

# Rights of the Child to a Healthy Environment in the Republic of Serbia

JUNE 2021



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>3. RESEARCH FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>3</b>
3.1. SUSTAINABLE HABITS .....	<b>3</b>
3.2. CHALLENGES IN REALISING THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT .....	<b>5</b>
3.3. RIGHT TO INFORMATION AND EDUCATION IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION .....	<b>8</b>
3.4. PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL POLICY MAKING AND ECO-ACTIVISM .....	<b>12</b>
<b>4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>15</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the research Rights of the Child to a Healthy Environment in the Republic of Serbia was to map challenges in realising the rights of the child to a healthy environment in the Republic of Serbia, examine the views of children and youth about the level of realisation of these rights, and create recommendations for further improvement of the rights of the child to a healthy environment. The research was conducted in March and April 2021 as part of the project "Child Rights in Policy and Practice" implemented by the Child Rights Centre in cooperation with Save the Children International, and funded by the Government of Sweden.

The child's right to a healthy environment is guaranteed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments. Article 24 of the Convention, which guarantees the child's right to health, provides that environmental pollution endangers the health and well-being of children and obliges States Parties to prevent the dangers and risks of environmental pollution. Article 29, which guarantees the child's right to education, requires States Parties to direct the education of the child, inter alia, to the development of respect for the natural environment.

The realisation of the child's right to a healthy environment is the basis for the full realisation of many other child's rights and at the same time the states' obligation to take measures to prevent environmental pollution. The UN Human Rights Council Resolution on the Rights of the Child: Realizing the rights of the child through a healthy environment stresses that denying the child's right to a healthy environment prevents the full enjoyment of many other rights by children, such as the right to life, health, living standards, education, the right of the child to be cared for by his or her parents, the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play, as well as the right of the child to

be protected from economic exploitation. This document emphasizes that States parties are obliged to take measures to prevent environmental harm and to protect the rights of children, given that they are particularly vulnerable to the effects of environmental harm. This includes improving legislation and policies, but also preventing harmful practices of air, soil, water, food pollution, the loss of biodiversity, preventing climate change and other. The Resolution encourages States parties to ensure children's inclusive participation in environmental decision-making processes that are likely to affect their development and survival, as well as raising awareness and enhancing education that prepares young people for the future they face.



## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology was based on an online questionnaire for children and young people and the information gathered through focus groups held with relevant actors operating in the field of environmental protection.

The online questionnaire was intended for children and youth aged 12-18 and included 29 open-ended and closed-ended questions. The research sample consisted of 432 children and youth from urban and rural parts of Serbia and from over 20 cities and municipalities in Serbia. The research included 140 male respondents and 271 female respondents, while 21 respondents did not declare their sex. (Figure 1)

The research included 122 respondents 12 years old, 93 respondents 13 years old, 78 respondents 14 years old, 46 respondents 15 years old, 21 respondents 16 years old and 43 respondents 17 years old. (Figure 2)

The questionnaire was created to map the degree of sustainable habits of children and youth, challenges in realising the rights of the child to a healthy environment, the level of information of children and their participation in creating and improving local policies in this field.

The challenges in realising the rights of the child to a healthy environment, which were identified during this phase of the research, were further examined and discussed in the focus groups held with representatives of the Secretariat for Environmental Protection of the City of Belgrade, civil society, international organisations, independent institutions and children and youth. During the period of research, three focus groups were held with a total of 25 participants, including 10 adults and 15 children in the age group 12-18.

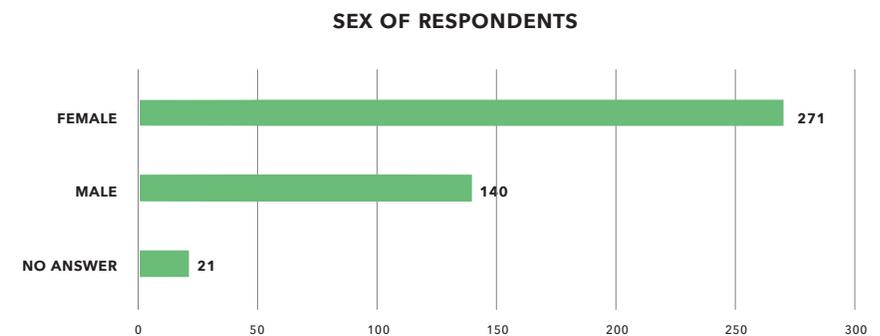


FIGURE 1

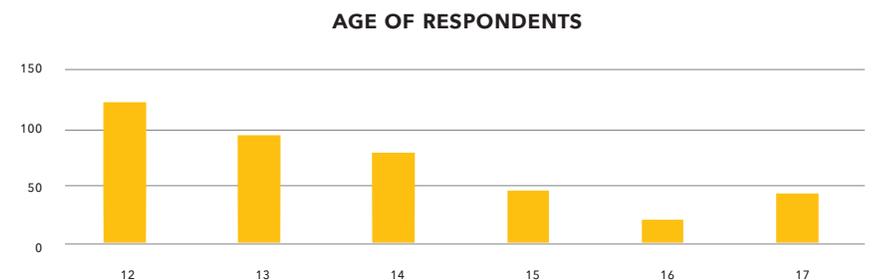


FIGURE 2

# 3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

## 3.1. SUSTAINABLE HABITS

The research findings show that the degree of sustainable habits adopted by children and youth varies.

Most of the respondents adopted sustainable habits related to switching off the light when leaving the room and using energy-efficient light bulbs, fixing broken things before deciding to throw them away and choosing eco-friendly products.

