



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

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## Committee on the Rights of the Child Seventy-fifth session

### Summary record of the 2208th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 24 May 2017, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Winter

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Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

*Fifth periodic report of Romania (continued)*

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

**Consideration of reports of States parties** (*continued*)

*Fifth periodic report of Romania (CRC/C/ROU/5; CRC/C/ROU/Q/5 and Add.1)*  
(*continued*)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Romania took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Todorova** (Country Task Force) noted that, according to the report, family courts would be replaced by wardship or guardianship courts. She enquired about the difference between them in terms of areas of specialization. She also enquired about the amendments contained in the new Civil Code and Code of Civil Procedure.
3. She requested additional information concerning proposed changes to the juvenile justice system and the introduction of diversion programmes and alternatives to detention for young offenders, such as education, community service, restorative justice and rehabilitation. The United Nations promoted the concept of diversion and the Council of Europe had issued Guidelines on child-friendly justice.
4. She enquired about the number of juveniles who had been sentenced to custodial educational measures and the duration of the sentences imposed. She asked whether there was a monitoring system that could lead to a reduction in the sentence and whether judges had discretionary authority to impose non-custodial measures.
5. She enquired about child-victim-friendly procedures, victims' rights, video recordings to protect victims, special venues to hear child victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation, and the availability of trained professionals such as psychologists and social workers.
6. **Ms. Khazova** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) asked whether the State party had developed a strategy to address the problems encountered by Roma children, in particular to promote their integration into social life and to prevent segregation.
7. **Ms. Panaitescu** (Romania) said that, since the publication of the report, the best interests of the child had been reflected in all areas of primary and secondary legislation that had a bearing on children. She underscored, in addition, that the best interests of the child had always constituted a traditional principle in the country's legislation, primarily in the Family Code, and had also been reflected in court decisions. The Family Code had now been replaced by the new Civil Code, article 263 of which stipulated that due consideration should be given, in all measures concerning children, to the best interests of the child. Article 503 stipulated that parental authority could be exercised only in the best interests of the child. The principle had previously been enshrined in Act No. 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of children's rights.
8. Act No. 17 of March 2017, which had endorsed the Government's Emergency Ordinance No. 1 of 2016 concerning notaries public, extended notaries' competence in areas of parental responsibility. For instance, before releasing a divorce certificate based on parental consent, they were required to conduct social research and to listen to the views of the child. Act No. 272 also contained criteria to be consulted in determining the best interests of the child.
9. Romanian legislation governing adoption had been amended and now provided a legal and administrative framework for promotion of the best interests of the child.
10. Children's right to be informed and heard in any judicial or administrative proceedings was regulated by article 264 of the new Civil Code and by Act No. 272. They were entitled to request pertinent information, to be consulted, to express their opinion, and to be informed of the possible consequences of the opinion expressed and of any decision taken.
11. **Ms. Khazova** asked whether notaries public were trained to interact with children and obtain their opinions on sensitive issues.

12. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** (Country Task Force) noted that Act No. 257/2013 had amended and supplemented Act No. 272/2004 with a view to improving child-related decisions by professionals. He understood that children who were unable to institute proceedings regarding a complaint concerning their rights were entitled to the assistance of legal counsel. However, he enquired about the action taken if the said counsel contravened their best interests.

13. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** asked whether the legislation specified the criteria to be taken into account in assessing a child's best interests in an objective manner.

14. **Ms. Morar** (Romania) said that the law prohibited the subjection of any minor detainee to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment. All violations were punishable under the Criminal Code. The custodial surveillance judge must be informed of measures taken by the administration of minor detention facilities that might exceed the legal framework. The administrative and jurisdictional responsibilities assigned to custodial surveillance judges included: the examination of minors' complaints regarding enforcement of their legal rights, regarding the establishment and amendment of educational measures, and regarding the enforcement of disciplinary sanctions; participation as a chair in the meetings of the Conditional Release Commission; and performance of any other duties foreseen by law.

15. Minors were entitled to receive confidential visits from their defence counsel at any time. All minors in the custody of the National Prison Administration benefited from the space and facilities required to enforce their right to judicial assistance.

16. Minors could be placed in detention from the age of 14. They were segregated from adults, including those in the 18 to 21 age group, in both educational and detention facilities. Minors on remand were placed in detention centres. With a view to facilitating their attendance at judicial hearings, they could be transferred to special pretrial wings of prisons for 10 days, during which time they were also mandatorily segregated from adults.

