



Child Rights Centre's online bulletin

2016



Child Rights Centre

Child Rights in the Republic of Serbia in 2016

➤ **During 2016 the state of child rights has not improved to the extent that was expected.** Operational Council for Child Rights and comprehensive document that clearly defines the state policy towards children are two key prerequisites for taking any other measures that contribute to the improvement of child rights and advancement of the conditions in which children in Serbia live and grow up. In 2016, the Republic of Serbia has not formulated a new policy towards children, although a

National Plan of Action for Children, adopted in 2004 by the Government of the Republic of Serbia, expired in 2015. The first session of the Council for Child Rights in the new composition was held at the end of the year - 20 December 2016.

➤ **Beginning of the year was marked by expectation of calling the elections for MPs, as well as increased political tension caused by the refugee crisis.** Early parliamentary and regular provincial and local elections were held on 24 April. Local elections were conducted in 17 Belgrade municipalities and 138 municipalities and cities in Serbia. On June 3, the

constitutive session of the Serbian Parliament was held. The Government of the Republic of Serbia was formed on 11 August 2016 with the appointment of Aleksandar Vucic for president. In its new composition, the Government has four deputy prime ministers and 16 ministries. Taking the aforementioned into account, the systemic issues of relevance to the lives of children in the Republic of Serbia were not addressed in this period.

➤ **At the session held on 14 July 2016, the Steering Committee on the Rights of the Child of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia was established.**

Maja Gojkovic, President of the National Assembly is the President of the Committee, while the Deputy Chairman of the Committee is Milena Bićanin.

➤ During 2016, at the third Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) of the EU and Serbia held on 18 July in Brussels there were two chapters opened: chapter 23 - Judiciary and Fundamental Rights and 24 - Justice, freedom and security, **while** at the fourth IGC, a decision was made to open negotiation chapters 5 - Public procurement and 25 - Science and research. **In the negotiations on membership in the EU,**

which began in January 2014, the Republic of Serbia has so far opened six of 35 chapters.

➤ **On June 7, 2016, representatives of the Coalition for monitoring child rights in the Republic of Serbia participated at the preparatory session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child where they presented the main conclusions of the Second and third alternative periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Serbia (2008 - 2014), as well as other important**

observations. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has sent a list of questions to the Republic of Serbia in connection with the Second and third periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Serbia ([List of issues in relation to the second and third periodic reports of the Republic of Serbia](#)). List of additional issues also address the issues raised in the Alternative periodic report prepared by the Coalition, as well as those to which the representatives of the Coalition pointed at the preparatory meeting of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. At the session held on 9

November 2016, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Answers to additional questions of the Committee on the Rights of the Child related to the Second and third periodic report of the Republic of Serbia on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, after which they have been submitted to the Committee. The delegation of the Republic of Serbia will present the report at the 74th session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, scheduled for 24 January 2017.

➤ **On 1 July 2016, the First report on the implementation of the Action Plan for Chapter 23**

was presented. The report is available at the following link: <http://www.mpravde.gov.rs/tekst/13178/izvestaj-br-1-22016-0-sprovodjenju-akcionog-plana-za-poglavlje-23.php>

As a reminder, on 11 December 2015, for the purpose of monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan for Chapter 23, the Government of the Republic of Serbia formed the Council for the implementation of the Action Plan for Chapter 23, while at the meeting held on 27 April 2016 it adopted the text of the Action Plan.

➤ **On 9 November, the European Commission announced Annual Report**

for Serbia for 2016. The report covers the period from October 2015 to September 2016 and is based on contributions from a variety of sources, including contributions from the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the EU Member States, European Parliament reports and information received from various international organisations and associations of citizens. Problems and priorities which were pointed out by the Child Rights Centre and which were submitted to the Delegation of the European Union as a written contribution have found their place in the report.

