
Child Rights in Serbia 2003
Published by
CHILD RIGHTS CENTRE
Belgrade, Dositejeva 4
www.cpd.org.yu
cpd@eunet.yu

For the publisher
Ljubomir Pejakovic, Director

Editor of all publications
Vesna Dejanovic

Translated by
Branka Robertson

Printed by
Colorgrafx, Belgrade

Circulation 300

ISBN 86-83109-30-5

Data gathering was made possible by Save the Children Norway and printing by Save the Children UK Office in Belgrade.

Child Rights in Serbia 2003

General Context and Child Rights in Serbia 2003

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Child Rights Centre thanks all contributors to the main „Report on the situation of the children’s rights in Serbia in 2003“ and to this Summary in English. Their expertise, impartiality and perseverance were of vital importance.

The Centre also thanks numerous local and foreign governmental and non-governmental organisations for allowing us to use and publish data from their research.

The development of specific indicators and the writing of the Report would not have been possible without generous assistance from the Norwegian organisation Redd Barna, which has been the Centre’s faithful friend and partner since the beginning of its work.

The publication of the Report and English Summary was supported by the Save the Children UK, which together with the Redd Barna – and other donors helped the foundation of the Centre.

FOREWORD

This document is in two sections: the first is an executive summary¹, of the „*Report on the situation of the children’s rights in Serbia in 2003*“ produced by the Child Rights Centre and published in Serbian; the second section looks at Serbia’s performance under article 4 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (The Convention). Article 4 concerns General Measures of Implementation of the Rights of the Child and is an indication of how States Parties are promoting children’s rights and undertaking their role as duty bearers.

Our aim is to provide information in English to a wider international readership on progress on the rights of the child in Serbia in 2003. Included in the document is the Child Rights Centre’s assessment of priorities, as well as its recommendations.

The Report in Serbian closely follows the General Guidelines of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to the States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child regarding the form and the contents of initial and periodic reports. As for the content we relied on the checklist of questions – possible indicators compiled by UNICEF². The indicators were adapted to local needs and circumstances. However there are a combination of factors that makes our situation analysis incomplete: firstly, as a consequence of unsystematic monitoring by relevant State bodies there is insufficient available data; secondly, although some excellent professionals were engaged to help prepare the report, it was not possible to identify experts in all areas of child rights especially regarding civil and political rights which, being new to our thinking, has few specialists.

Despite the above difficulties, the Report is an accurate assessment and can serve in methodology and content as a guideline for the compilation of future annual reports on the condition of the rights of the child in Serbia.

(1) Produced in August 2004 this English Executive Summary includes some more recent findings not included in the in the full Serbian version.

(2) UNICEF: Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF 2002, New York.

THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD IN SERBIA IN 2003 AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2003 was a year of turmoil, which started with a new State, the Union of Serbia and Montenegro. The actual change of the name caused no problems, but resulting political issues did: drafting a constitution for the new State union, new jurisdictions, new treaty obligations and reporting requirements, new definitions of human rights and re-organisation of state institutions.

The powers of the State union are limited and include almost nothing concerning the realisation of the rights of the child, which belong to the separate jurisdictions of Serbia and Montenegro. In this light there is a concern that the rights of the child will yet again, „wait“ for their turn and that children will not receive enough attention.

There are now concerns about the continuation of reforms initiated in the Republic of Serbia. During political uncertainty the most needy of attention, where children certainly belong, tend to be overlooked. The Report is, among other things, an attempt to draw the attention of local and international decision-makers to the condition of children in Serbia.

1. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Serbia

Key political issues, such as the south of Serbia, Kosovo, the relation between Serbia and Montenegro and the cooperation with the ICTY remain unresolved. The overall recovery of the country and its position in the Balkans, Europe and World will depend on how fast these problems are solved. Political and economic uncertainty threatens the planning of long-term policies with regard to the rights of the child.

