



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

**Ministry of Education and Science
Russian Federation**

Dear Conference participants, dear Colleagues,

Children and young people are, without doubt, the most valuable capital of each nation. They are those who ensure the generations continuity, create the environment for public understanding, they are a crucial factor for social development.

The child safety and well-being of young people determine the potential of the nation, they are an essential indicator of the national stability, a source for social optimism and responsibility of the current generation towards the future.

Protecting children's rights is one of the top priorities of the Russian Federation Government. In this context the scale and importance of this conference, which is organized in the framework of the Bulgarian chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe could hardly be overestimated.

In view of the above, we would like to express our gratitude to the conference organizers as such events pave the way to articulate national approaches in the focus area and share best practices, on the one hand, and to balance all the above with global trends, on the other hand.



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The Russian Federation acknowledges that one of the Council of Europe's clearest trends and its priorities mainstream is the solid and consistent commitment of the Council of Europe member states to the issues of child safety, and the Council of Europe current strategy (the third in a row) is the best proof thereof.

However, it is important to realize that taking into account the global financial, social and economic crisis the most effective solution is to develop an integrated and comprehensive policy of childhood social security, which currently should be a priority for every state.

The complex of divergent measures for the family, social, demographic and educational policies, best practices of motherhood and childhood protection should be used to withstand new challenges and threats to childhood, thus laying grounds for flexibility and awareness of rapidly changing social environment. This conference in Sofia is the appropriate and functional platform for the above problems to be solved.

In the last decade child safety and well-being have become one of the major national priorities of the Russian Federation. The President of the Russian Federation while addressing the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation has repeatedly stated the tasks to develop a modern and efficient state policy for child protection. These objectives have been embodied in a number of fundamental regulatory legal acts set out in the last few years: the Conception of long-term socio-economic development of the Russian Federation for the period till 2020, the Conception of demographic policy of the Russian Federation for the period till 2025, the National strategy of actions in the interests of children for 2012 - 2017 and some others.

The Russian state commitment to participating in the international community's efforts to create an environment that is comfortable and friendly for child's life is marked by the Russian Federation ratification of the Convention on the rights of the child and other international acts in the sphere of ensuring the rights of the child.

An effective tool for practical solutions in the area of children's rights protection was the implementation of priority national projects "Health" and "Education" and a number of Federal target programs.

The infrastructure for safe childhood has been developed further on. The Russian Federation's constituent entities develop the institution of the Commissioner for children's rights. The Foundation for supporting children in difficult life situation was established, new measures of social support of families with children were adopted, a large-scale nationwide information campaign for counteraction against cruel treatment of children was conducted and the single federal helpline came into operation.

The comprehensive measures taken by the Russian Federation have resulted in increasing childbirth and reducing child death, improving socio-economic status of families with children, increasing access to education and health service for children, increasing number of rehomed children left without parental care.

The past five years witnessed a steady increase in the population (due to the reduced natural death fall, the natural migration growth). According to preliminary estimates for January 1, 2015, the Russian Federation population amounted to 146.5 million people.

In recent years per capita average incomes have increased by an average 1,45-1,46 times. Unemployment has reduced significantly.

The total birth rate came to the age of 75, the planned life expectancy has reached the age of 71.

Positive changes related to orphans and children left without parental care deserve special mention.

A set of solutions have been adopted and resulted in supporting various forms of orphaned children placement in families, in reducing their number in boarding institutions, creating the conditions to support families with children, including large families.

The principles and approaches to children's education in orphanages are changing and getting closer to the family format. The work of experts at authority bodies and institutions in the sphere of children's rights protection is being improved. People's attitudes towards the orphaned children's adoption are changing: people feel much more positive towards such children upbringing in their own families. As a result of the work done the number of orphans in the orphanages has decreased by 42% from 119 to 68.8 thousand children late in 2012, as well as the number of children, left without parental care yearly has decreased by 23% from 75 to 58 thousands.

The Russian Federation has succeeded in achieving positive dynamics, first, thanks to the implementation of the state measures to support families regarding child birth and upbringing. The respective actions proved their efficiency through high demographic rise.

First of all, it is the maternity capital. Totally, 6.7 million of Russian families received a state certificate for maternity capital for the program being in effect.

72 Russian Federation entities have introduced the regional maternity capital program.

At the birth of the third child a monthly payment is provided. The Russian Federation entities with unfavorable demographic situation receive co-funding from the federal budget. In 2015, almost 450 000 people living in regions with unfavorable demographic situation got a monthly allowance for care of child under the age of 3. Families with three or more children are entitled to free land sites for individual housing construction.

There has been a more than four-fold allowance increase for care of disabled children and the 1st group disabled children since their birth.

The Conception of the Russian Federation family state policy for the period till 2025, setting out the development trends of the family institution and laying grounds for enhancing the life quality, has become an additional novelty in the children's rights protection area.

However, the problems related to the creation of comfortable and friendly environment for children, are still acute and far from being solved. For instance, the prevalence rate of chronic diseases among the students of educational institutions (schoolchildren) is high. The crime rate remains rather strained. Despite the overall systematic quantity reduction of crimes against minors for the last 5 years (in 2010 - 97,159, in 2011 - 89,896, in 2012 - 84,558, in 2013 - 84,055, in 2014 - 86,203; 2010-2014 - a decrease of 11.2%). There is a very dangerous trend regarding crimes against sexual immunity and sexual freedom of the individual, as well as against the morality of minors: not only the number of certain crimes of this type but their share in the structure of the entire criminality against children have steadily increased in recent years.

It is critical to identify the negative aspects of digital technologies rapid development. Problems associated with child trafficking, child pornography and prostitution require the most active measures to be taken.

The problems of teenage alcoholism, drug addiction and drug abuse are very acute: nearly a quarter of the crimes are committed by intoxicated minors.

Alarmingly high is the proportion of minors from low income families. The most vulnerable children are those between eighteen months and three years old, children from large families and single-parent families and children of unemployed parents.

Thus, the range of welfare services and child protection in the Russian Federation has, no doubt, expanded in the recent years; at the same time, the task of reaching the heights for the children's rights implies a complex and long pathway with a wide scope of challenges.

There is a number of areas that we should focus on during the next six years, in particular, such issues as opportunities for parents to combine family obligations and work; the status of children in the society and family; the problem of non-interference in the family private life; the criteria for the validity of the "minimum necessary intervention"; the problem of parental rights deprivation and the task to determine the extent of such restrictions in dysfunctional families. Moreover, special emphasis should be laid on androgogics and acmeology as the tools to increase the competence and responsibility of parents, the definition of criteria to identify the families within the "social risk" zone, the improvement of check mechanisms and supervision over life of children living in a foreign country. The above issues map those trends that should be developed in the next six years.

The Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child, adopted in March, 2016 by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers is designed for the mid-term period.

The Russian Federation considers it critical to draw attention to the fact that the Russian state policy in the field of children's rights protection traditionally and consistently rests on the need to protect the institution of family and marriage in their fundamental moral understanding. This stand leads to discrepancies with those Council of Europe member states, that have made it a rule to follow ultraliberal trends.

Deformation of moral standards, blurring of traditional family values and moral grounds of society constitute the obvious threat of degradation and destruction.

The Russian Federation considers the Strategy as a source of additional opportunities for children, and recognizes its potential to address a number of urgent tasks. Nonetheless, the Russian Federation does not consider it possible to remain silent about some doubtful ultraliberal Strategy provisions that do not meet the Russian national priorities in the field of child care and safety, contradict the Russian society core moral values and threaten with the nation's spiritual degeneration.