Thus, 90% of respondents always or often switch off the light when leaving the room, while only 3% of respondents never do so or have never thought that it should be done. (Figure 3)

As regards the use of energy-efficient light bulbs, the research shows that nearly two-thirds of children and youth always or often request the use of energy-saving and other types of energy-efficient light bulbs in their rooms (64.3%). However, unlike switching off the light when leaving the room, which is a quite common sustainable habit, nearly one-third of children and youth do not have the habit of using energy-efficient light bulbs. (Figure 4)

**I SWITCH OFF THE LIGHT BEFORE LEAVING THE ROOM**

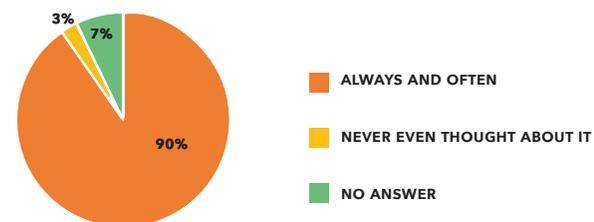


FIGURE 3

**I REQUEST THE USE OF ENERGY-SAVING AND OTHER TYPES OF ENERGY-EFFICIENT LIGHT BULBS**

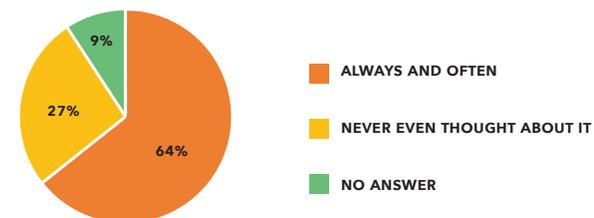


FIGURE 4

The research shows that a large percentage of respondents adopted a sustainable habit of waste reduction and circular economy in relation to throwing away broken stuff. Thus, 87% of respondents always or often try to fix a broken item before deciding on throwing it away, while only 6% of respondents do not do it or have not considered doing it. (Figure 5)

The degree of sustainable habits regarding sustainable consumption is slightly lower. The research shows that about a half of respondents consider whether the products they buy pollute the environment and whether the brands they buy are eco-friendly. (Figure 6)

The research findings reveal a higher degree of sustainable consumption when it comes to buying food. When buying food, 70% of respondents always or often try to choose products that do not pollute the environment. On the other hand, the research shows that a large number of respondents are not sufficiently aware of all the aspects of sustainability concerning food production and sales, particularly those related to protecting the rights of workers, solving surplus food problems and the importance of buying locally produced food. When choosing food, 39.6% of respondents do not take into account whether the rights of workers are respected during its production, 45% do not take into account what the seller does with unsold surplus food, 36.8% do not know whether the food is produced in Serbia or imported from abroad. Also, the research findings show that 43% of children and youth do not care or care only to some extent whether the food they eat is healthy, while 53.4% do not care or care only to some extent what was used and how many times for spraying the fruits and vegetables they eat. These data inevitably raise the question of whether children and youth are sufficiently informed about all aspects of sustainable nutrition when choosing foods that they think do not pollute the environment. (Figure 7)

As regards waste management and waste reduction habits, the research findings show that a large number of respondents have recognised the importance of reducing the use of plastic bags and that many of them wear a grocery bag when shopping (70%). However, the fact that about one-fifth of respondents (22%) continue not wearing a grocery bag and use plastic bags is worrying. As regards the separation of recyclable waste, it is worrying that nearly one-third of respondents do not separate paper, PET plastic, aluminium and glass for recycling or have not considered it, while 58.8% of respondents do it always or often. (Figure 8)

**I TRY TO FIX A BROKEN ITEM BEFORE DECIDING TO THROW IT AWAY AND BUY A NEW ONE**

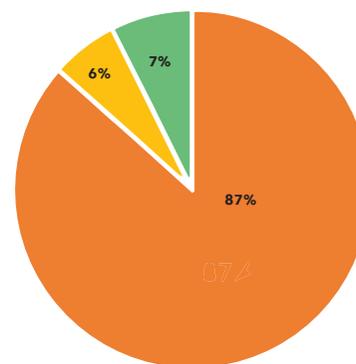


FIGURE 5

**I RATHER CHOOSE ECO-FRIENDLY BRANDS THAT RESPECT THE ENVIRONMENT**

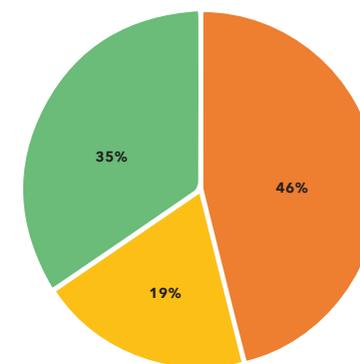


FIGURE 6

ALWAYS AND OFTEN      NEVER EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT IT      NO ANSWER

**WHEN BUYING FOOD, I TRY TO CHOOSE PRODUCTS THAT DO NOT POLLUTE THE ENVIRONMENT**

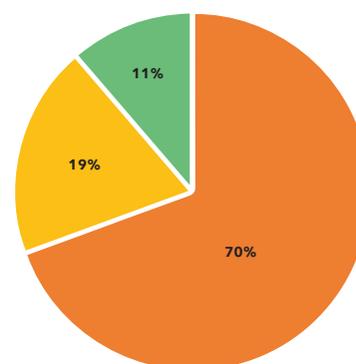


FIGURE 7

**I SEPARATE PAPER, PET PLASTIC, ALUMINIUM AND GLASS FOR RECYCLING**

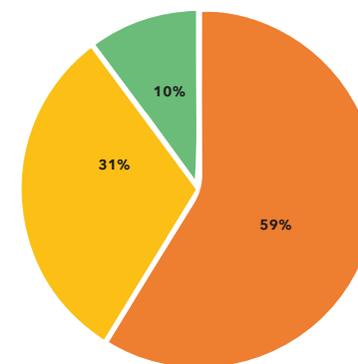


FIGURE 8

As regards sustainable transport, the research findings show that nearly two-thirds of respondents try to use the least-polluting means of transportation (66%). However, it should be noted that one-fifth of respondents stated that they did not have that sustainable habit (23%). (Figure 9)

The research findings show that children and young people recognise the importance of sustainable habits and sustainable development. The focus group respondents have repeatedly stressed that, in their experience, children and youth recognise the importance of sustainable habits and sustainable development, sometimes even more than adults, including their parents and other adults from their immediate environment.

### 3.2. CHALLENGES IN REALISING THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The research findings show that children and youth are concerned about numerous problems of environmental pollution, which were mentioned both in their answers to the questionnaire and in the focus groups held with relevant actors.