Political uncertainty – non-sustainability of reforms

The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child under the auspices of the United Nations (1989) that brought great hope for child coincided with the beginning of the crisis in former Yugoslavia. In the decade that followed; wars, destruction, isolation plus the deterioration of political, economic and social conditions had an enormous impact on children's rights.

The year 2000 witnessed more stable politics and social recovery began. The change brought relief but with it the renewed problems of economic and social transition which were not solved up to 2003. The combination of economic and political difficulties seriously threatens the effective implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The progress achieved towards the rights of the child slowed in 2003 and was relatively small in relation to the needs, which does not contribute to a fast recovery from years of destruction.

Incessant political squabbling and a lack of majority led to early parliamentary elections in December 2003. The new Government entered Office in the spring of 2004, bringing many changes.

Some reform processes, for example the social protection and services systems, survived the change of the Government. However, the so crucial reform of education, which showed excellent results in 2003, is now halted in the most important areas. On the other hand, Ministry of Justice of the new Government shows more interest in the relevant legal reforms. Some new developments lacking in 2003 are now expected within the labour departments, particularly in the area of the street children and the child labour, but on condition that donor assistance is provided for the activities.

The Serbian Council for the Rights of the Child (the only inter-governmental body operating in 2003) does not appear to be functioning at this moment and the new Government did not appoint a new president until late July 2004.

The new Government has dismantled the Education Council that operated in 2003 and no other has been established.

Economy and poverty

The family environment, so important for the healthy development of the child is less secure. Unemployment is considerable with many working in the informal sector as a result most families in Serbia face increasing poverty and deterioration in standards of housing. At the same time social protection systems are less strong and the State cannot come to rescue as it did in the decades of socialism. Now more families need help, but the social welfare system is poor and the State uses its meagre budget for basic social assistance, filling up empty pension funds and maintaining cumbersome administrative systems.

Attitudes – lack of awareness and negligence

Children are not yet accepted in Serbia as holders of rights. Key principles regarding ‘best interests’, a child’s right to be listened to and to participate in decisions are not yet understood in society. Although the situation of children in Serbia is directly affected by political, economic and social circumstances, it is also conditioned by local attitudes to children themselves and their rights. One of the basic characteristics of the attitude to children is over-protectiveness, at least in its verbal expression as the typical family structure in Yugoslavia was patriarchal with the extended family playing an important role in provision of support and advice. Going from the north of the country southwards, the features of patriarchy are increasingly expressed and prevalent. This family structure with the extremely dominant „pater familias“ directly influences the attitudes to children and their rights to participation, privacy and expression of opinions. Attitudes to women and girls are often discriminatory, which is again more evident in the south of the country.

Similar attitudes apply outside the family, which is visible in educational system, in health and social care institutions, in the actions of state and judiciary bodies and traditional attitudes of most political decision makers.

2. Child-related activities in 2003

The Poverty Reduction Strategy adopted by The Government of Serbia in the second half of last year and assessed children as a one of the groups most vulnerable to the effects of poverty. The analysis, which preceded the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper,

estimated that about 400,000 children live in poverty – which makes a quarter of the total number of children in the country. The birth rate continues to decline and the ageing population is taking a significant slice of the social transfers. About a third of population is poor and another third lives just above the poverty level. The middle class has reduced in size and thousands of educated people still live and work outside the country while others continue to migrate. Progress has been made in the following areas:

- In 2003 the public in Serbia was better informed of the situation of children accommodated in social care institutions and some improvements made.
- The condition of health institutions, schools and other places where children stay during the daytime were to some extent presented to the public and some measures taken to resolve some problems.
- The dramatic situation in schools (in respect of the professionalism of those employed, their attitudes, programmes and salaries) has been a topic for open debates, and the relevant administration worked on reforms.
- Child safety in schools, homes and on the streets has also been openly discussed and some activities carried-out.
- Children’s exposure to harmful influences and the use of harmful substances (cigarettes, drugs, alcohol) is still considerable and this is openly talked about, campaigns organized and some measures taken.
- Especially encouraging are the activities of the Government and non-governmental organisations directed at the identification of problems confronted by the adolescent (from the age of 15 to 25). This group is in an especially difficult situation³ and is confronted with an uncertain and grey future.
- During 2003 efforts were made to initiate research into the situation concerning child trafficking for sexual exploitation. Government and non-government organisations are now meeting together and a national anti trafficking strategy is expected in 2004.

