

ADDENDUM CRC PRE-SESSION SWITZERLAND

UNICEF Switzerland and Liechtenstein 2021

Dear Task Force members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child,

we would like to comment briefly on Ms. Suzanne Aho Assouma's final question regarding suicide prevention in Switzerland.

Action Plan on Suicide Prevention

Switzerland adopted an Action Plan on Suicide Prevention in 2016. It has been implemented since 2017. The action plan has ten objectives: to strengthen personal and social resources; to raise awareness of suicidality and provide information about it; to provide easy access to rapid help; to recognize suicidality at an early stage and intervene at an early stage; to provide effective support for people at risk of suicide in their recovery process; to reduce suicidal acts by making it more difficult to access suicidal means; to support bereaved families and those professionally involved; to promote suicide-preventive media coverage and the suicide-preventive use of digital communication tools; to promote monitoring and research; and to disseminate good practices from Switzerland and abroad. Overall, these are measures to reduce suicides and suicide attempts, including in young people.

We endorse these measures. Nevertheless, it is not clear how these measures are being implemented for children and young people in concrete terms. Children and young people are not always explicitly mentioned, but they should be the subject of a specific focus because of their special vulnerability. Also, it is not possible to see exactly and to what extent children and young people will benefit from these measures. A separate action plan or at least a **separate monitoring** for children and young people would be helpful in understanding where and to what extent changes and support services are being targeted for this age group in concrete terms. It is not possible to adopt one single action plan for all affected people in Switzerland, disregarding the age group. Children and young people do need child-centered measures, otherwise Switzerland doesn't do justice to their specific vulnerability. The Action Plan on Suicide Prevention is planned to last until 2030. However, we cannot wait another nine years to find out whether the measures it contains are really helpful and useful for children and how children really benefit from them. A **follow-up report** with initial insights into implementation would be helpful and important. This would require further research projects and investment in data gathering in a timely manner.

Investing in research

In this context, there is a further point to which we would like to draw the Task Force members' attention. The Federation is extending the scientific findings and basic data and improving networked work among the players to support and promote suicide prevention. The Federal Office of Public Health is spending around **CHF 200 000 per year** for this purpose. We appreciate the federal government's awareness of the importance of financial investment for research. However, we do think that CHF 200 000 per year are not enough to produce results and findings quickly. It is not enough to catch the complexity of suicidality in children and young people and generate sound data. This requires **more financial resources provided by the Federation** to support the cantons.

Federal law on the Promotion of extracurricular Youth Welfare

The Federal Social Insurance Office contributes to the implementation of the action plan by strengthening the basic skills of children and young people through the Federal law on the Promotion of extracurricular Youth Welfare (entry into force 2013, KJFG) and by financially supporting organizations such as Pro Juventute (e.g. 147), Ciao or Stop Suicide in the area of counselling for young people in difficult situations.

We highly welcome this Federation law. However, it is not clear whether and to what extent the basic skills are actually strengthened through the KJFG. How can the state be sure that children benefit from this law regarding suicide prevention, and if they do, **to what extent do they benefit?**

Further, the question of whether the amount of financial support was appropriate was only met with medium agreement by the funding bodies. Only the public funding agencies judged the financial resources to be sufficient. Almost half of all organizations stated that the activities would not have been carried out without the funds. The credit for financial aid amounts to about 10.3 million Swiss francs annually. In the meantime, the financial resources are being used up completely. If new target groups or fields of action were to be added in the future, thematic priorities would have to be set or an increase in the credit would have to be considered. The federal government's promotion of children and young people has developed positively in recent years. The consistent implementation of the Federal law on the Promotion of extracurricular Youth Welfare should be continued and supported. The question to be answered would be: **What is the state inclined to do when the annual credit no longer meets the need?**

Impact of Covid-19 on mental health

Studies have shown that the coronavirus has had a negative impact on mental health of children and young people in Switzerland. The child and adolescent psychiatric practices and institutions have been working to capacity since the autumn of 2020, and have been even overextended in some cases. The waiting times for admission are sometimes several weeks up to months. This situation has deteriorated because of Covid-19. However, children cannot wait several weeks or months to get an adequate help. This circumstance demands careful triaging to ensure that the most seriously affected children, young people and families obtain the right help in good time. In some cases, provision has already been adapted and extended accordingly (e.g. creation of group provision, additional resources for crisis interventions). These are good measures, but too little to cover the need for treatment in the outpatient, partially inpatient and inpatient setting. We'd kindly like you to ask the state **what the state is planning to do to fill this gap in provision?**

With these brief remarks on the current measures regarding suicide prevention in Switzerland, we hope to have answered your question and provided you with a brief overview.

Yours faithfully,
Committee for UNICEF Switzerland and Liechtenstein