The largest percentage of respondents are concerned about air pollution, pollution of rivers and lakes and waste accumulation. About a half of respondents are concerned about the extinction of plant and animal species and food pollution, and more than one-third of respondents are worried about climate change and overexploitation of natural resources. (Figure 10)

During the research, children and youth pointed out the existence of numerous problems of environmental pollution in the places where they lived. The respondents stated that the biggest problems of environmental pollution in their places of residence were waste, air pollution, water pollution, illegal logging, extinction of plant and animal species and food pollution. (Figure 11)

As regards the specific problems that concern them most in their places of residence, children and young people mentioned illegal dumps, waste incineration, insufficient number of garbage bins and containers, dumping of waste and harmful and toxic substances in rivers, construction of factories without filters, lack of green areas, traffic and other.

**WHEN I GO SOMEWHERE, I TRY TO USE THE LEAST POLLUTING MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION (BICYCLE, KICK SCOOTER, ETC.)**



FIGURE 9

**WHICH OF THESE ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION PROBLEMS ARE YOU MOST CONCERNED ABOUT? (YOU CAN CHOOSE MORE THAN ONE ANSWER)**

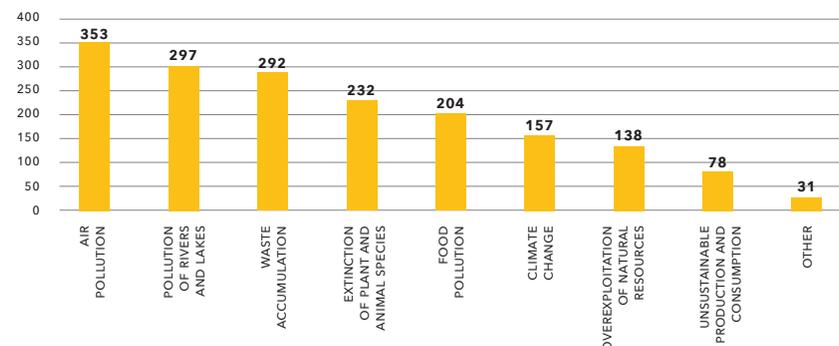


FIGURE 10

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION IN THE PLACE WHERE YOU LIVE? (YOU CAN CHOOSE MORE THAN ONE ANSWER)**

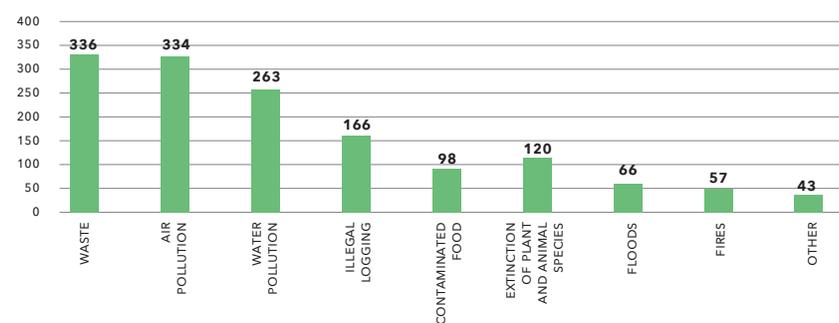


FIGURE 11

## What are children concerned about?

AIR AIR AIR!!!!!!

Irresponsibility of people who throw garbage around rivers and in nature.

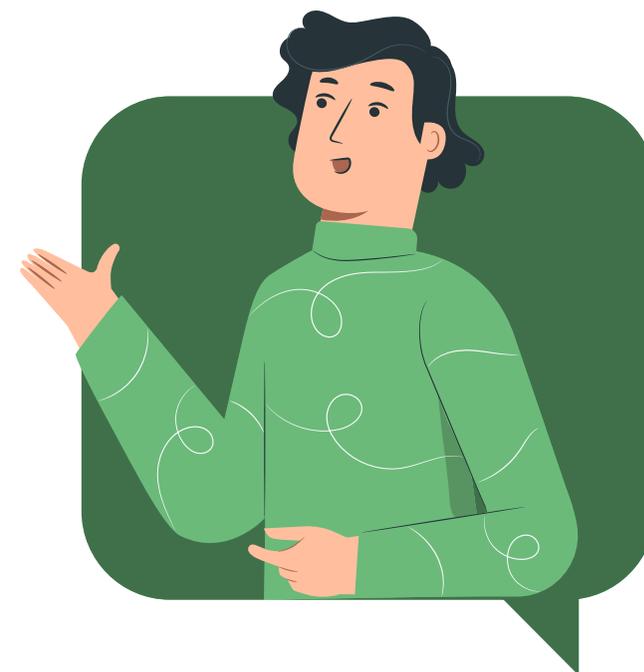
Water has colour and taste, air has colour and smell, we will find more waste next to the garbage bin than inside of it.

I am worried about the problems called "people". They are very obstinate and nothing can be ever explained to them. And there is also the problem that we all have different opinions and they really do not care about the fact that the air will be polluted, that streams will become sewers, that animals have the right to live. When all this is mentioned to them, they just say that it is better to be silent and not talk about it because who knows what can happen. I think exactly the opposite.

The cleanliness of my city!

Extremely polluted river.

There is not enough greenery.



The respondents pointed out that the major causes of air pollution in their places of residence were traffic, waste incineration, factories and industry. Moreover, the research findings reveal that one-third of respondents point out poor monitoring by the state as one of the basic problems of environmental and air pollution. (Figure 12)

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE BIGGEST SOURCES OF AIR POLLUTION IN THE PLACE WHERE YOU LIVE? (YOU CAN CHOOSE MORE THAN ONE ANSWER)**

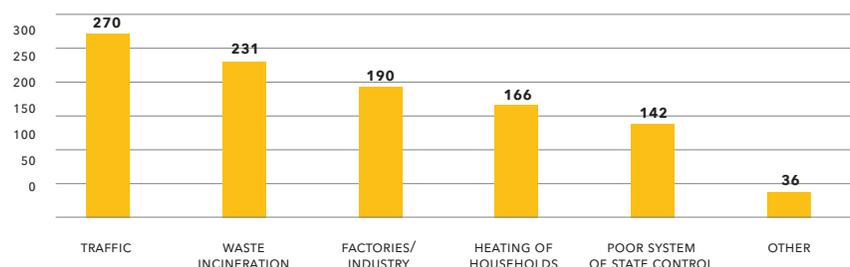


FIGURE 12

The respondents pointed out that the major causes of the extinction of plant and animal species in their places of residence were environmental pollution, insufficient care for the environment by the state, illegal hunting and harvesting of wild species. (Figure 13)