However, many spheres still remain unexplored. The number of children with special needs has not been precisely determined. It is unknown how many children live on the street or work instead of going to school. There is still no separate statistics regarding children, disaggregated according to age, gender, ethnicity and rural/urban region.

Domestic violence was talked about and some measures taken, but only concerning publicising the issue.

Drafting the Initial report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child started in 2003. This process was initiated on the basis of the obligations taken over by the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro as the State Party to the Convention. Serbia and Montenegro will make their separate reports, which are then to be collated and submitted as a unified report to the Committee for the Rights of the Child in Geneva. Unfortunately, this process has not been carried out in cooperation with non-governmental organisations nor, according to our information, have children been involved. However, the draft was sent to the Child Rights Center for the comments.

(3) For details see: „Brave New Generation“, UNICEF, 2002.

3. Recommendations

After reviewing progress towards the realisation of the rights of the child in Serbia in 2003, the Child Rights Centre proposes the following recommendations to the relevant bodies in Serbia:

*General recommendations:*⁴

- extensive legislative reform is necessary to bring domestic law into line with the international law and standards;
- the reform of judiciary and administrative systems to allow effective use of legal remedies for the realisation of the rights of the child;
- the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child including the wide promotion of this international document;
- the introduction of supervisory mechanisms such as Ombudsman for the rights of the child;
- the creation of a separate identifiable budget for children;
- the establishment of a unified data base on children which allows regular updating;
- reinforcing the powers and capacities of the Child Rights Council, as a separate body at the level of the Government of Serbia, and the formation of similar bodies at the level of smaller administrative communities;
- the implementation of the National Plan of Action for Children, with an emphasis on the general principles of non-discrimination, best interest of the child, right to life, survival and development and the right to participation;
- State support to and cooperation with local, national and international organisations dealing in the rights of the child;
- initiation of new and support to the existing programmes of education of professionals, parents, children and relevant public on the rights of the child;
- improved participation particularly an openness for discussion with children and young people on the issues, which concern them.

In addition to the recommendations on the general measures of implementation the Child Rights Centre wants to see the development of special policies and their implementation to deal with the following issues:

- alleviation of child poverty;
- provision of appropriate health care and safety standards for children and parents in health institutions especially in maternity wards as a priority;
- continuation of the education reform process and the implementation of the reforms especially as regards education on human rights and democracy and the introduction of new teaching methods;
- increased participation of Serbia together with other states of South East Europe in the fight against organised crime, smuggling the illegal trade in narcotics and psychotropic substances, trafficking and other abuses which lead to the abuse and exploitation of children;
- development of measures for early detection and elimination of violence against children in families, schools, on the street and in social care institutions;

(4) See Section 2 on General Measures of Implementation

- suppression of child trafficking;
- establishment of the system of juvenile justice with the inclusion of diversion schemes and alternative non custodial measures;
- development of specific inclusive programmes for children who are members of minority groups, including programmes for the development of their cultural welfare;
- development of supervisory mechanisms over the condition of children in public care and over the practice of judicial and other bodies that are responsible for the care and protection of children, with special attention to the reform of adoption system and the reduction in the use of institutional care for children without parental care;
- development of specific methodology for social rehabilitation and reintegration of children victims of armed conflicts or other forms of violence;
- identification of child labour and activities towards its suppression;
- development of special programmes for „street and homeless children“;
- development of safe, accessible and creative programmes for children’s free time.

This list is neither complete nor definitive; it is however based on the identification of problems faced by children in Serbia.

