

Country session: Estonia

Date: 74th session - 17 and 18 January 2017

Background information

[OHCHR press release](#)

[Webcast](#)

[Audio file](#)

Reporting

Reporting methodology

Regular reporting procedure

Simplified reporting procedure

Concluding Observations with urgent measures

State report:

	CRC		OPAC		OPSC
No. of report	Second to fourth periodic report	No. of report	First report	No. of report	Integrated
Due date	01 November 2008	Due date	13 Mar 2016	Due date	-
Submission	30 April 2013	Submission	3 June 2016	Submission	-

[Written replies to List of Issues](#)

Due date	1 June 2016
Submission	8 June 2016

Committee members welcomed the clarity and precision of the State report and written replies to the List of Issues.

Public reports from children's rights defenders

Alternative reports	
NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coalition Estonian Union for Child Welfare ▪ Human Rights Watch
NHRIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ISS ▪ Chancellor of Justice ▪ Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) ▪ Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment ▪ Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion

State delegation

Large high level and multisectoral delegation led was led by Mr. Rait KUUSE, Deputy Secretary General on Social Policy. He was supported by functionaries of the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Justice.

List of State delegation representatives on [OHCHR site](#)

Committee's Task Force members

Name & Last name	Country
Peter GURAN	Slovakia
Benyam Dawit MEZMUR	Ethiopia

Dialogue description:

i. Character of the dialogue

The atmosphere during the session was cooperative and constructive. The answers of the State to the Committee's questions were focused mainly on law implementation.

ii. General assessment made by the Committee

The Committee welcomed the adoption of the new Child Protection Act in January 2016, the ratification in 2014 of OPAC, and the Penal Code amendment criminalizing child recruitment or children engagement in war. Committee members also welcomed the competences given to the Chancellor of Justice as Ombudsperson for Children.

iii. Main issues discussed

Convention on the Rights of the Child:

- **Harmful practices:** Despite the low number of child marriages, the Committee was concerned about the possibility for children between 15 and 18 years to get married under exceptional circumstances. The delegation replied that marriage for mothers above 15 years was allowed to enable them to have a family and avoid social exclusion.
- **Violence against children:** The Committee was worried about the high rates of children experiencing bullying and several complaints received by the Ombudsman for Children. The State stressed that a national initiative is being undertaken by the Ministry of Education to raise awareness on this issue and address its root causes.
- **Children with disabilities:** The Committed was highly concerned about the limited accessibility to public institutions, the insufficiency of the social welfare services, and the limited access to mainstream education for children with physical and intellectual disabilities. The delegation acknowledged that the number of children with disabilities was increasing, particularly children with eating disorders, and explained that the Ministry of Social Affairs will implement a strategy until 2020 for delivering services for children with disabilities and their families.



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- **Stateless children:** The Committee welcomed the amendments to the Citizenship Law granting citizenship to children with undetermined citizenships born in Estonia. However, expressed its concerns for children between 15 and 18 years who are not covered by this law and for the lack of attention to stateless children arriving to the country due to migratory movements. The State replied that efforts have been taken to decrease the number of stateless persons, and language courses are provided to potential new citizens for supporting them during the citizenship application process.

Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict

- **Dissemination and training:** The Committee was worried about the low dissemination of the provisions of the OPAC among military forces and the insufficient training on children's rights for enforcement officials and military forces. The delegation stressed that military forces receive human rights education as part of their regular training.
- **Military education:** Committee members were worried about the Estonian Defense League voluntary program for children from 7 to 18 years, and that in practice children might handle firearms. The delegation replied that only children older than 12 are allowed to handle weapons and only if they have a written consent from their parents and under supervision of active members of the League.

Recommendations of the Committee

In its [Concluding Observations](#), the Committee recommended, inter alia:

Convention on the Rights of the Child:

- **Independent monitoring:** The State should ensure the independent character of the Ombudsman for Children, as well as visible and effective child-friendly complaints mechanisms.
- **Child marriage:** The State should revise its national law to ensure that the minimal age for marriage is raised to 18 years for both boys and girls, as well as to eradicate child marriage in practice.
- **Stateless children:** The State should provide legal identity for all children by ensuring birth registration and ensure the expedite naturalization of children between 15 and 18 years with undetermined nationality. A procedure to determine the statelessness of people arriving to Estonia due to migratory movements must be set up.
- **Violence against children:** The State should assess its anti-bullying programs, as well as further enhance training for teachers, educators and students to improve their conflict resolutions skills.
- **Children with disabilities:** The State should adopt a human rights-based approach to disability and formulate a comprehensive strategy to ensure that children with physical and mental disabilities are integrated into the social, education and health sectors. Inclusive education for children with disabilities must be prioritized over institutionalization, and awareness-raising campaigns within communities and government officials to destigmatize children with disabilities must be conducted. The State should also provide allowances for children with disabilities up to 18 years of age.

Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict:

- **Dissemination and training:** The State should enhance its raise-awareness activities with military forces and general public to widespread the provisions of the OPAC, and incorporate it in the training of armed forces, law enforcement officers, judiciary officers, social workers, health workers and teachers.



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- **Military Education:** The State should prohibit the handling of firearms for all children under 18 years old, including in the Estonian League Defense voluntary program, and ensure that this program fully complies with all the provisions of the OPAC, including the establishment of an independent complaints mechanism for children.

Next State report

CRC	
No. of report	Fifth to seven periodic report
Due date	19 November 2022

Disclaimer: Child Rights Connect reports are all drafted in English. If the State report and/or the alternative reports were submitted in another UN language (Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian or Chinese) the report will be translated accordingly.