

# Montenegro's Statement

Montenegro became a Pathfinding country in 2017. As part of the Together to #EndViolence Solutions Summit Series, the Ministries of Labour and Social Welfare, Education, Health, Internal Affairs, Foreign Affairs and Justice together made commitments to end violence against children and issued a Leaders Statement.

Key highlights from the Leaders Statement are as follows:

- 1.** Development of a new Strategy for Prevention and Protection of Children against Violence for the period 2023-2027 addressing bullying, safe use of internet, promotion of non-violent discipline and establishing the national Children's House (the Barnahus Model) for child victims of severe violence.
- 2.** Enhanced capacity in the Centres for Social Work, police, courts, prosecution offices, teachers and healthcare workers to provide support to children.
- 3.** Enhanced efforts to ensure access to justice for children and child-friendly justice, including new data systems for children in contact with the law.
- 4.** Continued awareness raising campaigns targeting parents, teachers and all experts working with children to change attitudes and entrenched patterns related to violence against children.





## **“Together to End Violence against Children” – the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (EVAC) initiative**

### **Montenegro’s pledge / priorities**

Violence against children, present in all countries around the world, with Montenegro being no exception, requires urgent joint action of all partners at the national and local level to support the implementation of laws and policies aimed to prevent and protect children against violence, ensure multidisciplinary, multiagency and comprehensive response and secure adequate funding towards creating a healthy environment for children to develop and thrive. New challenges arising from the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly affected children and their rights, particularly the most vulnerable children who are at a greater risk of violence.

Over the last decade Montenegro had this issue very much in its focus, intensifying efforts at a high political level to adopt positive social norms and improve policies, legal and institutional frameworks towards more effective prevention and protection of children against any form of violence, abuse and neglect. Moreover, Montenegro is continuously working on the implementation of the recommendations of the Global Status Report on Preventing Violence against Children, as well as the INSPIRE package. We welcome the Global Partnership’s initiative to launch the campaign “Together to End Violence Against Children”, in conjunction with the national dialogue as an opportunity to take stock of the achievements so far, identify the remaining challenges and gaps in implementing current policies and strategies to prevent and protect children against violence, and set new country’s priorities, tasks and commitments towards eradicating all forms of violence, abuse and neglect of children.

We are aware that exposure to violence has far-reaching consequences for child’s mental and physical development. It causes social exclusion, lower academic achievements, adverse economic implications, and often increased levels of poverty. Hence, prevention and protection of children against violence is deemed a priority in the area of child rights in Montenegro. To that effect, we have been working in continuity on improving the legal and regulative frameworks, building capacities of professionals responsible for providing support to children, strengthening the national system by introducing multidisciplinary, multiagency and multi-thematic response, and changing societal norms and raising public awareness on this significant matter.



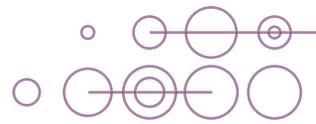


We are proud of the results achieved in terms of prevention and protection of children against violence, including: the 2016 amendments to the Family Law introducing for the first time the ban on corporal punishment of children by their parents, caregivers and all other persons who provide care or come into contact with a child; the first ever 2017-2021 Strategy for Prevention and Protection of Children against Violence, with a multi-agency team in charge of its implementation, and the 2019-2023 Strategy for the Exercise of the Rights of the Child, as an overarching cross-sectoral document addressing the preconditions for the exercise of child's rights; the Guidelines For Health Service Providers Acting With A View To Protecting Children And Adolescents From Violence, Abuse And Neglect; enabling support services for parents and caregivers of children with disabilities; promoting positive parenting since 2018 through the Parenting for Lifelong Health programme. Regarding awareness raising efforts, in 2016, the Government of Montenegro, in partnership with UNICEF, conducted a campaign to end violence against children, including cyber violence, while in its second phase conducted in 2017 the campaign focused on domestic violence and the relationship between parents and children.

Towards achieving the shared goal of ending violence, abuse and neglect of children, additional efforts will be invested in implementing the policies concerning prevention and protection of children against violence. Some of the specific steps to be taken by the Government of Montenegro include: developing a new Strategy for Prevention and Protection of Children against Violence for the period 2023-2027 to set priorities for the relevant sectors, covering bullying, safe use of Internet, promotion of non-violent disciplining, establishing the national Children's House (the Barnahus Model) for children victims of severe forms of violence including sexual abuse and exploitation, additional administrative and professional capacity building for Centres for Social Work, the police, courts, prosecution offices, teachers, healthcare workers to provide adequate support to children, step up the activities to ensure access to justice for children and child-friendly justice, and build data systems for children in contact with the law. Given a high level of tolerance of all forms of violence present in Montenegrin society, we will continue with the awareness raising campaigns targeting parents, teachers and all experts involved in working with children to change attitudes and entrenched patterns. We will continue to cooperate with the Ombudsperson and the nongovernmental organisations that play an important role overseeing and monitoring the state of human rights.

We wish to stress that the progress made so far, the recommendations made and the plans now in place are a result of the commitment of national institutions, and the support provided in continuity by our international partners such as UNICEF, WHO and EU through financial and expert assistance.





We reiterate the strong commitment of the Government of Montenegro to continue and strongly advocate ending all forms of violence, abuse and neglect of children and promote child's rights. We deem it crucial to reinforce and cherish cooperation among all countries, and with the international organisations and the private sector alike, to jointly define programmes that will help address this major challenge, while at the same time ensuring the exercise of rights for each child.

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Podgorica, June 2022

