



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

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Statements

Mr Jānis Reirs
Minister of Welfare
Latvia

Ms. Chairperson!
Excellencies!
Distinguished delegates!

First of all, let me congratulate us all with the launching of the new Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child that will guide us during the following six years.

I very much appreciate the work done by the expert working group, the Council of Europe Children's Rights Division as well as all the people involved in the drafting of the new strategy. And special thanks to the Government of Bulgaria for convening this launching conference.

I believe that the "Sofia Strategy" will be a very helpful tool, in combination with other international human rights documents, to improve the situation of children in our countries and to achieve a better world for future generations.

Now, I would like to briefly tell you about Latvia and, in particular, our efforts in achieving one of the strategy's priority objectives, that is, a life free from violence for all children.



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Latvia is one of the 49 countries in the world that has, since 1998, prohibited all corporal punishment of children, including in the family home.

I would like to emphasize that Latvia pays great attention to preventing violence against children, supporting victims as well as punishing perpetrators:

- Public campaigns and education are provided for professionals, parents and children.
- The State Inspectorate for Protection of Children's Rights monitors the relevant institutions, such as schools, residential institutions, prisons and hospitals.
- The Government finances social rehabilitation for children who have become victims of violence.
- Recent legislative amendments provide additional protection for victims from perpetrators, prohibiting the perpetrator to stay in the house and communicate with the victim.
- Perpetrators are punished either by administrative or criminal penalties depending on the gravity of the offence, and the penalties have been increased over the years.
- There is a general prohibition for persons who have committed offences related to violence and sexual exploitation to work in an institution working with children.

In addition, persons who might commit violence in the future can receive special state funded treatment for perpetrators.

Nevertheless, there are many future challenges to achieve a perfect protection system for all children.

For example, these challenges include the introduction of positive parenting education programmes, prevention and identification of violence in the institutions; the introduction of common principles according to which children can submit complaints, seek help and receive support.

I have to admit that we have achieved so much thanks to international cooperation. We base our work on the principles included in such documents as the Lanzarote Convention, the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and recommendations and guidelines prepared by the Council of Europe.

The positive initiatives supported by the Council of Europe are constantly building up new and improved regional, national and local actions. I am sure that the Sofia Strategy will continue this positive work in the framework of international cooperation.

Thank you!