4. Conclusions

There were some important programmes and projects in 2003 that testify on the progress made in the implementation of the CRC.

However, still missing are the mechanisms for strong inter-sector cooperation; this fact hinders coordination between sectors such as education, health care, social policy, legal regulation and finances as well as cooperation with the non-governmental sector and community-based associations.

Serbia is still fact-finding and is not yet developing solutions to the problems.

Unfortunately, the present political circumstances are a source of concern rather than hope that the initiated reforms directly affecting the position of children will continue in the manner and direction adjusted to the relevant international standards.

In such circumstances those most needy of attention, where children most clearly belong, tend to get overlooked.

Any significant change of the present situation of children will depend, among other things, on the capacity of political decision makers in Serbia and Montenegro to think strategically and devise short-term and long-term plans. It will also depend on their capacity to ‘notice’ children and put them in the centre of their attention and the introduction of a special ombudsman for the rights of the child would be an effective measure in this sense.

GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD IN SERBIA

At its 34th session held in October 2003 the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which is the supervisory body of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted General Comment number 5 entitled „General Measure of Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.“ This document is an excellent elaboration of Article 4 of the Convention and is for States Parties to use as an interpretation for measures to be taken at the national level for the realisation of the rights of the child in States.

General measures of implementation identified in the General Comment number 5 are directed at the promotion of all children’s rights through: the adjustment and adoption of appropriate regulations, establishment of coordinating and supervisory bodies – both governmental and independent, establishment of an all-inclusive data-base, raising awareness and education level, the development and implementation of appropriate strategies, services and programmes. The full implementation of the rights of the child is not possible without a structure and system of measures.

The general measures of implementation in Serbia in 2003 were carried out as follows:

1. The National Plan of Action for Children

In 2003 an attempt was made to make a special strategy for the realisation of the rights of the child in Serbia. Most sectors had separate strategies (education, institutions of social care) but there had been no overall strategy. In 2003 the Government of Serbia, acting upon the international obligations taken over by Serbia and Montenegro, started work on The National Plan of Action for Children in Serbia (NPA)

The NPA for children is a document prepared by the Child Rights Council of the Government of Serbia. The preparation of NPAs was agreed by States at the World Summit for Children in New York in 2001 on the basis of the meeting’s final document entitled World Fit For Children. The process of composition of the NPA was participatory and involved numerous consultations at all levels, including representatives of professionals, non-governmental sector and children themselves. Unfortunately, this document, did not come into existence in the period covered by this Report and was adopted in 2004.

2. Ratification and application of international human rights treaties

The new State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (SUSM) was formed on the 4th February 2003 and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia ceased to exist and The Constitutional Charter of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (Charter) was adopted by the Federal Assembly. The Charter on Human and Minority Rights and Civil Freedoms (CHMCF) was adopted on the 28th February 2003 and is now a composite part of the Constitutional Charter.

After coming into existence the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro has joined, ratified and signed a number of international treaties in the sphere of human rights and taken over previously accepted obligations on the basis of the succession statement of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on the 12th March 2001.

In December 2003 Serbia and Montenegro ratified the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Basic Freedoms.

3. The Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Serbia and Montenegro is a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the two optional protocols accompanying the Convention.

Article 10 of the Constitutional Charter prescribes the direct application of the international treaties of which Serbia and Montenegro is a state party. Therefore the Convention on the Rights of the Child is directly applicable, which means that in the absence of relevant domestic law or in case of contradiction with international legislation, the Convention's provision can be directly applied. However we have no information of judicial or administrative bodies in Serbia that made recourse to a provision of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2003.

