



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE
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11 East 84th Street, New York, NY 10028, Tel: (212) 737 4790, Fax: (212) 472 9865, e-mail: bulgaria@un.int

No More Children in Institutions: The Success Story of Bulgaria's Child Care Reform
Bulgarian event on children's rights

22 June 2016, 1.15 pm to 2.30 pm, CR 10, UNHQ, New York

Opening and keynote address:

H.E. Mr. Stephan Tafrov, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the UN

Dear guests,

The protection of children and the advancement of children's rights is one of the main priorities of Bulgaria both domestically and internationally.

Bulgaria is strongly committed to the promotion of children's rights in all major international processes. During the intergovernmental negotiations on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Bulgaria was strongly advocating for integrating children's human rights in all aspects of development with the aim to place children at the heart of all global action. Bulgaria believes that the new Agenda is truly transformative as it was designed for the people envisaging children and youth as the real agents of change.

At national level the Bulgarian Government has established a set of targeted measures for promoting the rights and well-being of all children, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized, including children with disabilities. Special attention is paid to the protection of the right of every child to grow up in a family environment by encouraging good parenting and supporting families with children, as well as by

providing innovative integrated services for early childhood development. Bulgaria has achieved significant progress in the process of deinstitutionalization of child care which is further supported by the implementation of special measures for the prevention of child abandonment and the provision of foster care and social services in the community. There is a strong political commitment to successfully complete the process of deinstitutionalization by 2025 and progress so far is very encouraging.

I would like to highlight the fact that the child care reform in Bulgaria was mainly driven by children's rights experts and human rights activists who contributed immensely to the work of the High-level Task Force on Children's Rights to the Prime Minister of Bulgaria which was established in 2009 with the vision to fully transform the child care system in Bulgaria. The child experts and law professionals were pushing strongly for the change of policies and played a significant role also in drafting the necessary legislation for operationalizing the reform. Prof. Velina Todorova who is currently the Bulgarian candidate to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and will elaborate more on the subject was the driving force of all major processes related to children's rights in Bulgaria. Prof. Todorova is a renowned scholar, a human rights activist and a well-established professional in the field of civil and family law and children's rights whose in-depth knowledge and vast experience was instrumental for all child related reforms and legislative initiatives in Bulgaria. She was the great mind behind almost all child protection and family related legislation and contributed also to the drafting of the first ever Domestic Violence Law in Bulgaria as well as the new Law on the Rights of Persons with Mental Disabilities. She served briefly as a Deputy Minister of Justice in 2011 - 2013 when she started the juvenile system reform in Bulgaria and is still the leading expert on this important issue.

Currently, Ms. Velina Todorova is Associate Professor on Civil and Family Law and Children's Rights at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the University of Plovdiv. She is also a Board Member of the Bulgarian Centre for Non-for-profit Law.

Prof. Velina Todorova is very active at regional and international level as well. She is a Member of the Commission of European Family Law at Utrecht University since 2014. In 2014 she joined also the Commission on European Family Law. Prof. Velina Todorova is a Member of the International Society on Family Law since 1997. She was the National Programme Manager for an ILO project in South East Europe in 2004 - 2009. Prof. Todorova has been working with UNICEF since 1996 both at national level and in other countries and has been involved also in several projects of UNDP in Bulgaria.

Prof. Velina Todorova has participated in many processes of the Council of Europe since 1996. Most recently she was part of the Expert Group tasked with the drafting of the second Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child for 2016 - 2021 - the so called Sofia Strategy which was launched in Sofia in April 2016 during the Bulgarian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The Bulgarian Government fully supports Prof. Todorova's candidature for the Committee on the Rights of the Child and is confident that with her profound knowledge and expertise on a wide range of issues related to child protection and children's rights she will be an important asset to the Committee.

Thank you!