



Progress towards implementing the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2012-2015

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Dear distinguished, guests and participants,

On behalf of the Minister of Labor, Social Security & Welfare of Greece, I address this so interesting conference for the children's rights, thanks to Council of Europe and the Croatian authorities.

Given the state of the economy on a global level as well as the financial crisis in Greece and several social factors that have aggravated the population statistics, it is clearly, that despite the policies that have already been taken in order to implement the International Conventions for the protection of the rights of the child, more efforts is needed in national level.

Recently, Greece has banned corporal punishment by Law 3500/2006, aligning our legislation with the recommendations of the Council of Europe and the International Convention.

In the framework of the administrative reforms that have been instituted during the past years in Greece, many needs were emerged. For example, the national family benefits have been under the microscope with a view to revitalise the concept so as to accommodate the recent social demands, update the procedures and achieve a more efficient distribution of national funds. Nowadays a typical family does not bear more than two children. On that basis the reform of the family benefits revolved around the need to support families from their first child. Therefore, the old policy with regard to the family benefits has been substituted by the newly established "Child Support Benefit" and the "Family Allowance".

We still have a hard work to do, regarding the progress of the implementation with respect of the protection of the rights of the child, enhanced our co-operation with the Greek Ombudsman for child's rights, we approved programs in financing institutions so they can function effectively and fulfill the role/duties assigned to them by the legislation, founding of institutions and coordination of the bodies which implement the legislation, decentralization of the institutions so that they apply to the whole territory of the state and especially to areas of the province which are vulnerable to poverty and discrimination, and working for the goal of de-institutionalization. We plan the operation of an Observatory that can provide independent supervision and documentation of the progress of the Convention and broad consultation with social partners for the development of a national policy for effective support and protection of children.

Following the completion of the first implementation period the General Secretariat of Welfare faces the challenges of completing the evaluation, analysing quarterly data sheets and issuing adequate statistical results, drafting a comparative report depicting the impact of the new scheme of children's protection, developing enhanced implementation tools, adopting better targeted policies and optimal decisions on a governmental level.

We should move towards protection and support measures for every separated child regardless of his or her asylum story, towards an overall framework that will clarify responsibilities, assign duties and provide services according to need. But the answer is not there. I will agree with the statement that all of you have clearly thought, and repeatedly said in these two days conference. We have to keep listening to the children's voice. It's our main duty.

Thank you.