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE MAJOR CAUSES OF THE EXTINCTION OF PLANT AND ANIMAL SPECIES IN THE PLACE WHERE YOU LIVE? (YOU CAN CHOOSE MORE THAN ONE ANSWER)**

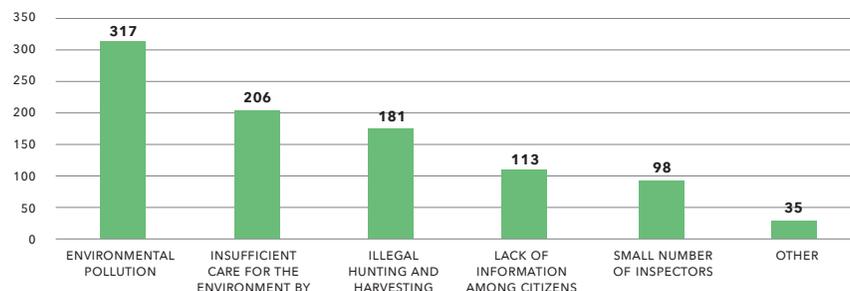


FIGURE 13

A large number of respondents believe that environmental pollution affects children's health (81.5%) or affects it to some extent (12.9%), while only a very small number of respondents believe that pollution has minimal or no impact on children's health (2.2%).

One of the recognised challenges in realising the child's right to a healthy environment is the lack of green areas in places where children and young people live and the fact that young people do not spend enough time in nature and outdoors.

The research findings show that only one-fifth of respondents believe that there are enough parks, greenery and trees in their town or municipality, while more than one-third of respondents think that there are enough or minimal green areas. (Figure 14)

**IN YOUR OPINION, ARE THERE ENOUGH PARKS, GREENERY AND TREES IN YOUR TOWN/MUNICIPALITY?**

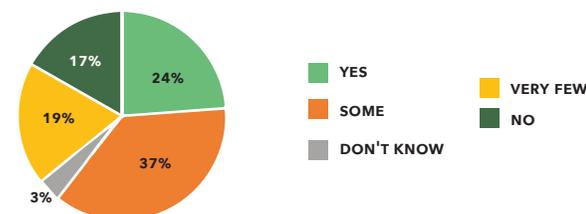


FIGURE 14

More than a half of respondents believe that young people do not spend or spend minimal time outdoors. The research findings reveal that most respondents spend only 1-5 hours a week in nature (32.9% before the COVID-19 pandemic and 51.1% during the COVID-19 pandemic), while a very small percentage of respondents spend over 20 hours a week in nature (10.6% before the COVID-19 pandemic and 5.9% during the COVID-19 pandemic). The respondents used to spend significantly more time in nature before the COVID-19 pandemic than during the pandemic. (Figure 15)

**HOW MUCH TIME A WEEK DO YOU SPEND IN NATURE?**

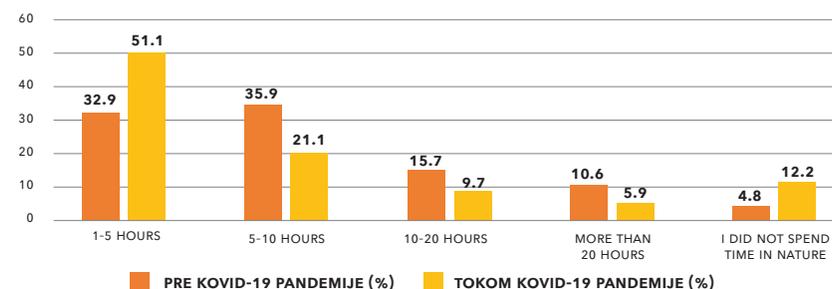


FIGURE 15

### 3.3. RIGHT TO INFORMATION AND EDUCATION IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

**The research findings show that the child's right to information in the field of environmental protection is not sufficiently exercised.**

As regards the level of awareness about the state of the environment in the respondents' places of residence, only 14% of them believe that they are fully informed, while nearly one-fifth of them (18.6%) believe that they are not at all informed or are minimally informed about the state of the environment in the places of their residence. The research findings show that there is an insufficient level of awareness among children and young people about the ways of exercising their right to a healthy environment. Thus, only 14% of respondents believe that they are fully informed about how they can exercise their rights, while about one-fifth of respondents (23.6%) think that they are not informed about it at all or are minimally informed. The respondents are not sufficiently informed about what their right to a healthy environment exactly means. Thus, about one-fifth of respondents (23.4%) believe that they are fully informed about what this right exactly means, while one-fifth of respondents are not informed at all or are minimally informed (23.2%). (Figure 16) The respondents also point out that they are not satisfied with the information about their rights to a healthy environment received at school. Thus, only one-fifth of respondents are completely satisfied with the information about their rights received at school, while one-fifth of respondents are not satisfied at all or are minimally satisfied. (Figure 17)

The focus group participants also point out that the education of children and youth in the field of environmental protection very rarely includes the aspect of the child's rights to a healthy environment and concrete steps for their exercise and that it is necessary to improve the way of educating young people about their rights to a healthy environment.

