

The **Macedonian National Coalition** of NGOs dedicated to protecting the rights of the child (henceforward: the Coalition) submits the following

Overview

- The Coalition thinks that the legislative system of the Republic of Macedonia contains all required legal measures, which constitute the basic prerequisites for the implementation of international standards on children's rights. This is conducive to the practical implementation of the Convention and the stipulated rights in Macedonia. The Coalition, however, also emphasises the disparity between legal regulations and their implementation in practice. In this sense the Coalition advocates the consistent implementation of legal norms.
- The Coalition thinks the extent of cooperation between the Govt. and NGOs insufficient - especially with respect to the preparation of legal acts referring to the protection of the rights of children and the relevant Convention.
- The members of the Coalition are not recipients of budget funds. They operate on the basis of voluntary activity, without any innate funds for the execution of planned projects. We propose that the Govt. prepares criteria providing equal financial support to NGOs dedicated to the protection of the rights of children.
- The Coalition welcomes and supports the initiative to introduce the institution of a CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN. It considers that this institution could operate within the NGO sector, as an office regulated by law or a special decree.
- The Coalition thinks that the Govt. should make additional efforts as regards the ratification of international conventions and agreements related to the recognition / implementation of court rulings - especially if the latter refer to cases of kidnapping or alimony cases.
- In spite of the fact that the Govt. Report offers a survey of the Constitutional and legislative regulatory framework on several issues concerning the protection of children with developmental difficulties and disabilities as successfully regulated - all this remains at a prevalingly declarative level. State institutions lack initiatives in practice through relevant mechanisms, through organisation and coordination and through achieving concrete results - which would be evaluated independently of existing subjective and objective factors and reasons;

- The Govt. has unreservedly reiterated adherence to several international treaties related to the rights of children, especially of those experiencing developmental difficulties as for example “The Standard Rules on Equal Opportunities for Handicapped People”. Their practical implementation has not been accomplished, however.
- The Coalition advocates the introduction of education on the rights of the child and on prevention against sexual abuse; on (verbal and physical) abuse, on protection against AIDS and on protection against child pornography into educational curricula.

The Coalition thinks that the Govt. should propose a law, concordant to which all children up to the age of 18 will not be required to pay for medical treatment.

- The Coalition considers the development of a protection and support system for children without parents - placed with foster-families or children's homes - a priority.
- Foster-families looking after children without parents should be granted high-quality material and social benefits.
- The Coalition endorses the proposal on the financing of a shelter for homeless children by the Govt. This facility would operate within the NGO sector.
- We would like to request the invitation of 2 representatives of the Macedonian National Coalition of NGOs by the Children's Rights Committee, to their session of the Working Group.

Reports have been submitted by all organisations which are members of the Coalition. Copies of the same have been enclosed.