

**United Nations Human Rights
Office of the High Commissioner**
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Holmens Kanal 22
1060 Copenhagen K
Phone +45 72 28 24 00
sim@sim.dk

To the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner

Docno.
347616

Date
2020-11-29

Thank you for the consultation on the report to the High level Political Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals and the rights of the child – Human Rights Council resolutions 37/20 “Rights of the Child”. We hereby submit our contributions to the questions of the consultation.

Question 1) How the rights of the child are being upheld as a priority in your country in the face of the adverse impacts of the covid-19 pandemic on children’s rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Regarding vulnerable children

The rights of vulnerable children has been a strong priority in Denmark during the period of COVID-19, including during the lockdown in the spring of 2020.

Efforts regarding vulnerable children are considered a so-called critical function, which has been maintained during the period of COVID-19, including during the lockdown. The municipalities must thus ensure, that vulnerable children and young people who need help and support can continue to receive the necessary help. Among other things, this means that:

- The municipalities continue to process notifications of concerns about a child or young person and supply help and aid if needed
- That children and young people should continue to receive the necessary support, including placement if they need it.

The government and municipalities are making efforts to find solutions so that all children and their families get through the corona crisis as well as possible. Among other things, it has been ensured that children with very special social, educational or treatment needs could stay in their day care or school, even during lockdown. That includes children who experience problems at home to an extent, that they need a break from everyday life. Furthermore, the municipalities established emergency care throughout the country as an option for vulnerable children.

Regarding early childhood care



The coronavirus confirmed the vitality of our early childhood education and care (ECEC) and school system, which was why Denmark was one of the first countries to reopen ECEC and the primary school grades already in early April this year after the initial lockdown in March. Even though Denmark is facing rising numbers of covid-19 cases again, the Danish government plans on keeping ECEC and schools open throughout the coronavirus pandemic, as it recognizes how much value it provides to families and children in Denmark – especially those in vulnerable positions. It is the belief of Denmark that keeping ECEC and schools physically open is a vital measure in ensuring the well-being, development, and learning of our children and pupils.

In Denmark an extra attention was given to reach children and pupils in vulnerable positions during the COVID-19 lockdown. Although public ECEC and schools were initially shut down, certain groups of children were exempt from lockdown and municipalities still offered emergency care to children and pupils in these groups. These amongst others included children and pupils with special socioemotional, pedagogical or treatment needs, including those whose needs are related to problems at home.

Municipalities were also mandated to offer emergency ECEC and education to the following groups at a minimum:

- 1) Children aged 0-9 whose parents are working in areas critical to the public, e.g. the health sector, social services, infrastructure maintenance, law enforcement, or the traffic and food sector.
- 2) Children aged 0-9 whose parents work at a private company that hasn't sent home its workers. Parents must have exhausted other options for care.
- 3) Children with special needs, including those whose needs are related to problems at home.

To the extent possible, all schools offered emergency education while the closures were in effect. This was done virtually or online. Parents were encouraged to support learning, but the responsibility for education still lies with the school. Parents cannot be instructed to teach at home.

The emergency care was set up in accordance with health recommendations from the Danish government. During the COVID-19 lockdown and the first phases of the reopening, the municipalities were encouraged by law to keep a special focus on identifying children and their families in vulnerable positions – making sure that they were able to access emergency care if needed, and to keep continuous dialogue with the families. Outreach was conducted mainly by pedagogical staff and teachers by phone, video calls, emails, visits etc.

When schools and ECEC opened up again, the municipalities were encouraged to make sure that the families felt safe to bring their children back to ECEC.

Ad. Question 2) Particularly noteworthy examples of good practice towards realizing the rights of the child in your country, in relation to sustainable and resilient recovery from the covid-19 pandemic and the goals under review – including specific laws, policies and actions to advance the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.



A number of efforts has been made to ensure that children and their rights are protected and supported during and the COVID-19 crisis:

- The situation has meant that a number of organizations, who supply counselling and help, experience a greater need for providing counselling, also regarding ones rights, as well as practical help to vulnerable children and their families. Therefore the parliament has set aside DKK 13.5 million for a children's package to support a number of organizations' work with vulnerable children.
- The parliament has also launched three partnerships with civil society organizations whereof one focuses on the needs of vulnerable children and young people. The partnership plays an important role in the planning and execution of efforts to support children and young people during COVID-19. The partnership should also collect and widely disseminate positive learning outcomes from dealing with the challenges caused by the pandemic.
- The parliament has allocated DKK 500,000 to the organization Save the Children's efforts to work against digital violations and online abuse of children during COVID-19 by providing counselling, guidance, and support.
- The government has sent a letter to schools and daycare institutions to bring their attention to the increased risk of violence and abuse that vulnerable children have faced during the lockdown.

From the Ministry of Children and Education, financial support was among other recipients granted to voluntary organizations to support vulnerable children and families in schools and education institutions. The majority of the grant was focused on initiatives that support the vulnerable pupils' learning after the school closure and introduction of distance learning.

In addition, the Danish government extraordinarily provided grants to the municipalities for summer activities for children and young people in general. The purpose of this initiative was for the pupils to catch up on lost learning and to rebuild their well-being and social life after the school closure in the spring.

The continuity of learning and successful safe reopening in Denmark can be attributed to constant communications and consultations with stakeholders among other things. The key stakeholders have been regularly consulted at all reopening phases and with great frequency in "sectoral partnerships" for both the school sector and the ECEC sector. The frequency of consultations enabled the sectorial partnerships to produce robust guidelines for reopening schools and education institutions.