The respondents have mostly been informed about the state of the environment, their rights and ways to protect their rights to a healthy environment at school (65.1%), through the media (51%) and by their parents/guardians (46.9%). However, about one-third of respondents are informed also through social media (35.6%) and independent research (34.6%). The smallest percentage of respondents receive information through influencers (6.9%). (Figure 18)

**ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5, PLEASE RATE TO WHICH EXTENT YOU ARE SATISFIED WITH THE INFORMATION ABOUT THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE PLACE WHERE YOU LIVE.**

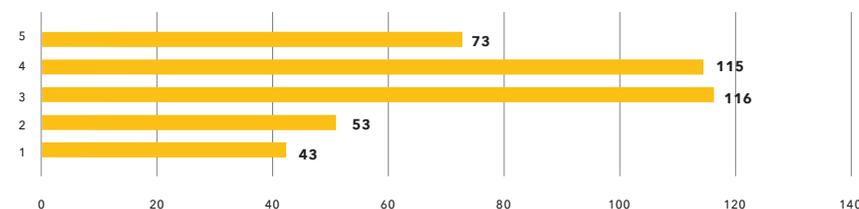


FIGURE 16

**ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5, PLEASE RATE YOUR SATISFACTION WITH THE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT RECEIVED AT SCHOOL.**

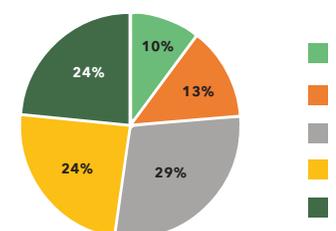


FIGURE 17

**WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT, YOUR RIGHTS AND WAYS TO PROTECT YOUR RIGHTS TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT?**

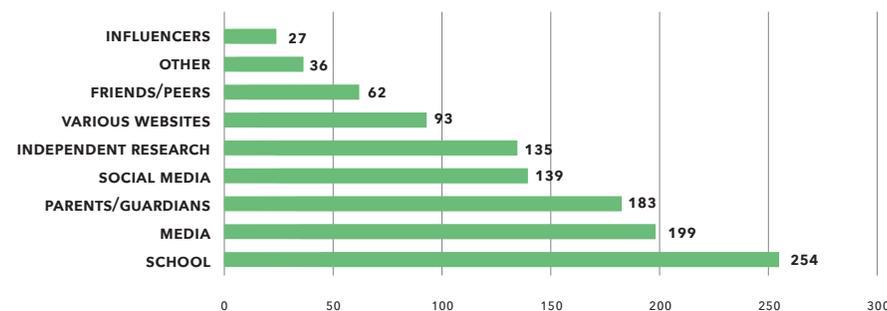


FIGURE 18

As regards trust in the accuracy of information, the research findings show that most respondents trust the information about the state of the environment received from environmental organisations or scientists, while the smaller number of them trust influencers, companies, the government and civil servants. (Figure 19)

Most of the respondents believe that providing information at school is the best way to raise the children's level of knowledge about their rights to a healthy environment and ways to exercise and protect them. The surveyed children also recognise media, online platforms, posters, brochures, festivals and social media as important ways of informing. As regards various social media platforms, children are most interested in the information received through TikTok and YouTube, and they use Instagram and Facebook much less. The research reveals that children are also beginning to recognise podcast as a place where they can be informed about the rights to a healthy environment. (Figure 20)

**In addition to the mentioned ways of informing, the research participants suggested some additional ways of getting information: through the introduction of a special subject in school, interactive workshops, various environmental actions, education and spending time in nature, animated educational programmes and short online courses that would be part of school curriculum and other.**

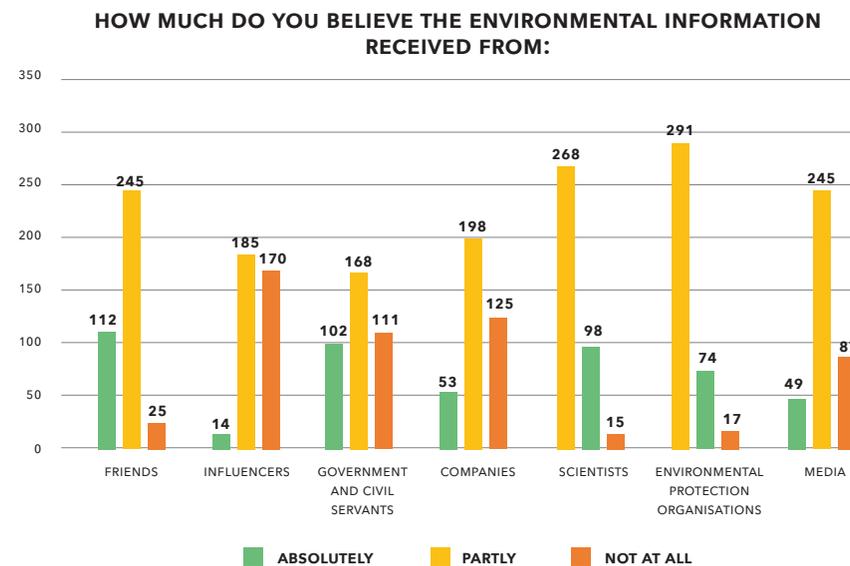


FIGURE 19

**WHAT SOURCES COULD CHILDREN USE TO BE BETTER INFORMED ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT AND WAYS TO EXERCISE AND PROTECT THEIR RIGHTS?**

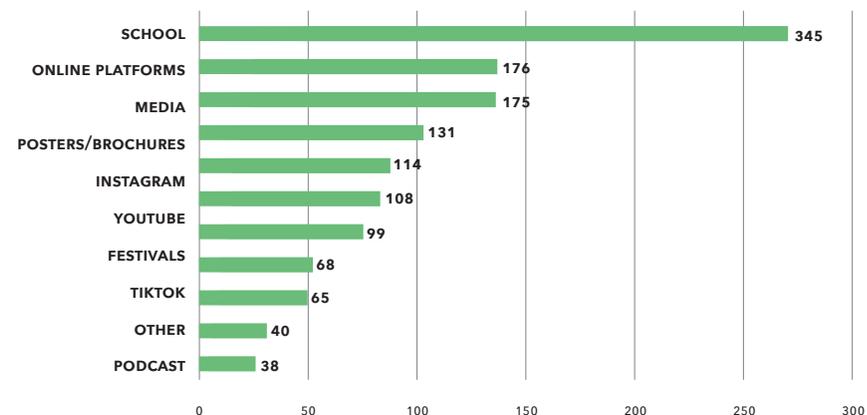


FIGURE 20

## What do children suggest?

*If the children participating in the actions were publicly praised, it would motivate them.*

*Organise environmental clubs.*

*Reliable websites should exist to inform us about the pollution of nature and ways we can reduce it.*

*Obtaining an online certificate for short online courses that children would attend as part of a particular school subject, as well as grades for that subject or at least the possibility of collecting "pluses" that would increase their final grade.*

*Organise educational camps for children (to teach them how to protect the environment and how the environment affects their health).*

*Introduce a MANDATORY subject: Environmental Protection and Rights of the Child.*