➤ **The Council for Child Rights of the City of Belgrade has formed several Working Groups.**

Within the mandate of the Council for Child Rights of the City of Belgrade, a body whose role is to monitor and review the implementation of child rights in the city of Belgrade, launch initiatives for amending regulations in the field of child rights, a body responsible for improving the prevention and protection of child rights, organisation of expert meetings in specific areas related to child rights in the city of Belgrade, in the first quarter of 2016 constituted six working groups and defined the general scope of

their work:

1. Working Group on the early development of children of age 0-3 (5) years,
2. Working Group for the prevention and protection of children from violence and children living or working on the street,
3. Working Group on inclusive education for children,
4. Working Group for the development of social protection and poverty reduction for children and their families,
5. Working Group on children and young people with behavioural problems and in conflict with the law,

6. Working Group for drafting the Policy Program for children of Belgrade for the period 2016-2020.

The representative of the Child Rights Center manages the work of the Working Group on children and young people with behavioural problems and in conflict with the law and participates in the work of the Working Group for drafting the Policy Program for children of Belgrade for the period 2016-2020.

➤ **On 9 November 2016 the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted a decision on the dismissal**

and appointment of the President, the Secretary and members of the Council for Child Rights.

President of the Child Rights Centre was appointed one of 18 members of the Council. **The inaugural session of the Council for Child Rights was held on 20 December 2016.** At the session, the draft Law on the Protector of the Rights of the Child was discussed. During this occasion, the comments and suggestions of the Child Rights Centre to the Draft, which were sent to the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Issues, were presented and supported by the Council

members. At the session, the initiative for adoption of a new National Plan of Action for Children was started, as well as the initiative for the adoption of a new Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence.

➤ Keeping in mind the fact that according to the census of the Republic of Serbia in 2011, the population of children in Serbia for the first time has decreased in comparison to those older than 65, it is essential that the state start and accelerate the processes in the domain of population policy.

On 26 December, the Government of the

Republic of Serbia established the Council for Population Policy, headed by the Prime Minister. The necessity of these steps was previously pointed out by the Child Rights Centre and it delivered a letter to the relevant ministries and the general public.

➤ **During 2016, the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia adopted 9 laws important for the realisation of child rights:** the Law on Police, the Law on Public Order and Peace - adopted on 26 January; Law on Sport - adopted on 4 February; Law on Amendments to the Law on Offences - adopted on 12

February; The Law on Administrative Procedure, the Law on Public Health, Law on Protection of Population from Infectious Diseases - adopted on 29 February, the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence, the Law on Amendments to the Criminal Code - adopted on 23 November.

The Child Rights Centre's activities in 2016

➤ Final international Conference of the project Empowering Children / Young People with Disabilities to Improve Responses to Child Abuse and Neglect was held on 26 January 2016 in Belgrade.

The Conference was organised by the Child Rights Centre and international charity organisation founded by author J.K. Rowling - Lumos, with the financial support of the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia through the EIDHR program.



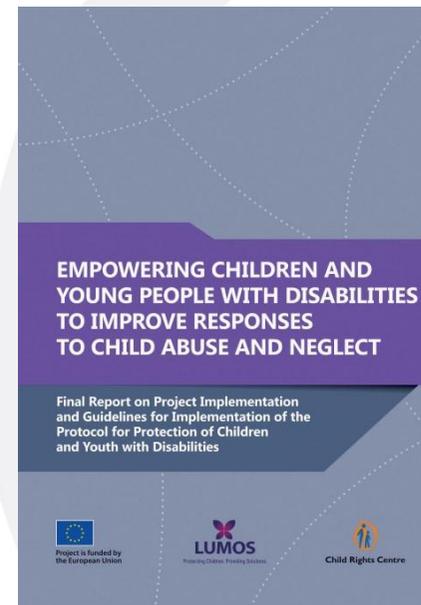
The Conference was attended by 75 participants from the country and abroad.



