

National recommendations on how to ensure alternative care is provided with a focus on the rights of children and their best interests

Country: *Bulgaria*

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| <p>All professionals who work with children in alternative care to be trained on children's rights</p> | <p>Children's rights should be guaranteed by creating a professional community for the child, which should include social services as well as the other professional communities. Moreover, it is necessary to work towards creating a connection between these systems and communities.</p> <p>The Ordinance on Criteria and Standards of Social Services for Children states that the social service provider guarantees that the whole process of service provision is in line with the UNCRC. The first step for the service provider to comply with this stipulation is to provide introductory (basic) and ongoing training on children's rights for the personnel of the residential service.</p> <p>State Agency for Child Protection (SACP) within its functions should monitor and control the extent to which the child care service provides training for the personnel on children's rights. The level of implementation of children's rights in the day-to-day work of the residential service is the responsibility of monitoring and control, but it is essential that SACP monitors the ongoing support the personnel receives from the management of the service for better realisation of children's rights.</p> |
| <p>Training courses on realisation of children's rights to be included in the university and post-graduate curricula for professionals who work with children in alternative care.</p> | <p>There are State educational requirements for the professions related to child welfare services that fall under the Law for Vocational Education and Training. These requirements should explicitly state that the programmes for the respective vocational training include the topic of children's rights and their realisation in practice. The Ministry of Education and Science should set the topic of children's rights, realisation of children's rights by care professionals in the university and post-graduate curricula of care professionals.</p> |
| <p>Children and young people in alternative care learn about children's rights</p> | <p>Realisation of the children's rights cannot be done properly without the involvement of children and young adults. The role of civic education in schools and in extracurricular forms can be further developed so that the children and young adults receive good knowledge and understanding about their rights.</p> <p>The service providers should plan and implement additional activities with children focused on children's rights. The activities should take into account children's age and maturity. The activities should be properly documented and reflected in the individual care plans of the children.</p> <p>These activities of the service providers can also be a subject of monitoring and control by SACP.</p> |

Conduct research and data collection regarding existing educational and training programmes and practices

In Bulgaria there are 13 universities that have accredited programmes for social work, 9 for psychology and 9 for pedagogy. Presently there is no official data on whether these programmes contain courses on children's rights.

In terms of ongoing training opportunities for child welfare professionals, there is no valid and reliable information about training providers, methodologies and professionals that have been trained.

The implementation of the above-mentioned recommendations can be strongly supported by a national survey, which will give evidence for further actions regarding the university programmes for child welfare professionals.

Child welfare services and the service providers should also be included in the survey to evaluate to what extent the child welfare professionals employed in the services have received training on children's rights and what support they receive by their employers to introduce the rights-based approach in their work.

Such a survey will give sound basis for evidence-based advocacy on national level, so that the training curricula for child welfare professionals include the topic of children's rights.

The Ministry of Education and Science can initiate the survey and support its implementation.