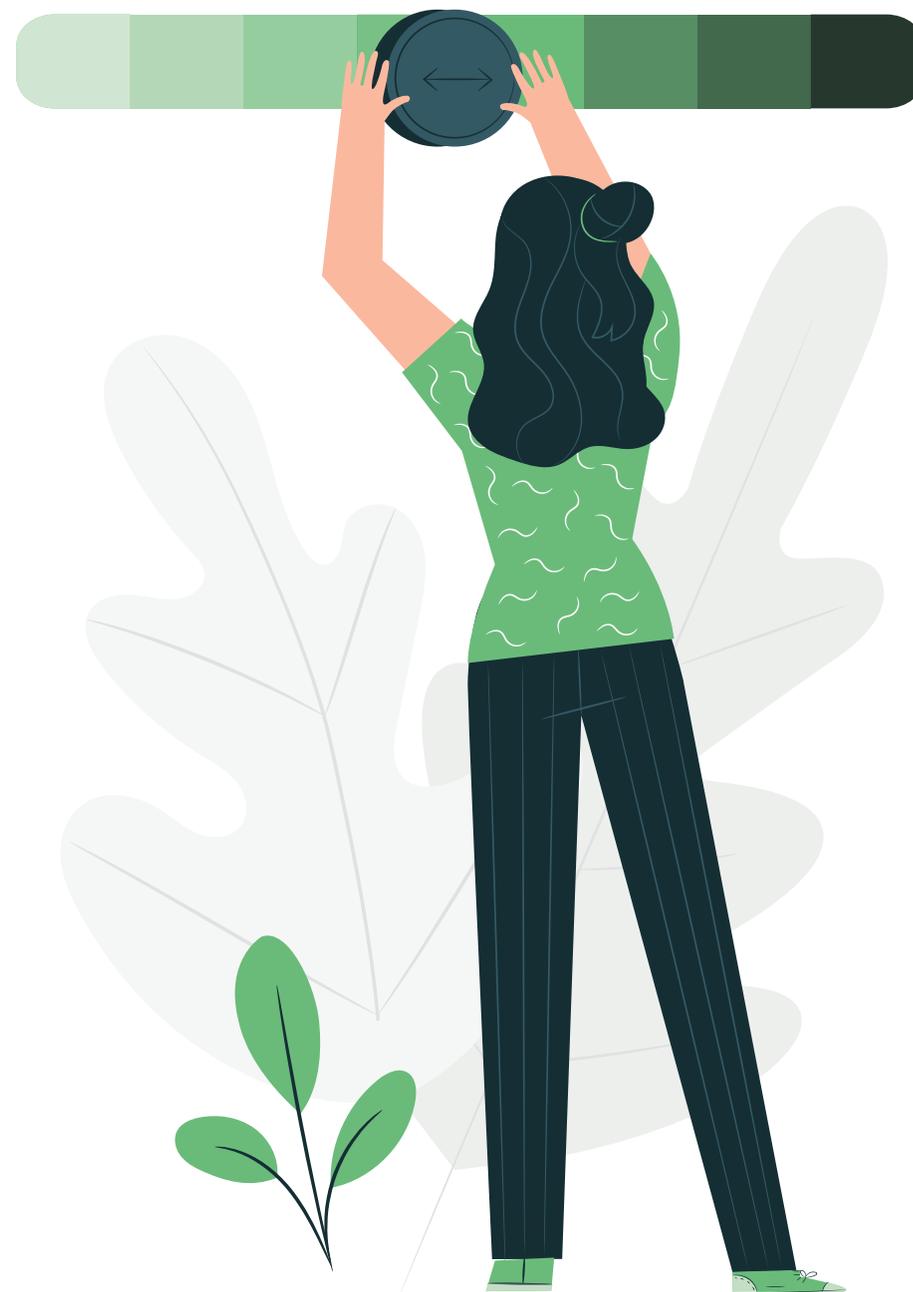


**The research findings show that one of the key challenges is the realisation of the right of the child to education in the field of environmental protection.**

The respondents point out that there are significant differences in the exercise of this right in the system of formal education. One of the basic problems is the fact that the subjects related to environmental protection and sustainable development are elective and that in some schools a small number of pupils choose these subjects. The respondents state that in choosing between different elective subjects, they were not sufficiently informed about the content of those classes, so they mainly opted for the elective subjects suggested by their teachers or parents. This is why a small number of primary school pupils choose the elective subject Nature Keepers. The same problem exists in high schools regarding the subject Sustainable Development. Some respondents point out that at the time of choosing an elective subject, they did not get a thorough explanation of the content of this subject, and the teachers instructed them to choose some other subjects. In addition, one high school pupil stated that the subject Sustainable Development was not offered in her school when she was choosing elective subjects. An additional problem is the low level of awareness among parents about the importance of these subjects, especially when choosing subjects in primary schools.

Another problem is the fact that elective subjects are often taught by teachers who do not have a sufficient number of classes, and they are most rarely biology teachers. This raises the question to which extent the teachers who teach these elective subjects have had the opportunity to improve their capacity to work in this area, particularly if we take into account the fact that such subjects require an interactive and multisectoral approach.

The research shows that children are very interested in acquiring additional knowledge in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development, particularly through interactive and concrete activities. The respondents with experience in the field of formal and informal education state that the regular education system provides a possibility to work interactively through various subjects and that the fields of environmental protection, climate change and sustainable development are taught through specific elective subjects, but also through different regular subjects. In addition, all focus group participants agreed that it was necessary to introduce these subjects as compulsory, instead of elective subjects in primary and secondary schools.



### 3.4. PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN LOCAL POLICY MAKING AND ECO-ACTIVISM

The research findings indicate that the participation of children in the making of local policies related to the improvement of the environment is at a very low level.

Only 8.7% of respondents stated that they participated in local policy making in the place of their residence. Taking into consideration that the research included children from over 20 towns and municipalities in Serbia, this piece of information is very worrying and suggests the importance of the issue of exercising the right of the child to participate at the local level.