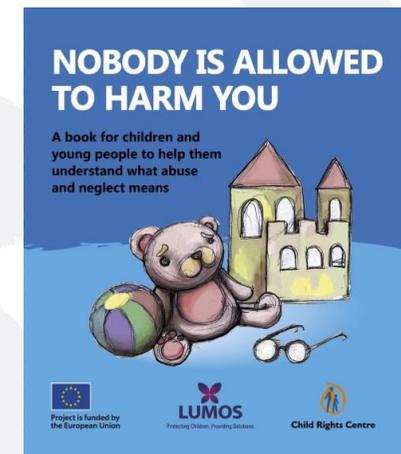
Publications presented at the Conference:

- The most important results achieved during the project 'Empowering Children / Young People with Disabilities to

Improve Responses to Child Abuse and Neglect' and 'Guidelines for Implementation of the Protocol for Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect in Relation to Children and Young People with Disabilities.'

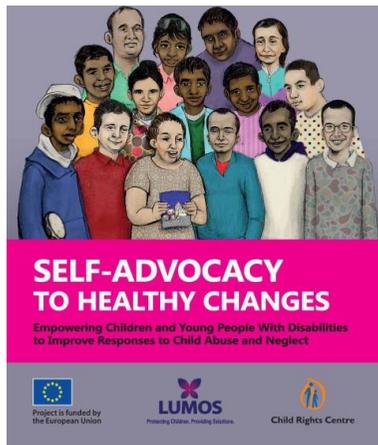


- Easy-read publication for children and young people '[Nobody is Allowed to Harm you – A book for children and young people to help them understand what abuse and neglect means.](#)'



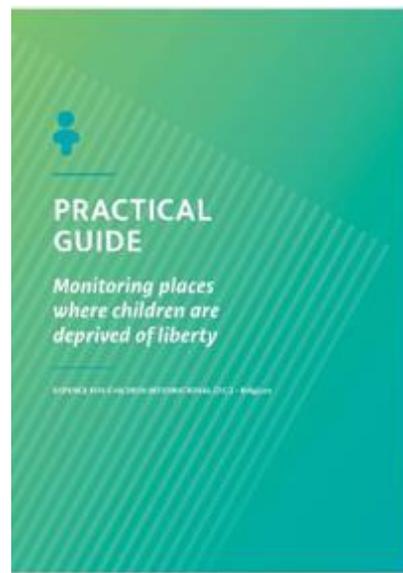
- Report on activities conducted by children and young people with disabilities gathered in the Club for Healthy Changes –

'Self-advocacy to Healthy Changes.'



➤ The representative of the Child Rights Centre participated in the final conference of the project "**Children's Rights Behind Bars**" **Human Rights of Children Deprived of Liberty: Improving**

Monitoring Mechanisms", which was held in Brussels on 15 February 2016. The conference presented the [Practical guide to monitor places where children are deprived of liberty.](#)



This guide is the result of two

years of work of a large number of eminent experts and organisations across Europe, from 14 countries (Austria, Belgium, Estonia, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain, Britain and Serbia) who participated in this project and is of great importance for the promotion and protection of the rights of children deprived of their liberty. The project is coordinated by Defence for Children International (DCI) - Belgium and financed by the Criminal Justice Program of the European Commission, and the Child Rights Centre is one of the partners associated with the project.

➤ In January and February, the

Child Rights Centre was engaged by UNICEF Montenegro to **prepare "Guide for Counseling Parents of Children with Disabilities."** A team of medical and legal experts from Montenegro and Serbia has prepared the text of this document and trained doctors and other health personnel for its implementation. The training was held last week of February 2016 in Bar, Berane and Podgorica.

➤ **The efforts of the Child Rights Centre to create a mechanism for the prevention and sanctioning of violence against children in sports and that in this**

system we have a complete and effective protection of children, were successfully achieved by adopting a new Law on sport by the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia ("Off. Gazette of RS" no. 10/2016). This Law promotes the protection of children from violence, abuse and neglect in sports, by the prohibition of any kind of misuse, abuse, discrimination and violence against children. More detailed requirements on methods of identifying forms of abuse, exploitation, discrimination and violence of the children are jointly set by the Minister in charge of youth and sports, Minister of Interior, Minister of

Justice and Minister responsible for health.

➤ During 2016, the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, UNICEF and the Child Rights Centre continued implementation of the project **"Improvement of child rights through the strengthening of the judicial system and social protection in Serbia"**, funded by the European Union.



