

**SECRETARIAT GENERAL**

DIRECTORATE GENERAL  
HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW

JUSTICE AND HUMAN DIGNITY DIRECTORATE  
*THE DIRECTOR*

Please quote: DGI/MRu/SB/av-Cab 2349



Mrs Ruby Harrold-Claesson,  
President  
Nordic Committee for Human Rights – NKMR/NCHR  
Ströms väg  
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Sweden

Strasbourg, 4 February 2013

Dear Mrs Harrold-Claesson,

On behalf of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, I wish to thank you for your e-mail of 10 December 2012 and the attached comprehensive report on "Child Removal Cases in Sweden and the Nordic countries" by the Nordic Committee for Human Rights.

I am pleased to inform you that with its new Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2012-2015), the Council of Europe is further committed to enhancing the protection of children in vulnerable situations, including children in care, as one of its four priorities. Within this framework, the overarching goal for our Programme "Building a Europe for and with children", in the next years, will be to achieve effective implementation of existing children rights. Guided by the spirit of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Council of Europe has the best interest of the child at the heart of its actions to promote, notably, policies to support positive parenting as reflected in our Recommendation (2006)19 on policy to support positive parenting, by reason of its firm belief that the child's development and well-being will be best achieved in a caring and safe family environment.

In addition, we firmly recognise the need to support children who are at risk of losing parental care by disseminating the Council of Europe publication "Rights of children at risk and in care" and promoting, notably, the Council of Europe Recommendation (2012)2 on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18. With the current process of developing a self-assessment tool to support governments with the implementation of this important Recommendation, the Council of Europe seeks to ensure that children have an opportunity and space to express their opinion concerning the decision on their placement. In this regard, the Council of Europe Guidelines on child-friendly justice is of utmost importance in such context where children are confronted with the justice system at a very early age. These Guidelines encourage governments to establish child-friendly judicial settings, language and participatory tools, thereby ensuring effectively the right of all children to access justice.

Protecting the rights of children in care is also one of the key priority actions of the Council of Europe. In cooperation with our partners working in this area at national, regional and international levels, we continue to promote the Guidelines of the United Nations on the Alternative Care of Children, our Recommendation (2005)5 on the rights of children living in residential institutions as well as the Quality4Children Standards for Out-Of-Home Child Care in Europe. In this framework, and with the support of SOS Children's Villages International, we continue to translate and disseminate a child-friendly information booklet addressed to children and young people in alternative care "Children and young people in care – Discover your rights". Finally, I would also like to inform you that we are currently in the process of developing a toolkit for professionals working with and for children in alternative care to inform them on the rights of the child and to encourage them to use a child rights based approach in their daily work.

We are convinced that promoting these standards and supporting our member States with their effective implementation, will improve the recognition and respect of the rights and best interest of our children in such vulnerable situations.

Yours sincerely,



Marja Ruotanen