The research shows that children are insufficiently informed about the state’s obligations and policies related to environmental protection and sustainable development. The highest level of information exists in relation to policies regarding the protection of nature, the protection of plant and animal species and air pollution. The lowest level of information exists in relation to policies regarding circular economy, energy efficiency and sustainable development. The research shows that 45% of respondents are not or are minimally informed about the state’s obligations and policies related to circular economy; 37.4% of respondents are not or are minimally informed about sustainable development policies, and 35.4% about energy efficiency policies. The research shows that about one-third of respondents are not informed or are minimally informed about policies in the field of waste management (33.5%), climate change (30.5%), sustainable nutrition (29.4%) and eco-friendly and green cities (30.5%). (Figure 21)

The research shows that children are very interested in participating in activities for the protection and improvement of environmental protection. Nearly one-third of respondents (26%) have so far participated in protests, campaigns or other actions for environmental protection. Nearly two-thirds of respondents state that various environmental protection actions have been organised in their schools.

The focus group participants mention various activities in which they have participated, such as collecting bottle caps (CAP FOR HANDICAP), collecting different types of waste for recycling, arrangement of courtyard (planting plants or collecting waste) and other. Some focus group participants also point out that they tried to organise environmental actions in school independently, mainly as part of various local projects aimed at activism or education of children and youth. (Figure 22)

TO WHAT EXTENT ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH THE STATE'S OBLIGATIONS AND POLICIES RELATED TO:

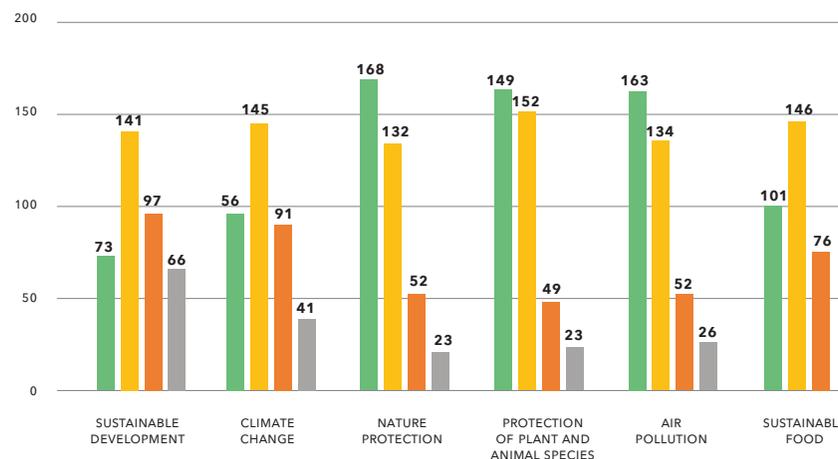


FIGURE 21

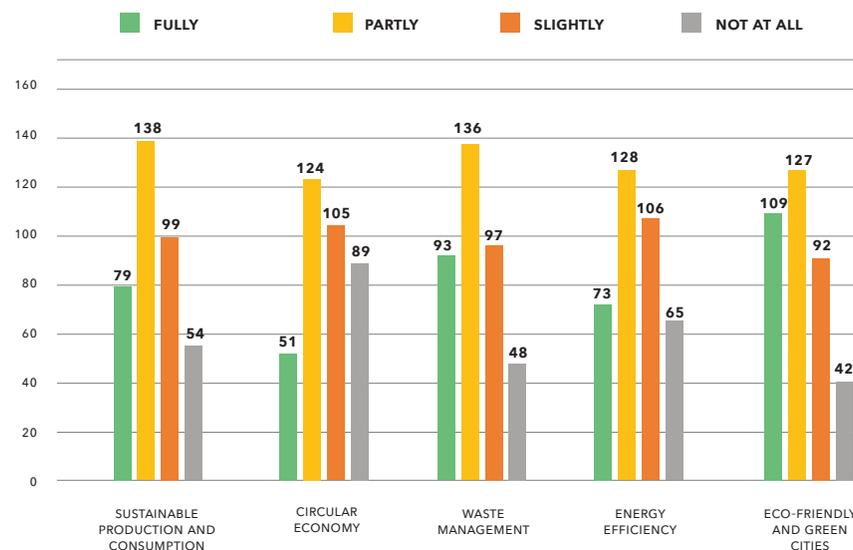


FIGURE 22

The respondents gave numerous recommendations for improving the state of the environment in the places of their residence. Most of the recommendations referred to the need to improve the system of monitoring, its efficient implementation and to increase penalties for violations of environmental regulations.

In addition, a significant number of recommendations referred to specific measures aimed at improving the environment, such as placing a sufficient number of garbage bins, improving the recycling system, creating more green areas, installing filters in factories, introducing sustainable transport, solving the problems of socially vulnerable population, banning artificial fertilizers, organising environmental actions and greater involvement of children in environmental protection projects.



## What do children recommend?

*Filters for house and factory chimneys.*

*I would change the accumulation of waste and the way people dispose of it.*

*More organisations for environmental clean-up.*

*More campaigns for planting trees and greater state control of waste, deforestation, etc.*

*I would adopt a law on banning air pollution and supplement it with new measures, such as using appropriate sources of heating, banning cars with outdated systems (diesel, etc.), limiting the number of cars in traffic, introducing free city bikes, ordinary and electric ones, applying the concept of roof afforestation and roof gardens, green corridors between traffic lanes, etc.*

*Sanctions for the pollution of nature.*

*Greater use of renewable energy sources.*

*Punishing those who destroy nature.*

*I would involve children more in environmental projects.*

*If each person collected waste in front of their building, raft, house, etc. once a week (e.g. "clean Thursday"), everyone would dedicate time to cleaning up on Thursdays and everything would be much better and cleaner.*

*Mandatory recycling and removal of plastics from the production of products such as food and beverages.*

*Eco-friendly, green city.*



## 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research shows that children and youth are highly aware of the importance of environmental protection, the negative effects of environmental pollution and the establishment of a sustainable society. Currently, however, there are a number of challenges that call into question the realisation of the right of the child to a healthy environment in the Republic of Serbia.

