

## **STATEMENT 21.8.2013**

### **Nordic and Baltic Ombudsmen for Children urge their governments to ban and prevent corporal punishment of children at home**

All Nordic and Baltic countries have ratified The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which obliges the governments to provide safe and violence-free life and special protection to children.

Sweden, Finland/Åland, Norway, Denmark, Iceland and Latvia have in their legislation banned corporal punishment of children in all settings, including home.

The Estonian government is committed to ban corporal punishment, but the legislation is not yet reached the parliament. In Lithuania the draft legislation is on the discussion but the parliament has not decided on the ban yet. The Greenlandic parliament has not actively taken a ban into discussion.

The ban of corporal punishment in legislation is necessary but not enough in order to protect children from all violence. There is a constant need to campaign among the public and educate, train and support parents in order to prevent and minimize the use of corporal punishment.

In all Nordic and Baltic countries many children are still exposed to verbal/mental and corporal punishment at home by their parents.

The ombudsmen for children underline that children need more protection than adults - not less. Children and adults should mutually respect and value each other and each other's human dignity. The adults always set the example of good behavior and how to solve conflicts and disagreements without any forms of violence. Finally, all forms of violence are harmful and detrimental to the development of the child. In Nordic countries, after the corporal punishment has been banned, there has been positive declining trend also in prevalence of serious violence against children at home.

Therefore the ombudsmen for children in Nordic and Baltic countries urge the governments of Estonia and Lithuania and Greenland to change the legislation in order to ban corporal punishment of children at home.

The ombudsmen for children also urge all governments of Nordic and Baltic countries to

- provide and strengthen counseling and training for parents about the positive methods of keeping the limits and bringing the children up. This is especially important for all new parents in an early stage - preferably already before the child is born.
- introduce and reinforce support services for fatigued parents and help to prevent the stress. This implies especially parents of infants, parents of children with disabilities or special needs, separated parents and immigrant parents.
- provide promptly support and better services for parents with mental illness or substance abuse problems

- provide information about legislation on parental responsibilities and human rights of children to all parents, including immigrants parents who come to Nordic or Baltic states
- inform children themselves with age appropriate methods about their human rights and services available to them - especially as a part of education at school or in pre-school/Kindergarten/daycare.
- collect regularly data from children and adults about attitudes and on prevalence of violence against children and especially disciplinary violence

In Jyväskylä, Finland, 21.8.2013

Ombudsmen for Children in Nordic and Baltic countries

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