

NATIONAL NETWORK FOR CHILDREN



Ref. No. 150 / 15.08.2024

TO:

PROF. ANN SKELTON

CHAIR OF UN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

COPY TO:

MS. ALLEGRA FRANCHETTI

SECRETARY OF UN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

**HONORABLE MADAM CHAIR AND MADAM SECRETARY OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC),
ESTEEMED MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE,**

The [National Network for Children \(NNC\)](#) is the largest alliance of NGOs, experts and activists working with and for children and families throughout Bulgaria. Promoting, protecting and respecting children's rights, on a par with the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, is what unites our over 130 members.

On August 7th, 2024 Bulgaria's National Assembly voted a Bill to amend and supplement the Preschool and School Education Act (PSEA). The Bill was submitted by one of the small parliamentary groups represented in the Assembly and did not go through the regular public consultations. Neither children nor teachers were consulted.

The current amendment to Article 11(2), p. (3) of the PSEA reads: *"Carrying out of propaganda, promotion and incitement in any way, directly or indirectly, of **ideas and views related to non-traditional sexual orientation and/or the determination of gender identity other than the biological**, in the system of preschool and school education is prohibited."*

Among the legal definitions appears one of the newly introduced terms "non-traditional sexual orientation", which is defined as: *"**different from the generally accepted and enshrined in the Bulgarian legal traditions notions of emotional, romantic, sexual or sensual attraction between persons of opposite sexes**".*

The Act was adopted with **almost full majority** in the National Assembly. These new regulations undoubtedly **prerequisite victimization and ostracization of LGBTQI children** and are indicative of the Bulgarian State's overall attitude towards them, incl. towards their rights of access to justice and remedies.

In January this year, the Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted its Concluding Observation on the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports the Republic of Bulgaria. Among the relevant recommendations, the Committee invited the Bulgarian Government to, as follows:

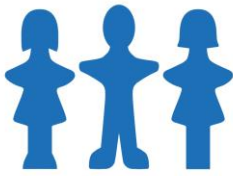
Para 6: "(a) Take the necessary measures to fully align national legislation with the Convention and address any inconsistencies;



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(b) Ensure the effective implementation of the Law on Normative Acts with regard to preliminary impact assessments of new legislation or amendments to legislation, and develop mandatory child rights impact assessment procedures also for any proposed policy, regulatory, budget, international cooperation or other administrative decision relevant to children.”

Para 17: “(d) Ensure that children who experience discrimination, bullying or harassment in relation to their racial background, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity receive protection and support, including through targeted anti-bullying measures;

(f) Address discriminatory stereotypes against refugee and migrant children, children with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and promote a positive image of them as rights holders;

(g) Evaluate, with the participation of children and civil society organizations, existing measures aimed at combating discrimination against children in disadvantaged situations to assess their effectiveness, and revise the measures as needed.”

We kindly hereby ask you to use your authority under Article 44, Para. 4 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to request the Bulgarian Government to answer what measures are or will be undertaken with the aim to:

- 1. Ensure that the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations are fully implemented and that a child-friendly version is disseminated to, and made widely accessible for, children, including those in the most disadvantaged situations (para 51, 1 of the COBs).**
- 2. Make widely available in the Bulgarian language the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic Reports, the written replies to the list of issues and the present Concluding Observations (para 51/2 COBs)**
- 3. Initiate a Parliamentary procedure to repeal the above-mentioned amendments to the Preschool and School Education Act.**

Sincerely Yours,

George Bogdanov

Executive Director of the National Network for Children



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