



## **Reaching the heights for the rights of the child**

### **Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2016-2021**

#### **High-Level Launching Conference**

**Sofia, 5-6 April 2016**

#### **Statements**

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Norway**

First of all, it's a great pleasure to be here in Sofia, and I would like to pass the best regards from the Norwegian government on the launch of this important Strategy.

Children's rights should always be prioritized in our work as law makers – both nationally, regionally and internationally.

This new Strategy gives both direction and underscores the significance of this work in Europe today and in coming years.

I'm impressed by the broad scope and yet focus of the new Strategy. It highlights achievements, remaining challenges and important next steps to further children's rights in Europe over the next six years.

I was especially pleased to hear that the work on drafting the Strategy has been inclusive and open to input from children and young people, as well as from civil society organizations.

Not surprisingly, ending all forms of violence against children tops the list of priorities for both children and the Council of Europe member states. The Government of Norway shares this priority. We have taken many steps to make progress in both policy and practice within this field.



Recently, we launched a new action plan to intensify the efforts against violence and abuse. The action plan is called A good childhood lasts a lifetime.

The plan contains 43 measures and has the following target areas:

- prevention and good parenting
- the responsibility of the government
- child and youth participation
- cross-professional collaboration and NGO's
- right help and treatment at the right time and
- research and expertise

Our Parliament has already decided that our efforts to combat violence against children and youth should be further strengthened in the years to come. The Government will therefore present a new plan this autumn.

Let me highlight two challenges that we have in Norway. One major challenge is to detect violence, since violence and abuse does not always show. It is therefore of critical importance that those who have a job where they interact with children have the right competence. They need to see the child, talk with the child and listen to child, in order to identify whether the child has been exposed to violence, neglect or sexual abuse.

In Norway, our aim is to improve our expertise on violence and sexual abuse in professional study programmes, as well as to develop employees' in the municipality's skills in talking to children.

Another challenge relates to cooperation and communication between different services that protect children against violence – such as the child welfare services, the police, kindergartens, and health stations.

We have now appointed a committee of experts that will analyse cases of violence and sexual abuse against children and youth. Its purpose is to uncover deficiencies and challenges in the public services' handling of the cases. To give this committee the best working conditions, we have proposed a law to parliament that will give the committee access to confidential information from all public services. I hope that this will lead to new insights on how to improve the system.

Again allow me to congratulate the Council of Europe and the Bulgarian Chairmanship on this important occasion and thank you all!