4. The Compliance of the National Legislation to the Convention

The adjustment of the national legislation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child can be assessed as partial. The reforms in the course of 2003 were as follows:

- The new Law on the basic elements of the education system of the Republic of Serbia was developed in a highly participatory manner, with wide consultations especially with the non-governmental sector. The extent of adjustment to the Convention was satisfactory⁵.
- Certain provisions of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia were adjusted, in response to the international obligations of the Union of Serbia and Montenegro. The Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia introduced some new criminal acts such as: trafficking in human beings, sexual abuse and exploitation of minors in pornography. There were some positive steps taken in 2003, but there remain many areas, which require new legislation. Reforms required:
- The Constitution of Serbia does not specifically recognise the rights of the child.
- There is no special law on the rights of the child which includes the General Principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, without which rights cannot be realised
- The law on marriage and family is not in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the present draft of the new Family law of the Republic of Serbia is far from harmonised with the Convention.
- It is necessary to develop Law on Child Protection in the Republic of Serbia in compliance with the Convention and other international norms and standards.
- A new system of children's justice should be established as a unified system, regulated by provisions of a special law aimed at the adequate protection of children, both those who are in conflict with the law and those who are victims of crime.
- The Law on elementary school and the Law on secondary school of the Republic of Serbia need to be in compliance with the Law on basic elements of the education system and of the Republic of Serbia, as the main law in this sphere.

(5) Unfortunately, the amendments of 2004, proposed by the new Ministry of Education of Serbia and adopted in the parliament, substantially undermine the purpose and the spirit of the reforms 2001-2003 and particularly bring the amended law in breach with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- The law on the protection of the rights of the child (an Ombudsman Law) needs to be adopted (the draft Law on the protection of human rights of the Republic of Serbia has been in the Assembly procedure for a year).
- The Law on Citizen Associations (NGOs) needs to be adopted. We would also like to see provisions which will amend the national legislation in accordance with the Convention article on the rights of a child to free association.
- The media and public advertising need to be regulated in the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially in view of positive measures to stimulate the broadcast of information and materials of use to children and clearer regulations in view of protection.

5. Efficient Measures of Protection – Children's advocate (Ombudsperson)

An independent system for the protection of children's rights in Serbia has not yet been established.

The present system of protection of individual rights of the child prescribed by laws of the Republic of Serbia implies access to the courts and appeal systems, including an appeal to the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Serbia for legal remedy.

After the ratification of the European Convention on Human Rights, citizens of the Republic of Serbia including children have the option of appealing to the European Court in Strasbourg if one of their rights guaranteed by the Convention has been violated. Though before going to the European Court of Human Rights the case must be pursued through the national courts. However up to now children have no right to independent legal representation in all judicial and administrative procedures about matters which concern them. This situation would be improved through the creation of an „advocate for child rights“ working through an independent institution of ombudsman for children

6. Coordination and Implementation of the Convention

The goal of coordination is to provide respect for the principles and articles of the Convention on the rights of the child. The goal is to ensure that the obligations resulting from the ratification apply to all government departments not only those most closely connected with children, such as education, health and social care, but also other departments including the Ministry of Finance, Labour, Defence at all levels.

The Child Rights Council in Serbia was appointed in 2002 with the task of coordinating and monitoring the rights of the child in Serbia. It was institutionally strengthened in 2003 but not enough. The body does not have sufficient powers or staff to be able to communicate with other departments in Serbia on a daily basis and in response to all issues.⁶ The work of the Child Rights Council on drafting the NPA, as well as activities on drafting the Law on Juvenile Justice are very important activities of the body. Furthermore, especially significant is the Council's readiness to cooperate in some segments with the civil sector, although the question of cooperation with the civil sector should be defined more clearly through the establishment of institutional mechanisms.

(6) The Child Rights Council in Serbia has not met in months and has not been appointed president since the last change in the Government.

At the local level, there are no decentralised bodies similar to the Council. The City of Belgrade, with the population of almost 2,000,000, has not yet formed a body that will deal with the rights of the child and coordinate activities at the city level.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Poverty Reduction Strategy in the formulation of which a number of relevant departments took active part that allowed inter-connection and coordination.

