

- *Address the significance for their country of the intergovernmental work undertaken by the Council of Europe in the area of the rights of the child;*
  - *Refer to the most significant measures promoted by their country to enhance the rights of the child under the outgoing Strategy (2016-2021);*
  - *Underline on which of the six strategic objectives of the new Strategy your government's action will focus under the upcoming, six-years' Strategy cycle (2022-2027), also in the light of the current crises situations affecting Europe (armed conflict in Ukraine and continuous Covid-19 pandemic).*
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Dear Colleagues and honourable representatives of international organisations,

- The Council of Europe has acted and will continue to act as a regional driver for better, safer, more equal and inclusive Europe that respects human rights, and supports member states in striving towards this goal. Having a clear vision and focus, financial means, tools, monitoring system and also the willpower to make change happen is what enables us to reach it. And the Council of Europe with its new Strategy for the Rights of the Child is giving us an extra push along the way.
  
- The measures that Estonia has applied during the outgoing Strategy for the Rights of the Child are as follows:
  - 1) To fight child poverty, we have significantly raised child allowance, reformed parental benefit system, and are offering housing loan guarantee and home improvement allowance for families with many children.
  - 2) We have phased out institution-based care, moved to family-based care and launched after care. We have raised the quality of alternative care, trained and supported care providers. Also campaigns and outreach activities have been carried out to find foster families and normalise family-based substitute care.
  - 3) Since 2016, corporal punishment of children has been prohibited by law. We have trained and motivated child protection workers, created notification channels and hotlines and raised awareness on children's rights throughout the whole society. We have adapted and started to offer evidence based positive parenting program and consistently improved services to support family relationships and parent education.
  - 4) We have trained specialists working with juvenile and young offenders, also risk and need assessment tools are used and alternative interventions are in place for juvenile offenders to replace fines and sentencing to prison.
  - 5) We have launched an integrated Barnahus model to react to the cases of child sexual abuse. It is part of a broader plan to guarantee child friendly justice to every child who comes in contact with the justice system – this includes the designation and training of professionals to handle cases that

involve children, child friendly materials, designing child friendly premises, but most importantly, the change in paradigm that children are entitled to be fully heard and treated with integrity.

- For the ongoing Strategy, we have set our focus on ending violence against children. Combating violence against children means not only contributing to the social sphere, but also joint action in the fields of education, health, and law enforcement, which makes the existence of integrated child protection systems essential. We aim for child protection that is loop-free.
- As we are living in a digital era, access and safe use of digital technologies is what shapes our present and future. Besides various threats that need to be addressed, this field also offers many positive opportunities for children and can support children's development and further coping. It is important to establish a safe and healthy balance between the use of digital technology and mental and physical health.
- Finally, it is crucial to increase equal opportunities and inclusion of children. In addition to the Council of Europe's Strategy for the Rights of the Child, the European Union's Child Guarantee gives an excellent focus to this priority area and has indeed proved to be especially relevant during the pandemic and now, during the terrible war in Ukraine.
- Today it is particularly important to stress that systems need to adapt quickly and flexibly to help those in need. Once the war is over, it is our mission for the children that have fled the war in Ukraine, to hand them back educated, healthy and well held. Because that is what every child is entitled to.

Thank you!