Within the project, in the period from 22 to 26 February there was a training held - "Towards Child-friendly Justice - Participation of children in civil proceedings and the assessment of the best interests of the child".



At the training, the 14 participants were empowered to implement information sessions for judges, lawyers and representatives of centres of social work.



Information sessions were conducted in partnership with the Judicial Academy, in order to increase understanding of the situation and the needs of the child in the civil court proceedings and improving the practices of the child in them.



In the period from 6 May to 28 October, **91 information sessions** were organised on "Towards Child-friendly Justice - Participation of children in civil proceedings and the assessment of the best interests of the child."

- 46 judges of higher courts,
- 156 judicial assistants,
- 282 representatives of centres for social work,
- 104 lawyers,
- 30 representatives of other institutions.



At the information sessions there were **831 participants** including:

- 213 basic court judges,



For the purpose of implementing the aforementioned information sessions, the promotional material "**Child rights in civil court proceedings,**" was prepared and printed, and distributed to all the higher and basic courts and centers for social work in Serbia.



- Within this project there were published ["Guidelines for the child participation in civil proceedings and the assessment of the best interests of the child"](#).

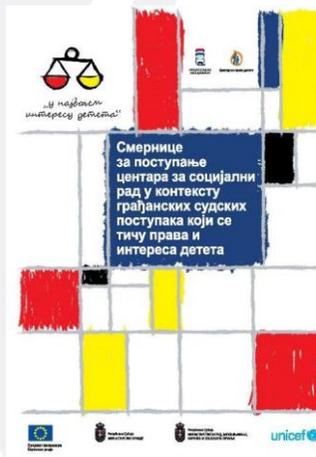


It is intended that these guidelines provide reliable support for the proper interpretation and application of

legal regulations concerning the participation of the child in court proceedings by expressing opinions and implementation of the principle of the best interests of the child to judges who conduct proceedings relating to children. They represent a set of practical guidelines for the work and specific tools whose application ensures that the child fully and with as little trauma participate in court proceedings and that any action taken, measures and activity of the court, as well as the decisions a court makes are in line with the principle of the best interests of the child. Implementation of the guidelines can help increase the

efficiency of court procedures and the provision of effective legal protection.

- Within this project there were also published the ["Guidelines for the treatment of centres for social work in the context of civil judicial proceedings concerning the rights and interests of the child"](#).



Their goal is to provide support to professionals in centres for social work for the successful realisation of the process roles and responsibilities they have in civil court proceedings. This publication present a set of practical guidelines for work and specific tools whose application ensures that the centers for social work recognise the legal protection need and initiate appropriate legal proceedings as well as to properly comply with orders of the court, thus contributing to the efficiency of judicial procedures and the provision of effective legal protection of rights and interests of the child.

➤ As a contribution to building a child-friendly justice in Serbia, one part of the aforementioned project also envisages improving the capacity of the existing providers of free legal aid in the field of protection of child rights, particularly in the areas of health, education and social protection. In that sense, a **network of providers of free legal aid for the rights of the child was established under the coordination of the Child Rights Centre**. At the moment the network includes 36 providers of free legal aid from various cities and towns in Serbia. In order to improve the capacity of network members in the field of child rights

protection, four training sessions were held:



- On 23 May, the training aimed at informing network members with the concept of child rights and international standards in this field. Lecturer at training was prof. Dr. Nevena Petrusic;



- On 24 June the second training was held, with the aim of improving communication and the acquisition of skills and knowledge in working with clients, with a special emphasis on communication with the child. The trainer was Dragana Cuk Milankov;



- On 26 September, the training to strengthen the capacity of network members about the rights and responsibilities of the child in the education system

and protection from violence was held. The training was conducted by Biljana Lajovic and Marija Petrovic.



- On 21 and 22 November, representatives of the network participated in training with the topic of protection of child rights

through strategic litigation in Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia.



