

## **SUPPLEMENTARY NGO REPORT**

### **To the Faroese Government's 5th periodic report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child November 2016**

Supplementary NGO report to the *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention - Fifth periodic reports of States parties due in 2016 - Denmark.*

The following comments only concern the Faroe Islands, formally a part of the Kingdom of Denmark, but with extensive autonomy.

#### **Child Helplines**

Comment on report submitted by the State parties<sup>1</sup> regarding The Faroese child-helpline “*Tú & Eg Ráðgevingin*” run by Barnabati.

The organisation Barnabati is supported by the Government with DKK 350.000, whereof DKK 200.000 ring-fenced to the helpline.

It is worth to consider *Concluding observations, regarding Denmark*<sup>2</sup> where the Committee notes with concern that the danish helpline (Børnetelefonen) is inadequately funded and is not operational for 24 hours per day every day.

The Faroese child helpline is only open for direct online or telephone contact 3 hours, 3 days a week, due to lack of funding.

The annual budget (includes co-ordinator salary, technical operation, competence uplift, recruiting and retaining counsellors as well as promoting the Helpline among Faroese children.)

Due to insufficient fundings there has not been any competence uplift among the pro-bono counsellors the past 3 years.

Due to the difficulties in funding the Help line, we plan to temporarily shut it down ultimo 2017.

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<sup>1</sup> Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention - Fifth periodic reports of States parties due in 2016 - Denmark. Page 46

<sup>2</sup> Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention. Concluding observations: Denmark 2011. Page 14

## **Data collection**

Comment on report submitted by the State<sup>3</sup> regarding standard of living, where it states:

*“Since 2011, statistical data has been collected on household income and income distribution in the Faroe Islands. According to the latest data from 2013, 10.5% of the Faroese children aged 0-17 are at risk of poverty. “*

According to the data provided by the Statistic Faroe Islands<sup>4</sup> the percentage for 2013 is 10.8% and not 10.5. Furthermore statistical data has been collected since 2009, and not 2013 as stated in the report.

In 2015 a bill was passed, in the Faroese Parliament, whose purpose is to improve the financial conditions of low-income families with children under the age of 18, and therefore diminish child poverty in the Faroe Islands.

Due to lack of statistical data, no evaluation can be done, in order estimate if this improvement has any influence on child poverty.

Since January 2016, low-income families with children under the age of 18, have had the possibility to apply for financial aid.

In august 2016, 258 applications were granted by Almannaverkið (The Social Office - a public institution under the Ministry of Social Affairs, administering this service).

- Unfortunately, The Social Office can not inform us, how many children were included in these granted applications.
- Unfortunately, The Social Office can not inform us, if any of these granted applications were enough to improve these families financial conditions, so the children within these families were not subject to child poverty.

According to the Social Office, they can not provide these statistics, because the system used for gathering information is under development, which has no funding.

## **Respect the views of the child**

As stated in the report submitted by the States parties 2016<sup>5</sup>, adjustments have been made to the Child Welfare Act in order to improve children's views to be heard and in cases, where the age, maturity or specific circumstances of the case make it difficult to let the child's voice to be heard, the welfare administration shall seek to ensure that the views of the child are represented in an alternative matter.

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<sup>3</sup> Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention - Fifth periodic reports of States parties due in 2016 - Denmark. Page 49

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Faroe Islands is the national statistical authority of the Faroe Island [www.hagstovan.fo](http://www.hagstovan.fo)

<sup>5</sup> Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention - Fifth periodic reports of States parties due in 2016 - Denmark. Page 49

The Organisation Barnabati, has through its Child Helpline been in contact with many children and parents who claim, that welfare system does not seek to ensure the child's right to be heard. Also, an open letter from the Children's Ombudsman dated 19 August 2016 indicates a lack of respect towards children's right to freely express their views in all matters affecting them. And therefore the Children's Ombudsman reminds everyone whom this concerns, to respect the statements in article 12 in the CRC.

In April 2015 Barnabati had a meeting with, the Minister of Social Affairs, in order to present a recommendation to improve the Child Welfare Act.

Barnabati wished that children, who's case will be treated according to the Child Welfare Act, at any time would get the right to an independent assistant, in order to ensure the child's civil rights, give comfort and acknowledgment, to create a better understanding between all parties, and to assure best available preconditions for the child to express its views.

The purpose of our suggestion is therefore to clearly state, that vulnerable children have the right to an assessor, that is independent from the parents right to a parties' representative pursuant to the Administrative Code § 8, stk. 1.

### **Dissemination and awareness-raising**

*In the Consideration of reports submitted by State parties under article 44 of the Convention: Concluding observations: Denmark, 2001.* The Committee on the Rights of the Child urged the State Party to incorporate teaching on the Convention as a specific subject in school curricula. It also urges the State party to promote knowledge of the Convention among the public at large through, inter alia, the mass media.

The United Nation published in 2011 a resolution about education and training in human rights. In this resolution, it was referred to these agreements and conventions:

UDHR, article 26

CESCR, article 13

CRC, article 29, and 42

In May 2015 the organisation Barnabati conducted a pilot survey, in order to gain information about children's knowledge about their rights and where to seek help, if needed.

- 374 children between 13 and 17 years old answered.
  - 48.93% Girls
  - 51.07% Boys
- 43.05% claimed not to have received education or information about their rights (CRC).
- 34.76% are uncertain/don't know if they have received education or information about their rights (CRC).
- 69.52% of these children don't know what the Ombudsman for children<sup>6</sup> is.
- 30.35% Don't know where to turn to, if they feel depressed or other kinds of psychological discomfort.
- 40.65% Don't know where to turn to, if they have troubles within the family.

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<sup>6</sup> The Children's Ombudsman was established 1. October 2014.

- 34.51% Don't know where to turn to, if they or someone they know has been a victim to violence, threats or other kinds of misdemeanours.

Among other things, this pilot study gives us a clear understanding, that children in the Faroe Islands know very little about human- and children's rights.

The Children's Ombudsman, has received so few complaints and/or questions from children, that these are not even gathered in any statistical overview. This indicates, that the CRC awareness-raising is not sufficient.

The CRC is sporadically mentioned in teaching books aimed for primary and secondary level schools. The CRC should be a natural part of the curriculum for primary and secondary level schools in order to improve the dissemination and awareness-raising.

### **Evaluation**

No systematic and public evaluation of human rights is carried out in the Faroe Islands. No public evaluation is carried out when UN treaty bodies and special procedures give recommendations or when international bodies make decisions concerning children's rights which may be of relevance to the Faroe Islands. Furthermore the Faroe Islands have no governmental focal point ensuring systematic and coordinated implementation of human rights obligations. It is therefore the task of the individual ministries to implement human rights obligations within their field.

### **Barnabati**

A national organisation in the Faroe Islands, whose main goal is to promote and improve children's rights, firstly in the Faroe Islands.

Barnabati works according to the UN Convention on the Rights of Children, and additionally has a helpline that offers support and guides to children and young people in the Faroe Islands. The organisation was established in 1980, and a former member of Save The Children Alliance.

On behalf of Barnabati

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