The Education Council of Serbia was founded towards the end of last year. This body consists of 28 independent experts, a significant number of whom are representatives of civil sector including the Child Rights Centre. This body seriously considered the rights of the child and cross-sector approach to cooperation.⁷

In the sphere of healthcare and health protection a number of mechanisms have been initiated and implemented including programmes and strategies, which allow coordination at the level of governmental sector.

In the sphere of protection of children with special needs the unification of all activities from different departments has been initiated around the concept of the persons with special needs. Within the Ministry of Education a coordinating body has been formed for the care of persons who need special social support, which should take care of children with special needs and their educational needs starting from the age of three, as the Law prescribes. Bearing in mind the problems of early development and inclusion of children with special needs in the programmes for the stimulation of early development, this together with some initial steps towards inclusive education has been an important step towards the provision of better quality education for these children and support to their families.

The work group of the Ministry of Education has made a document on the strategy and plan in the sphere of education of children with special needs that connects their education with the overall education system and is planning to develop a system of inclusive education within the programme of *Quality Education for All*.

7. Supervising Implementation

As we have already stated Serbia has no independent mechanism for the supervision of human rights and the rights of the child, which we hope will be remedied in the course of 2004. The absence of this mechanism represents a serious problem in practice, particularly bearing in mind the fact that many state mechanisms are not efficient and with 'friendly' disposition to children and their rights.

Sector Ministries do not yet have systems for monitoring and evaluating their progress on child rights or standards. The exception is in education, where although we do not have a developed, independent and holistic mechanism for the supervision and evaluation of success in the realisation of educational goals and other measures. However, we do have the establishment of the Centre for Evaluation in the sphere of education represents the beginning of a system for supervision and monitoring (the introduction of 'supervision to ensure quality', development of the culture of internal and external

(7) The Council was dissembled by the new Government.

evaluation at all levels: institutions, teachers and other employees, students; measuring the results of education on the basis of defined outcomes, accession to PISA project – international comparative analysis of academic achievements, OECD).

In the sphere of health care, social protection and the protection of children with special needs there are no mechanisms for monitoring implementation.

8. The State budget and Allocation of funds for children

In Serbia there are no budget funds earmarked for children. Budget funds are provided through sector allocation.

Indirect indicators can be estimated from data on planned expenditures from the budget of the Republic of Serbia according to functional classification, and which refer to the spheres that affect children's position. For example, the planned expenditure for healthcare is 0.1% of the GNP, education 3.0%, social protection (with pensions) 7.4%, culture, entertainment and religions 0.2%, ecology less than 0.1% of the GNP.

According to the data from the Ministry of Education the percentage of the GNP for education changed in the following way, in 1996 it was 4.51%, 2001 - 2.7%, 2002 – 3%, 2003 – 3.4 %.

The information available is not specific for the category of children and the youth.

9. Classified Data / Indicators

One of the greatest problems in the monitoring of children's position in Serbia is data. It applies to questions of completeness, reliability and validity of data and its disaggregation. Data is most often kept in connection with budget allocations: child benefits and other contributions that belong to the family. Data is also kept on children in social care, children included in the system of education, children offenders and similar. This data is collected by the relevant ministries and state bodies which are entrusted with these jobs. The Republic Bureau for statistics gathers all the data but according to the methodology, which does not allow reliable evaluation of children's, position. There are no developed indicators that could serve as the basis for continual monitoring the rights and position of children, except for global ones publicised by the Bureau or those used by UNICEF and those that are developed and used by this Centre.

The National Plan of Action envisages the creation of a unified data basis on children in Serbia, which represents a significant step.

Individual strategic documents of relevant ministries envisage the making of indicators for monitoring the progress in goal realisation, e.g. in education.

10. The Role and position of Non-Governmental Organisations

Cooperation between the civil society and the Government is principally unsatisfactory, with the exception of a few ministries. Most importantly legislation on non-governmental organisations was not enacted in 2003, which means that their status is still unresolved (international non-governmental organisations are in an even worse position). The tax system puts non-governmental organisations in a very difficult situation, especially due to the lack of tax rebate for donations. Non-governmental organisations,

especially those dealing in the rights of the child, still rely on funds from international foundations, foreign governments and international organisations.