The aim of the training was to familiarise participants with the concept of strategic litigation at national, regional and international levels, pro bono practice and how and in what way to lead a campaign through strategic litigation. The training was conducted by representatives of the Child Rights International Network (CRIN), and organised by Save the Children International.

- From 8 to 10 December, the training aimed at introducing members of the network to the role and responsibilities of the centres for social work in civil court proceedings was held.



At the training, the participants had the opportunity to familiarise with the topic of advocacy and create a common action plan to promote network work and advocacy for free legal aid tailored to children. The training was led by Aleksandra

Calosevic, Ranka Vujovic, Sladjana Radulovic and Milena Golic Ruzic.

- The Child Rights Centre has formalised its work in providing legal advisory services in the field of child rights. **Legal advice and/or information in order to protect the rights of the child are given every Tuesday and Thursday from 12.00 P.M. to 2.00 P.M. by phone numbers: (011) 32 86 690 32 86 700.**

- In the third quarter began the project "**Increasing inter-sectoral cooperation in the protection of children from violence,**" which is being implemented in cooperation

with UNICEF, and as part of the project "Protection of children from violence and promotion of inclusion of children with disabilities in the Western Balkans and Turkey."



The project is aimed at strengthening and building of the capacity of multisectoral teams that work to protect children from abuse and neglect in the 12 selected municipalities/towns in Serbia:

Subotica, Vrbas, Novi Becej, Sremska Mitrovica, Aleksinac, Svrlijig, Knjaževac, Zajecar, Kraljevo, Trstenik, Paracin and Vrnjackska Banja. During July there were held preparatory meetings with local teams in Nis, Kragujevac, Novi Sad and Belgrade. With the aim of mutual exchange of experience from previous practice and agreement on the manner and pace of further work, a meeting was organised on 24 November in Nis and on 13 December in Kragujevac.

➤ **At the meeting of the Assembly of the Child Rights Centre held on 28 April, a new composition of the Running Board was elected:**

Dr. Viktorija Cucic, Dr. Veronika Ispanovis Radojkovic, Biljana Lajovic, Martina Petrovic i Sladjana Radulovic from the employees at the Centre.

In the **new convocation of Supervisory Board** there were elected: Marija Petrovic, Milena Banic and Tanja Bogicevic. **Members of the Running Board elected Dr. Viktorija Cucic for President of the Board of the Centre, while the president-elect of the Centre is Dr. Ivana Stevanovic.**

➤ **At the meeting of the Running Board of the Child Rights Centre held on 9 June 2016, the Strategic Plan of the Child Rights Centre for**

2016 - 2020 and Operational Plan of the Child Rights Centre for 2016 were adopted. The Strategic plan of the Child Rights Centre for 2016 was published, and its making and printing was supported by Save the Children International.



➤ **On 6 April, at the Child Rights Centre's premises, the first inspection of the quality management system was**

conducted. During the first inspection, audit showed no non-conformities and the certification commission has suggested that issued certificate of compliance of the quality management system with the standard ISO 9001: 2008 remains valid.

➤ In accordance with the conclusion of the Council for legal system and government organs and the Programme of public hearings on the Draft Civil Code, the **Child Rights Centre submitted the remarks and suggestions on the Draft Civil Code. Also, comments and suggestions on the Draft Law on the Protector of Child Rights were submitted to the Ministry of Labour,**

Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, which the representatives of the ministry introduced to members of the Council for Child Rights. In this way a contribution was made to better regulation of the proposed solutions important for the realisation of child rights.

➤ **Representatives of the Child Rights Centre created two expert analysis on the topic of Abuse of children for political purposes - Analysis of the existing regulations and legal standards and Juvenile justice and the protection of child victims of crime, child victims of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and child witnesses.**

The texts are prepared within the project "Strengthening the capacity of the Ombudsman to launch legislative initiatives in partnership with civil society." Making these and similar analysis were submitted jointly by Uzice Child Rights Centre and the Child Rights Centre in the competition announced by the Human Rights House.

