



For: Mr. Arben Vitia, Incumbent Minister of Health
Mrs. Hykmete Bajrami, Incumbent Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
Mayors of the Republic of Kosovo

From: Coalition of NGOs for Child Protection in Kosovo - KOMF

Subject: Request

Date: 30 April, 2020

Dear all,

The Coalition of NGOs for Child Protection of Children, which represents 31 non-governmental organizations in the field of protection of children's rights, evaluates the actions of Kosovo institutions in managing the situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this time, KOMF has continuously monitored the actions of responsible institutions in managing the situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on child protection. KOMF continuously receives reliable information from member organizations that provide direct field services to vulnerable children.

KOMF expresses its deep concern over the situation of children with disabilities and their parents or custodians, which has worsened during the pandemic.

Based on the needs of children with disabilities and their families or custodians, KOMF urges government institutions to consider the following requirements regarding children with disabilities in order to ensure their well-being when dealing with COVID-19.

KOMF requires:

- Access to public information and guidelines on public health for children with disabilities. This means that the messages published regarding public health must be comprehensive, by not discriminating or stigmatizing anyone. Also, these guidelines must be in harmonization with existing legislation in cases of natural disasters or emergencies. The information and instructions must have a clear language in order to be read and understood; There may be added other means to access information, where in addition to the Internet at the time of pandemic, telephone lines, videos, information brochures, etc. can be available, as well as the appropriate interpretation in sign language. In the case of informing blind children about the epidemic, alternative solutions about protection and care should be researched and formulated by these people themselves and by the organizations that represent them.
- Investing in the provision of necessary services and equipment for children with disabilities It is very important during this time to eliminate any financial barriers related to access to health care for children with disabilities. KOMF requires responsible institutions to create an economic package to support children with disabilities, which may include payment of amounts for children with

disabilities, assistance for specific expenses and automatic extension of any service even if their documentation has expired. Necessary quarantine services and equipment should be fully accessible to children with disabilities. Health and social services are constantly lacking sufficient and sustainable funding. Investing in these services is essential and urgent to fulfill the increased costs due to pandemic, including the provision of medicines, protective equipment and support for staff working overtime.

- Provision of essential products, professional support during fighting with COVID-19 pandemic for children with disabilities. No child with disabilities should be left without the necessary food, support and professional services. Institutions need to establish mechanisms to authorize people with disabilities to be able to go out during compulsory quarantine for short and safe periods, when faced with difficulties while being closed at homes. Securing internet access (free of charge) and providing electronic devices for families with children with disabilities, so that children with disabilities can receive professional services and online support from professionals who work with children with disabilities. A good example that can be replicated is the Municipality of Prishtina which has initiated an action for providing electronic equipment for children in need in the Municipality of Prishtina.
- Professional support for parents / custodians as well as foster families: Crisis and isolation measures can worsen mental health and generate fear and anxiety, hence professional support for custodians of children with disabilities is important and necessary.
- Organize field visits by representatives of institutions mandated to provide protection for persons with disabilities who are being abused at home or within the community, and to provide adequate support for them in order to respect their human rights.

Considering the common interest of all citizens to enjoy social welfare, KOMF requires an increased attention, in support of children with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,
Coalition of NGOs for Child Protection in Kosovo - KOMF

The Coalition of NGOs for Child Protection in Kosovo - KOMF, established in June 2011, is a coalition of 31 local and international non-governmental organizations working in the field of child protection.

KOMF member organizations are: Association for Social Training, Research and Advocacy –ASTRA, Action for Mothers and Children - AMC, Balkan Sunflowers Kosova, Childproof/CIPOF, Education Comes First – ECF, Initiative 6, Youth organization Akti – Ora, Organization for Children without Parental Care – OFAP, OPFAKKOS, Civil Rights Program – CRP/K, PL4Y International, Kosovo Education Center – KEC, Day Care Center PEMA, Center for the Protection of Victims and the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings – MVPT, Center for Advanced Studies – FIT, Kosovo Rehabilitation Center for Torture Survivors – KRCT, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages Kosovo, Hope and Home for Children Kosovo – SDSF, Patients' Rights Association Kosovo – PRAK, Association of Paraplegics and Paralyzed Children of Kosovo – HANDIKOS, Terre des hommes, The Ideas Partnership, VoRAE, World Vision, Public Organization for Local Initiatives and Supports – POLIS, Network of Peace Movement – NOPM, Social - Educational Center SOS Kindergarten dhe Nevo Koncepti, Labyrinth Center and Peer Education Network (PEN).

This request was drafted in cooperation with the organization Solidar Suisse, which is part of the Thematic Group for Health within KOMF.