In the wider context of inclusion of civil society in individual activities of state bodies, non-governmental organisations have been included in certain spheres and processes.

Representatives of the civil society have been largely included in the development of the concept of educational reform, its preparation and implementation of the first and second 'wave' of the reform (2001-2003). Among them were local non-governmental organisations (citizen associations), international organisations (UNICEF, UNESCO, The Council of Europe, The Open Society Fund, OECD), syndicates, professional organisations (secondary vocational education), parents and children themselves (students).

National minority councils had their representatives in the Educational Council; the National Council of Roma Minority was particularly active in the making and implementation of the Strategy for the improvement of Roma education.

In 2003 few direct activities in the sphere of the rights of the child took place in partnership between Government – non-governmental organisations. If the question of activities related to the rights of the child are viewed in a wider context, cooperation did exist in the sphere of educational reform, the reform of social system and some projects which were connected with the improvement of health care system, sensitisation to discrimination of persons with HIV/AIDS and a little in the sphere of sport.

11. Dissemination, Training and Raising Awareness

The information dissemination, training and general level of awareness of the rights of the child in 2003 were of improved concern of the authorities, but still on a very rudimentary level. Most of the work remained subject of individual campaigns concerning special spheres and activities of non-governmental sector. The most significant systemic effort in this sense is connected with the sphere of education and action of the Ministry of Education and Sport.⁸

Campaigns

The Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of Serbia and Montenegro has organised campaigns to sensitise the public to tolerance and non-discrimination. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has organised a campaign for child safety and the promotion of the role of police in child safety. The Ministry of Education and Sport and the Ministry of Health have organised campaigns with messages related to the promotion of healthy lifestyles and sport and against the use of harmful substances, as well as the campaigns concerning the rights of children with special needs and those victims of trafficking and pornography. All these campaigns are very effective but the problem is that they are short-lived. They pass quickly and the public does not get informed about impact and results that would indicate positive results.

The Role of Media

In 2003 there were many articles in printed and electronic press but these were not the result of the State's special measures, instead they were the result of more intensive

(8) This process is now reversed by abolishment of teacher's training for civic education.

activities (projects) of both domestic and international organisations and of above mentioned campaigns which largely relied on electronic media.

Educational Reform and Dissemination of Information

The reform processes in education are certainly the best example of systemic change in relation to the rights of the child. The syllabus of the optional subject 'Civil Education' (especially 'Civil Education II' for secondary schools) introduces students to human rights and to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Moreover, general goals and outcomes of the reformed school programme include the goals of education for democracy and civil society which create a basis for further inclusion of the subjects of human rights and the rights of the child (see article 29).

The Reform of Social Protection System

In 2003 the Ministry of Social Affairs worked intensively on seven projects that were aimed at the transformation of social protection system. In almost all of these projects one of the dominant activities was the education of staff in the social protection system on children's development needs and their rights.

Civil Sector and International Organisations

Activities disseminating information on the Convention are still largely the work of the civil society sector and international organisations, be it in the form of general and theme-focused campaigns (such as 'Leave no child out' – the campaign of a network of non-governmental organisations which work with children with the UNICEF help) or be it in the form of educational projects for different target groups (children with special needs, medical workers and associates, minority group and similar).

International Cooperation

Cooperation between Serbia and the international community was relatively successful in 2003. In that year again UNICEF played the most important strategic partner to the state in the sphere of the rights of the child. There were also some other important international organisations such as UNESCO, the World Bank, the European Union, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the UN High Commission for Human Rights and many governments of developed countries. Our estimate is that this cooperation would be even more successful and effective if there was an appropriate policy and more coordination in this sphere. Therefore we in the Child Rights Centre hope that the NPA will provide institutional capacities for the implementation of Serbian strategy in the sphere of the rights of the child that will include building capacities for successful international cooperation.