



Progress in protecting CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

challenges and opportunities

Conference organised by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour with the support of the Council of Europe Programme "Building a Europe for and with children"

CONFERENCE OUTLINE



Conference Room, Building III of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania,
Gediminas Ave. 53, Vilnius

6-7 November 2014

TOPIC

Progress in protecting children's rights, challenges and opportunities

DATE AND VENUE

The conference will take place on 6–7 November 2014 in the Conference Room, Building III of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Gediminas Ave. 53, Vilnius.

ORGANISERS

The Conference is organised by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania in the framework of the 25th Anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child with the support of the Council of Europe Programme "Building a Europe for and with Children".

PARTNERS

The Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania (Seimas), the Children's Rights Ombudsperson of the Republic of Lithuania, civil society organisations and representatives from the private sector.

THE FORMAT

This is a high-level expert conference which will gather 200 participants including the Children's Rights Ombudsperson of the Republic of Lithuania, Members of Parliament, representatives from the relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science, recognised international experts as well as civil society organisations and representatives from the private sector.

CONFERENCE LANGUAGES

The Conference languages are English and Lithuanian with simultaneous interpretation provided for both languages.

BACKGROUND

Since Lithuania ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 18 years ago, major changes have been made in protecting the rights of the child in Lithuania. The child protection system has been developed in Lithuania since 1994 when child protection services were set up in municipalities. The Children's Rights Ombudsperson of the Republic of Lithuania was established in 2000. Moreover, since 2000 Lithuania has been implementing programs to prevent child sexual abuse. The new Law on child custody was adopted in 1998, which fundamentally changed the provisions of childcare giving priority to childcare in the family and not in an institution. Now preparations are underway to implement an action plan for deinstitutionalisation, moving from institutional care to family and community services. All of these changes comply with international legislation. Lithuania supports the implementation of the provisions of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2012–2015 that targets consistent and meaningful child participation, the general principles for the development of child-friendly justice, and for combatting all forms of violence against children. On 6 November 2012, the Parliament of Lithuania ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Lanzarote Convention), which entered into force on 1 August 2013. Through the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Lanzarote Convention and other international instruments, Lithuania has committed itself to ensure social, economic and political rights of every child. Child participation is an effective means of influencing preventive measures and intervention tools and instruments to combat child sexual abuse and violence. Against this backdrop, it is important to review the achievements of Lithuania so far in protecting and promoting children's rights, to take stock of progress made and to identify future challenges and opportunities.

In the framework of the 25th Anniversary of the UNCRC and aforementioned priorities of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child, the event aims to discuss the effective implementation of children's rights on a national level and more specifically focus on the following topics:

- Protecting the rights of the child: preventing and reducing all forms of violence against children through the effective enforcement of legal frameworks;
- Combatting sexual violence against children: good practices in preventing sexual abuse, reporting and ensuring investigations proceedings which are in the best interest of the child;
- Responses to domestic violence against children;
- Children and young people as agents of change: empowering children to combat all forms of violence against them.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of the conference is to discuss the future challenges and opportunities strengthening the protection of the rights of the child as well as to share international best practice implementing international law on the fight against child sexual exploitation and abuse, the reduction of domestic violence against children and to share examples of best international practice.

PLENARY SESSION I: PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD: PREVENTING AND REDUCING ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN THROUGH THE EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT OF LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Lithuania as a member of the Council of Europe and the European Union implements a number of international instruments on children's rights protection. The conference will provide an opportunity to celebrate the 25 years of the existence of the UNCRC while at the same time exploring the progress in implementing the Lanzarote Convention in Lithuania and the EU Directive on combating sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children and child pornography.

Lithuania is making headway in joining the 25 other European nations having introduced a global ban on corporal punishment of children. There will also be information on the achievements towards enhancing children's access to justice and their treatment in judicial proceedings in accordance with the Council of Europe Guidelines on child-friendly justice.

PLENARY SESSION II: COMBATTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN: GOOD PRACTICES IN PREVENTING SEXUAL ABUSE, REPORTING AND ENSURING INVESTIGATION PROCEEDINGS WHICH ARE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD

The issue of sexual exploitation and abuse of children remains relevant to all European countries. This session will deal with the discussion of instruments and tools that focus on the prevention of sexual violence against children, in particular the Lithuanian implementation of the Lanzarote Convention and the EU Directive on combating sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children and child pornography. In this session international experience and discussions will be shared on prevention and intervention models when a child has experienced different forms of violence and when his/her family is in crisis. A presentation will be given on the functioning of Child Advocacy Centres and the integrated services they provide for children and families in the community. The issue of how to protect the safety and health of a child involved in legal proceedings will be addressed, as well as the protection of juvenile perpetrators. As the prevention of sexual abuse inevitably also involves preventative treatment of perpetrators, a nationwide project providing treatment of self-identifying paedophiles will be introduced.

PLENARY SESSION III: RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN THE HOME AND WITHIN THE FAMILY

The Law on Protection against Domestic Violence came into force in 2011. Acts of domestic violence (violence within the family) might be charged under the 'Law on Protection against Domestic Violence'. The Law on Protection against Domestic Violence encompasses people living in a 'domestic environment': people, who are currently or were previously related to marriage, partnership, affinity or other close relations; in addition, people, who share common household. Children are the part of above discussed 'domestic environment'. Under the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence, the definition of 'victim of domestic violence' includes 'a child who has become a witness of domestic violence or lives in an environment exposed to violence'. The Children's House Model has been successful in protecting victims of violence although more progress can always be made, the challenges and achievements of this model will be discussed. Corporal punishment is a common form of violence in the home. As vulnerable children are arguably more at risk of such exposure than others are, the possible methods for the protection of this group of children will be presented. Information will also be given on prevention strategies and support programmes for families and children who have experienced domestic violence. Finally violence amongst children and young people will be addressed as well as the possible methods of intervention in such cases.

PLENARY SESSION IV: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AS AGENTS OF CHANGE: EMPOWERING CHILDREN TO COMBAT ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST THEM

Positive changes in the lives of children can be achieved through the active involvement of children in decisions that affect them. Government representatives, professionals working with children and parents themselves often lack knowledge on how to ensure meaningful participation of children in practice. This session will explore the most recent research and practices on human rights education, citizenship education and child participatory methods. It will also discuss the importance of children's participation in the fight against various forms of violence, providing examples of good practice from Lithuania.

In parallel to the panel discussion, civil society organisations will hold an interactive session for children, where they will learn about and share their ideas on leadership in their communities. Non-governmental organisations and representatives from the private sector will present their contribution to the development of children's participation and children's well-being.