**One of the main challenges is a high level of environmental pollution in many places where children and young people live, with the most common sources of pollution being inadequate waste management, air pollution, water pollution, food pollution and biodiversity destruction. The causes of these problems lie in the underdeveloped legislative and strategic framework and the inefficient implementation of the existing regulations and policies.**

Many causes of environmental pollution in the places where children and young people live, as identified during the research, directly arise from the violation of regulations (illegal dumps, dumping of waste and toxic substances in rivers, illegal exploitation of biodiversity, waste incineration, installation of inadequate filters, etc.) or from the lack of efficient strategic measures for ensuring a sufficient number of sustainable green areas, improvement of air, water, soil and food quality, better waste management and improvement and protection of biodiversity.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Analyse the legislation of the Republic of Serbia concerning the realisation of the right of the child to a healthy environment.
- ▶ Analyse the policies of the Republic of Serbia concerning the realisation of the right of the child to a healthy environment.
- ▶ Establish the level of compliance of the Republic of Serbia's legislation and policies with international standards in the field of environmental protection, protection of nature, air, soil and water, climate change, waste management, energy efficiency, sustainable nutrition, sustainable production and consumption, sustainable development and other fields important for realising the right of the child to a healthy environment.
- ▶ Identify key challenges in practice that lead to inadequate application of adopted regulations and inadequate implementation of defined strategic measures.
- ▶ Formulate recommendations for the improvement of legislation, policies and practices in terms of exercising the right of the child to a healthy environment in the Republic of Serbia.
- ▶ Improve the legislative and strategic framework to ensure the realisation of the right of the child to a healthy environment.
- ▶ Improve the monitoring system and ensure efficient implementation of regulations.

► Enhance the capacity of all professionals at the national and local level in the field of realising the right of the child to a healthy environment, in order to ensure the life of children in a healthy environment through a coordinated multisectoral approach and the adoption of sustainable policies.

**A serious challenge in realising the right of the child to a healthy environment is also the fact that children and youth do not spend enough time outdoors and in nature and that in many places, in the opinion of children and young people, there are not enough parks and other green areas, while schools do not organise education in nature.** The research shows that a large number of children spend between 1 and 5 hours a week in nature, which is a very disconcerting fact.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify the causes why children and young people do not spend enough time in nature.
- Define recommendations for improving legislation, policies and practices and ensure that children and young people spend more time in nature.

**The research shows that children and youth are usually not involved in the processes of making and improving local policies and do not know enough about the state's obligations and the content of policies related to sustainable development, climate change, nature protection, protection of plant and animal species, sustainable nutrition, sustainable production and consumption, circular economy, waste management, energy efficiency and eco-friendly and green cities.** On the other hand, children are highly motivated to get involved in the policy-making process, suggest ways to improve the environment in the places where they live and participate in concrete environmental protection actions. The low level of children's participation in the local policy making process and the improvement of their environment is a serious violation of the right of the child to a healthy environment and the right to participation.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Raise the level of knowledge of children and youth about their rights to a healthy environment, relevant strategic policies and ways of participation in local policy making and advocacy.

► Urgently develop participatory mechanisms and ensure the participation of children in the making of local policies related to environmental protection and sustainable development.

**The child's right to information and education in the field of environmental protection is not sufficiently exercised.** The research shows that a small percentage of children and youth are fully informed about the state of the environment in their places of residence. As many as four-fifths of respondents do not know how they can exercise their rights to a healthy environment and what that right exactly means. The system of formal education has not been developed in a way to provide every child with efficient education in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development, but the quality of education depends on the motivation and capacity of teachers. The research calls into question the quality of these subjects, especially when teachers are selected from among those who lack a certain number of classes and when they do not have sufficient capacity or are not motivated to work in this field. The subjects dealing with environmental protection and sustainable development are usually elective and teachers do not promote them sufficiently, due to which in some schools a small number of children opt for them. As regards the provision of information about the rights to a healthy environment, the research shows that only one-fifth of respondents are completely satisfied with the information about their rights received at school.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve the system of transparency and informing children and youth about the state of the environment.
- Improve the system of formal education and ensure that every child in formal education acquires a high level of knowledge about environmental protection and sustainable development and realisation of the child's right to a healthy environment.
- Improve the capacity of teachers in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development, with a special focus on the child's rights to a healthy environment.
- Strengthen the system of informal education in the field of the right of the child to a healthy environment.
- Improve the ways of informal education of children in this field through online platforms, applications, social and other media, brochures, posters, other creative content and workshops at festivals, camps and other.
- Enhance the level of knowledge and awareness of all citizens about the importance of realising the child's rights to a healthy environment and building a sustainable society.

# IMPRINT

**Publisher:**

Child Rights Centre  
Dobračina 29/3A, 11000 Belgrade  
www.cpd.org.rs

**For publisher:**

Jasmina Miković, Child Rights Centre Director

**Editor:**

Jasmina Miković

**Author and researcher:**

Milena Banić, PhD

**Proof-reader:**

Milena Jakovljević

**Design and layout:**

Polovinas design studio

---

**The research was conducted as part of the project "Child Rights in Policy and Practice" implemented by the Child Rights Centre in cooperation with Save the Children International, and funded by the Government of Sweden.**

**The views expressed in this publication are those of the publisher and do not necessarily reflect the views of Save the Children International or the Government of Sweden.**

All terms used in this publication in the masculine grammatical gender include both the masculine and feminine genders of the persons to whom they refer.

---

# CHILD RIGHTS CENTRE

DOBRAČINA 29/3A, 11000 BELGRADE, SERBIA

TEL: +381 11 33 44 170

WWW.CPD.ORG.RS

OFFICE@CPD.ORG.RS

---

THE CHILD RIGHTS CENTRE IS AN ASSOCIATION OF CITIZENS ESTABLISHED IN 1997 WITH THE MAIN AIM OF IMPLEMENTING CHILD RIGHTS IN SERBIA IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD. THE MAIN COURSE OF ACTION OF THE CENTRE IS AIMED AT CREATING A FAVOURABLE INSTITUTIONAL, LEGISLATIVE AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE FULL ACHIEVEMENT OF CHILD RIGHTS IN SERBIA THROUGH ACTIVITIES FOCUSED ON THE INTRODUCTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LAWS, POLICIES AND PRACTICES THAT CONTRIBUTES TO THE CHILD'S WELL-BEING AND PROTECTION, AS WELL AS TO THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN IN SOCIETY.

---

 @CENTARZAPRAVADETETA

 @CENTARZAPRAVADETETA

