



Committee on the Rights of the
Child (CRC)
Palais Wilson - 52, rue des Pâquis
CH-1201 Genève (Suisse)

Brussels, 14th December 2018

CRC- 80th Session – BELGIUM

OHCHR REGISTRY

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Recipients : CRC
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Dear members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child,

We have duly received Belgium's replies to the list of issues that were addressed to the Belgian state. We thank you for the list of issues, which are of a very high quality and which reflect the concerns of children and organisations that defend the rights of children. We are happy that the environmental issue is also raised in these questions.

The difficulties that children encounter in the context of migration or poverty have led us to draw your attention, in your Concluding Observations and your dialogue with the Belgian state, to the opinion of these children. We hope that their voices will be heard, which is why we are sending you an overview of their main recommendations:

1. Unaccompanied children recommend an asylum procedure that is clearly limited in time, with qualified guardians on hand to assist them. They also wish to be better informed upon arrival.
2. Unaccompanied children recommend a simplified family reunification procedure, more possibilities to keep in touch with their family and more support from trusted counsellors (mentoring, buddy projects).
3. All unaccompanied children (including those aged 12 years or over) recommend that they be placed in family-type structures (in small structures or by a host family). They require a sufficient number of qualified counsellors in the reception centres, who listen to their concerns.
4. Migrant and refugee children feel that the large reception centres are not a good environment for children. They wish to be placed in more calm, clean and protective environments. They want to know where they can find help when they need it.

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5. Migrant and refugee children who dropped out of school or who arrive at the end of the school year would prefer more support so they can learn the language and can catch up with their peers. Children who are in classes for newcomers want to have more contact with Belgian children.
6. Migrant and refugee children would like to practice sports and enjoy other activities outside the reception centres. They recommend more resources to pay for transportation, to participate in activities, holiday camps or school trips.
7. Unaccompanied teenage mothers want to be placed in a calmer and more protective environment, during the day and at night. They recommend a family-type structure, support for their education (remediation, assistance with their schoolwork in the evenings, during the holidays) and more resources to take care of their baby (clothing, food) as well as a more complete follow-up during their pregnancy, when they give birth and after their baby is born, as well as more regular healthcare for their babies.
8. Young migrants and refugees who are about to turn 18 demand more support because they often find themselves without a lawyer, a guardian or any protection from one day into another. Another priority is assistance with housing.
9. Children living in poverty situation who have been taken into care do not want to be separated from their brothers and sisters. Those who live with their parents want to be treated with respect and feel safe in their home. They need to know where they can find help when they need it.
10. Children who live in poverty situation are worried about the precariousness of their parents' jobs and their debts. They demand more support for families (job assistance, combating over-indebtedness, access to social assistance, health services, housing).
11. Children who live in poverty situation need to be able to play outside their house. They want good playing fields in their neighbourhoods (playgrounds, benches, football pitches and basketball courts), places where boys and girls can meet and more information about emotional and sexual life.
12. The violence of these neighbourhoods has a major impact on the life of children living in poverty situation: they want to live in safe, healthy, protected and protective neighbourhoods, where drugs, crime and violence are eradicated. They also need support and want to be heard.
13. Children living in poverty situation want more green spaces and rubbish bins in their neighbourhoods. They also want road safety to be a priority.
14. Children living in socially vulnerable neighbourhoods want to have the same chances to succeed at school as children in rich neighbourhoods. They want positive measures to be taken to combat stress, bullying and harassment, the channelling of certain children to special schools.
15. Children who live in poverty situation understand that being a teacher is a difficult job. They want teachers to be better paid, trained, assessed and receive better support. They request help for their homework and remediation in school.

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16. Children ask that the lack of teachers and the long periods of absence of certain teachers be resolved. They want more experienced teachers who do not wait to know whether they like to teach and work with children until they are standing before a class.
17. Children need time to learn how to count, write and play. Assessments, homework and marks are a source of great anxiety. Many children who live in poverty situation are also bullied. They request that this problem be urgently eradicated.
18. Children who live in poverty situation need to know that equal opportunities in school are a reality. They want to be included in decisions about their school career and their study choices. They feel that a child's social origin should never be an excuse to channel this child into special education.
19. Children who live in poverty situation recommend positive measures to combat redoing the year, channelling children into special education and dropouts. They request that redoing the year only be used as a last resort. They also recommend waiting until they have turned 16 before choosing what they will study and taking preventative measures to avoid school dropouts.

UNICEF Belgium would like to take advantage of this opportunity to yet again express its faith in the excellent work of the Committee for the Rights of the Child to benefit children.

Olivier Marquet
Executive Director
UNICEF Belgium


*po Michel CORGE
E. D as interim.*

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