

Children's Rights in the Netherlands 2008-2012 Summary of the recommendations from the NGO-report 2012

1. Increase awareness of children's rights

- Information on children's rights is necessary for proper implementation of the rights.
- Make children's rights a permanent element of school programmes.
- Ensure that all professionals working with children and for children (judges, public prosecutors, police officers, as well as youth care, healthcare and education employees and persons involved in migration law) are well-acquainted with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

2. Improve the legal position of children

- Improve child participation in decision-making within all procedures that concern them directly (e.g. child protection measures) and in youth policy at local and national levels.
- Appoint a special curator in cases where parents cannot represent the interests of their child.
- See to proper formulation and implementation of rules of conduct, protocols and treatment plans in closed youth care institutions.

3. Protect the most vulnerable children against the effects of cutbacks

- Living in poverty can result in social exclusion and a greater risk of child abuse. The effects of cutbacks on children must be mapped and limited.
- Avoid cutbacks in youth participation, access to early education, healthcare and cultural activities, the struggle against child abuse, assistance to children with disabilities and children with special needs.
- Remove the reservation to art. 26 CRC and give children who cannot count on their parents an individual right to welfare benefits.

4. Improve youth care

- During the transition of youth care to local communities, the supply and the quality of care have to remain guaranteed.
- Give special attention to the waiting lists, especially within the youth mental healthcare.
- Invest in skills for foster parents so that children who are in out-of-home care can be supplied with tailored care.
- Give guarantees that children who are placed at Youth Care Plus immediately receive proper treatment.
- Apply closed youth care only as a last resort and for the shortest possible time. It is (should be seen as an extreme child protection measure.

5. Give more attention to children with disabilities

- Make a sufficient number of places for children with disabilities available within the systems of regular or special education and the after school care system.
- Ensure early recognition of disabilities, so that children and their parents can be offered suitable support and the out-of-home care is not necessary.
- Invest in places of care for children with disabilities and in high quality treatment in each local community and all regions. Monitor care supply at local and regional levels.

6. Make healthcare child friendly

- Give all children in the Netherlands, including undocumented children, equal access to general and mental healthcare.
- Pay special attention to vulnerable children such as undocumented children or victims of abuse.
- Refrain from any cutbacks in healthcare prevention.
- Make healthcare more child-friendly.

7. Guarantee access to education

- Provide financial means to guarantee that children with educational or behavioural problems attend school.
- See to early learning and pre-school education for children with disadvantages.
- Formulate an agreement on a common non-discrimination policy, compulsory for local communities and school boards.
- Avoid cultural and social segregation of children, and premature dropping out of school.

8. Create more playgrounds

- Give more attention to play facilities.
- Create safe, inspiring, formal and informal public playgrounds.
- Encourage child participation in the setting up of playgrounds.
- Reduce disrupting behavior by youth gangs through a positive youth policy.

9. Invest in prevention of child abuse

- Implement an evidence-based support in upbringing in all local communities.
- Guarantee access to specialized aid in all cases of child abuse.
- Give abused children and their parents treatment and support to guide the whole family to a safe situation.
- Stimulate regulations on upbringing without violence.
- Give all parents of newly- born babies information on crying babies to help prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome.

10. Protect children who are in conflict with the law

- On average minors stay too long in detention. Invest in alternatives for deprivation of liberty to decrease the number of children in (pre-trial) detention.
- Support and train employees working within the juvenile justice institutions to increase a positive living climate and safety.
- Improve re-integration of minors in conflict with the law, by introducing a special system for issuing Certificates of Proper Behaviour for all those who were, as minors, in conflict with the law.
- Do not apply laws and regulations for adults on children younger than eighteen years of age.

11. Improve the situation of children in migration

- Remove additional requirements for family reunification to guarantee the right to family life.
- Improve the situation of children in asylum seekers' centres, make these places child-friendly.
- Reduce the number of moves.
- Accommodate asylum seeking minors who are alone in foster families and not in campuses for adults asylum seekers.
- Deprivation of liberty in refugee centres is not based on any legal rule.
- Give families with children always access to shelters.
- Establish a legal basis for residence permits for children rooted in the Netherlands. Children who are removed from the country after five years of residence, sustain damage in their development.

12. Prevent economic exploitation of children

- Improve the working conditions of young people at super markets.
- Resume labour inspections to prevent exploitation in sectors where many children work.

13. Approach the development cooperation from the perspective of children's rights and within the system of human rights

- Give special attention to protection against abuse and exploitation; violence against children; children with disabilities; gender differences.

14. Improve the position of minors who are victims of exploitation

- Set up a National Plan of Action describing a coordinated, comprehensive approach to all forms of sexual violence and exploitation.
- Cooperate in a structured way with countries from where children are trafficked.
- Guarantee sufficient specialised reception and support possibilities for minors who are victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking.
- Issue permanent residence permits to undocumented children who are victims of trafficking, to improve their legal position.

15. Increase the age for voluntary military recruitment to eighteen

- Improve identification of vulnerable children from the areas where armed conflicts prevail.
- Give better support and care for these children.