



International
Labour
Organization

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RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR MEDIA REPORTING ON

CHILD LABOUR

IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

These recommendations with supporting guidelines aimed at media professionals were prepared under the framework of the Country Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labour [CLEAR] Project.

One of the project objectives in Serbia refers to the introduction of child labour issues into the broader national framework for the protection of children. It is therefore the intention of the study that has been conducted, *Media reporting on child labour in the Republic of Serbia*, to demonstrate the visibility of the phenomenon of child labour, i.e., the extent to which this phenomenon is represented in the media in Serbia, as well as its image, i.e., the way in which this phenomenon is portrayed in the media. Another goal is to develop, on the basis of the most important conclusions that have been reached, recommendations on how to make the media more sensitive to proper reporting on this phenomenon. The recommendations were the foundation of a training programme for media representatives which aimed at improving ways of reporting on the phenomenon [quality and quantity of reporting]. The recommendations will also be used for defining the role of the media in the roadmap for the elimination of child labour in the Republic of Serbia.

The recommendations have been created on the basis of the results of the study and have taken into account the meetings and consultation workshop held with media representatives on a participatory basis on 20 April 2017. The main task of the meetings was to validate findings of the study, draft recommendations and guidelines, in order to obtain input for the best possible finalization.

Of particular importance is the input obtained for designing and organizing future training sessions for media professionals, as well as for the promotion of cooperation between the media and all relevant social actors, especially civic associations dealing with the protection of human/child rights.

Also, on that occasion, great emphasis was placed on the importance of compliance with the Code of Journalists, its harmonization with the Law on Public Information and its further promotion with respect to media professionals. Likewise, the active role of all regulatory and self-regulatory bodies in the field of media was highlighted as very important.

Journalists who attended the meetings¹ pointed out that all the recommendations complied with the Code of Journalists and concluded that.

“ It is necessary to support compliance with the code, as this will increase ethical reporting on the problem of child labour in serbia. ”

In light of the violations of the Code of Journalists [in 2016, 126 complaints relating to the violation of the Code of Journalists were filed, and in 2015, 109 complaints were filed], the journalists were of the opinion that the guidelines should remain at the stage of research results, i.e., responses to the findings of the research.

In their view, it would be impractical to seek the institutionalization of these recommendations, which would further burden journalists and media companies.

During the discussion, it was concluded that journalists have no information pertaining to the relevance and importance of this topic as it relates to the Republic of Serbia, and that it is necessary to make public both the problem and the action in order to combat child labour more frequently and extensively. The weak response of journalists, as well as the poor media coverage of this issue speaks to the lack of recognition of this problem, which is one of the conclusions of the study on media reporting on child labour.

1. LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS ON POLICY CHANGE

◆ **Harmonization of the Code of Journalists of Serbia with the Law on Public Information and Media and the Regulation on the Protection of Minors in the Area of Media Services..**

It is the duty of the media to inform the public in a full, timely and truthful manner. However, the interest of the child to be protected – including the right to his/her privacy – is considered to be above all other interests and of higher priority than the interest of the public to receive information that includes personally identifiable information on a child and his/her family that may compromise his/her dignity and physical integrity.

This is especially important because the documents pertaining to this matter are not mutually aligned, which further complicates their application in practice. For example, the Code of Journalists of Serbia defines the professional and ethical standards of journalists. In accordance with the code, the media are bound to put the interest of the public for full, timely and truthful information above all other interests. However, the Law on Public Information and Media stipulates that the interest of the minor to have his/her privacy protected outweighs the interest of the public in accessing the information.

¹ Journalists who attended the meetings were from the following journals: *Blic*; *Večernje novosti*; *Narodne novine*; and *Vreme*.

2. MID-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS ON INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK IMPROVEMENT

- ◆ **Mainstreaming child labour issues in the relevant strategic documents which define the policy of the Republic of Serbia in relation to children and the media framework, which are:**
 1. New National Action Plan for Children;
 2. New Strategy for Preventing and Protecting Children from Violence; and
 3. New Strategy for the Development of the Public Information System in the Republic of Serbia.
- ◆ **A more active role of the Press Council, as well as of professional and business organizations and associations in order to take a clear stance in cases of violation of legislation, regulations and codes by journalists when reporting on child labour.**
- ◆ **The appropriate functioning of the Regulatory Authority of Electronic Media (REM) and its active response to contents that represent a violation of children's rights.**
- ◆ **Inclusion of an expert in the field of child rights in the membership of the REM as a representative of civil society, by organizing advocacy platforms of associations of citizens for the election.**
- ◆ **Transparent and publicly promoted work of the REM, in order to impact the daily work of media representatives.**

3. SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS ON AWARENESS-RAISING AND IMPROVEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ROLE OF MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

- ◆ **Informing media professionals about the concept of child labour and its worst forms, making a clear distinction between the concepts of *child work* and *child labour*, in order to raise the level of professionalism in reporting on this issue, through short, informative materials such as:**
 1. text content published on the websites of various organizations/institutions;
 2. recorded material with instructions for professional reporting uploaded to the websites of various organizations or institutions; and
 3. informative materials [leaflets, brochures, posters, etc.].
- ◆ **Giving faculties, institutions and organizations involved in the education of media professionals access to materials developed for media professionals who report on child labour:**
 1. Study on media reporting on child labour,
 2. Guidelines for media professionals on reporting about child labour.
- ◆ **Organizing training sessions for journalists at the beginning of their career to introduce the concept of child rights, the concept of child labour and professional reporting practices for this phenomenon.**

- ◆ **Inclusion of the subject of professional reporting related to the protection of children from child labour in the annual study programme for faculty-level journalism students.**
 - ◆ **Formation of a group (pool) of experts from Serbia in the field of protection of children from child labour who would be available as interlocutors for the media when reporting on the phenomenon.**
 - ◆ **Creation of specialized information materials and organization of training sessions for editors on: professional reporting on the rights and situation of children; sensitivity of the issue; mechanisms that ensure the protection of children when reporting, and possible courses of action that will contribute to improvements in this area.**
 - ◆ **Creation of specific informative materials and training sessions for camerapersons and photographers in order to teach them how to prepare and publish a photo of a child, avoiding his/her identification.**
 - ◆ **Creation of a database/list of journalists who cover topics related to the protection of children with the aim of informing on a continuous basis.**
 - ◆ **Encouraging media representatives to both report on child labour and take a proactive role in supporting and/or organizing events and campaigns that will contribute to improving the situation in this area, such as the ILO's Music Against Child Labour initiative.**
- These materials and training sessions should place special emphasis on informing on international standards and the national legal framework relevant to the protection of child rights, with a particular accent on the protection of children from all forms of abuse and neglect and the consequences of violations.

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