – report provided by local, international NGOs, Children’s Ombudsman
- Dialogue with the Committee (in case of other treaties, with other committees, e.g. CRPD, CEDAW etc., in case of UPR, with other governments’ representatives)
- Concluding observations made by the Committee based on the reports and dialogue
- Implementation of the concluding observations, monitoring, evaluation – and reporting again...
- Individual complaint mechanism – 3rd Optional Protocol on Communication Procedures 2012 – how to use it?

Guiding principles of the UNCRC (Art. 2,3,6,12)

UNCRC Principles



More guiding principles

- Provision – distribution of resources (what kind and how)
- Protection – family strengthening, protecting children from harm, prevention, intervention, changing risks – changing reactions (e.g. digital age)
- Participation – participation of children in decisions in all matters related to them, participation of other stakeholders, communities, including family members – ensuring the participation of the most vulnerable children and their families

Estonia – on the move!

- Estonia has got one of the fastest economic growth rate in Europe
- Many attempts and efforts to improve the life of children and families – Strategy for Children and Families 2012-2020 – positive parenting, child rights and protection, income support, reconciliation of working and family life
- Child poverty and deprivation under the EU average – 18% - however big disparities between regions and specific needs (2015)
- Universal family benefits system, generous parenting leave provisions,
- Decreased voting age at local levels to 16 years – participation
- Ban on all forms of corporal punishment, 2014
- New Child Protection Act 2016

Main challenges

- Child poverty – territorial differences, one parent families, families with a member with special needs, left behind children – national strategy is needed
- European Commission's Recommendation, 2013: Investing in Children, breaking the cycle of disadvantage
- Enhancing parenting skills, parent education, implementing the total ban on corporal punishment – promising practice: “ positive parenting mobile app for parents”
- Eurofound review on parenting support in the EU, (2013) – 44% Estonian parents have no idea where to seek help,, 40% of parents accepting corporal punishment, 70% never attended any program on parenting
- Early Childhood Education and Care – universal, high quality care is needed for all – inclusion, tackling poverty, parenting support

Main challenges

- Education – equal access, inclusive education for all, minority children, children with disabilities, children at risk, drop out
- Bullying prevention programs – holistic approach, community based, involvement of parents, other sectors – implementation of “kindergartens and schools free from bullying” program , Bullying free school website
- Digital media, use and misuse of the social media, digital literacy for all – opportunities and risks
- Out of school, after school activities, play, sports, culture, catching up – access for all!

Main challenges

- Children at risk and separated from their families
- Territorial disparities concerning service provision, lack of sufficient access to services, professionals and support for families and children at risk – no child welfare and protection service available for 60% of all children in Estonia at local level
- Out of home care: 3190 children separated from their families – 1,5% of the child population of Estonia – many still in institutions, especially children with disability, multiply sibling groups, mental health issues, children in conflict with the law, addiction – quality care, standards, training, supervision, monitoring
- Prevention, early intervention, on-going contact with the families, review procedure, reunification – alternative techniques and opportunities for diversion(e.g. Family Group Conference)
- UN Guidelines for Children in Alternative Care, 2009, Moving Forward Handbook, 2013, EU Transition from Institutional to Community Based Care framework (Deinstitutionalisation), Opening Doors Campaign Eurochild, 2014-

More challenges

- Refugee, unaccompanied children and children with undefined citizenship
- Children of incarcerated parents – children in contact with their parents, children in the prison system and/or parents/mothers avoiding detention, imprisonment – use of diversion, restorative techniques
- One of the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence, 9900 known cases – impact on children

Moving Forward in Estonia

- Provision of more universal, basic and targeted local services for all, including social welfare and protection, inclusive education, access to special services for those families and children in need (poverty, disability, mental health, addiction, minority, migrant, refugee, violence)
- Strengthening and increasing the quality of care in early childhood education, schools, out of school activities – working together with children and parents in partnership
- Use of conflict resolution, non-violent communication techniques
- Prevention of separation of children from their families, community, family based placement, reunification

Thanks for your attention!