➤ During 2016, the Centre representatives participated in:

- meetings of the Council for Child Rights of the City of Belgrade,
- meetings of the Committee on Labour, Social Issues, Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction of the National

Assembly of the Republic of Serbia,

- meeting of the Council for Child Rights of the Republic of Serbia.

➤ The existing database of laws of the Republic of Serbia relevant to the field of child rights is updated with the legal texts adopted in the period January - December 2016, so on page

http://cpd.org.rs/home/relevantno_zakonodavstvo_srbije_u_ondnosu_na_prava_deteta.html

there are titles and links to the full texts of **96** laws completely or partially concerning children.

➤ **Members of the Children's Cultural**

information service - DX continued their work in 2016. Since the Republic of Serbia is in the process of reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the DX's work this year was focused on introducing the children and young people with the position of child rights and the importance of reporting. Therefore, members of the Children's Cultural information service – DX, with the support of the Child Rights Centre, and in cooperation with Save the Children International have prepared an informative brochure with the findings of the "Report on the state of child rights in the Republic of Serbia

from the perspective of children



and young people"

which are incorporated in Second and third periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; findings from the Second and third periodic alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Serbia (2008-2014) and basic information about the process of reporting to the Committee on

the Rights of the Child.



➤ **For their peers, members of the DX organised and held 8 workshops with the aim of informing them about the process of reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the main findings of the Alternative periodic report and "Report on the state of child rights in the Republic of Serbia from the perspective of children and young people" which are incorporated in the State**

report.



Workshops were held for: student parliament of the Woodart High School, members of clubs of the Centre for social preventive activities GRiG bringing together children with disabilities, pupils of elementary school "Ivan Milutinović," children and young members of BIMUN (Belgrade International Model United Nations), Artimedia secondary school students, Fifth Belgrade Gymnasium students and students of Second economy school.



The workshops were attended by 200 children and young people. The workshops were organised within the project "Institutional support for the development of the organisation" which is implemented in cooperation with Save the Children International.



➤ On 20 October, members of the Club for healthy changes and DX organised a joint workshop named **"I will show you how I feel now."**



At the workshop, members of the two clubs had the opportunity to share experiences through play and

review the challenges that young people face today.



➤ To mark 27 years since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Children's informative cultural

service (DX) and young people from BIMUN (Belgrade International Model United Nations) held a joint debate.



There they discussed the activities of the children in monitoring the implementation of their rights, as well as the rights of the child and the recommendations for their improvement. On this occasion, club DX presented the Report on implementation of child rights in the Republic of Serbia from the perspective of children and youth

and its key findings.

➤ **In the period from 20 to 25 June 2016, Save the Children International has organised a summer school held in Struga in Macedonia,**



where the members of the group DX had the opportunity to share their experiences with their peers from Moldova, Ukraine and Kosovo through socialising and participation in workshops on responsible use of information

technology in order to take advantage of the best that the internet provides them; how to stay safe in the online world.



During the summer school they also talked about topics that are aimed at raising awareness among children and young people about the importance of prevention and protection of children from abuse and discrimination.

➤ **Members of DX participated in the workshop organised on 29 September 2016 by the International Labour Organisation.** At the workshop, together with the members of the Panel of young advisors of the Ombudsman, they gave their comments and suggestions for amendment to the "List of harmful work for children." The workshop was conducted by professor of Medicine School Petar Bulat and Milica Djordjevic from the International Labour Organisation's Office in Serbia.



After the workshop, which was held at the Child Rights Centre's premises, the **members of the DX participated in the round table held on 7 November 2016 in Belgrade.** At the round table, members of the DX shared their impressions and conclusions from the workshop to the working group of the ILO, which creates a "List of harmful work for children."



➤ DX Club members established their YouTube channel: DX Club - a group of children and youth at the Child Rights Centre, where they released a [short documentary](#) prepared by the young people from the DX prepared, as well as [informative report on the activities of the Club](#) originated in the TV show "Information for young people."

➤ **On 20 December, members of the DX visited Shelder for Children in Bgrade.** Together with children from the shelter they prepared holiday cards. The children and young people from the DX have prepared and gave small holiday gifts to the shelter children.



