



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

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Globally, the Czech Republic belongs to developed and relatively rich countries. But concerning children rights, there are still areas to improve.

I have been very active in shaping the social policy in the Czech Social Democratic Party for the last 15 years. And I have to say that topics concerning children's rights and children at risk have been very difficult to push forward.

Of course, we have made a progress since 1989, but not as significant as other post-communist countries. Institutional care facilities for children under the age of three still exist. Also a relatively high number of children is placed in institutions for older children but the number has been decreasing in recent years thanks to the promotion of foster care. We are still fighting to centralise the responsibility for all forms of care, including institutional care, under jurisdiction of one Ministry. So far, it has been divided among three Ministries: Institutional care for children under three years of age is within the scope of the Ministry of Health, children older than three years of age are in the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and social protection of children is governed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Concerning justice system, there are no courts specialised in family law issues in the Czech Republic which means that cases that involve



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children have been judged by generally educated judges. We are also lacking standards for participation of a child in the court proceedings, obligatory education for judges specialised in family law and deadlines for civil proceedings. We are also fighting to increase salaries of social workers in the field of child protection to make this highly important and demanding work more attractive. And I find very difficult to explain to e.g. the Minister of Finance, that devoting more finances to this policy area and to prevention will bear fruit in the future.

To conclude: I am very grateful for organising of this conference and for launching the new Strategy which I found very important for children in my country and also worldwide to help us to make a progress in this field.