17. The regime in educational centres focused on the adaptation of educational, psychological and social assistance measures to individual needs. Detention centres comprised both closed and open regimes. Minors were detained under closed regimes for sentences exceeding three years. They could attend educational or vocational training courses and receive cultural, moral, religious and psychosocial assistance. They could also work outside the detention centre under permanent surveillance with the director's approval. The open regime was applicable to minors serving a sentence of less than three years. They could attend similar training courses, receive similar assistance and work outside the centre with the director's approval. With regard to the diversification of educational measures, the new package implemented from February 2014 provided for non-custodial measures and supervised probation.

18. **Mr. Petrescu** (Romania) said that all asylum-seeking or refugee children were entitled to the same rights as Romanian children. A legal guardian was appointed by the social services at the local level and accommodation could be provided in child protection centres until they reached the age of 16. Minors could then decide whether they wished to be accommodated with adults in immigration centres and there was no time limit for such accommodation. The minors first attended a Romanian language course and were then enrolled in school according to their level of education. Social workers and immigration service staff attended training courses financed by the European Commission's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. Their multidisciplinary teams were also supported by interpreters. Border police officers were trained on the basis of the Frontex Common Core Curriculum and the immigration service staff were trained on the basis of European Asylum Support Office curricula. When there were serious doubts about a minor's age, a forensic medical examination was conducted, but the result was not decisive when it came to granting protection.

19. The applicable legal framework was Act No. 122/2006 on Asylum in Romania and Government Ordinance No. 44 of 2004, both of which had been amended on several occasions. New draft amendments to the Ordinance were currently being debated. They would introduce intensive Romanian language courses and linguistic competence

certificates for children who successfully completed the courses. The provisions for social integration would also be clarified.

20. A pilot project on trafficking victims had been developed in 2015 and 2016 with the assistance of the Federation of NGOs Active in Child Protection (FONPC) and with French Government funding. Three pilot centres had been established with the requisite technical support in Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca and Craiova. Prosecutors and judges had been trained to conduct investigative interviews and hearings for minors, which were recorded for use in court so that the minors themselves were not required to testify in public. The pilot project would serve as a model for supporting minor victims of all categories of crimes.

21. Rehabilitation of trafficking victims was based on the principle of case management, which included a complex assessment of their needs by multidisciplinary teams of social workers, psychologists and police officers, continuous evaluation and adjustment of the results, and empowerment of victims to promote their independence. Rehabilitation procedures were conducted locally and evaluated by inter-agency teams in the light of the National Strategy against Trafficking in Persons (2012-2016). A new strategy was currently being developed.

22. National, local and online campaigns to prevent trafficking were targeted at specific groups, in the light of factors such as poverty and social exclusion. The Government had also recently launched an online campaign to combat child labour. The public and private sectors worked together, pooling their resources, to ensure the long-term rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of trafficking, including children.

23. **Ms. Preda** (Romania) said that there were clear disparities between Roma and non-Roma children in terms of school enrolment, education outcomes, participation in compulsory education and access to quality education. Around 27 per cent of Roma children were in segregated schools.

24. School enrolment rates were also comparatively low among children with disabilities, particularly in rural areas; however, some of those children at least had access to special schools. The number of children with disabilities in special schools had decreased by between 50 and 60 per cent at each level of education over the previous 15 years and the number of children with disabilities in mainstream schools had risen. There were many obstacles to the inclusion of children with disabilities, such as inadequate teacher training and discriminatory attitudes.

25. Various programmes had been implemented, with support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and an NGO called RENINCO Romania, to increase parental involvement at all levels of education, starting from preschool. A community-based initiative, including a package of measures for inclusive education, had been piloted in the county of Bacău; the Government planned to introduce similar initiatives elsewhere in order to increase access to education for children with disabilities. Efforts would also be made to improve data collection in that regard and to connect the Government's various data platforms.

26. There were also significant disparities between children from rural areas and those from urban areas in terms of access to education and education outcomes. As much as 25 per cent of the rural population completed only primary education or received no formal education. Moreover, the quality of education was lower in rural areas because it was harder to attract highly skilled teachers to those areas and the infrastructure there was inadequate.

27. The Ministry of Education had developed a number of initiatives, in partnership with UNICEF, the World Bank Group and various NGOs, to promote equal access to education and inclusive education. Those initiatives, which had been outlined in paragraphs 147 to 162 of her country's report, included providing milk and cookies to children in preschools, primary schools and lower secondary schools on a daily basis, awarding education grants to children from disadvantaged backgrounds and supporting Romani language teaching at the preschool and primary levels. A centre for inclusive education was being set up in each county.

28. Under the Strategy on Early School Leaving Reduction, three calls for proposals had been launched, focusing on universal education, teaching in disadvantaged schools and quality preschool education; financing for those projects would be provided by the European Social Fund. As outlined in paragraphs 4 to 13 of the replies to the list of issues, a ministerial order had been issued in late 2016 to prohibit discrimination and segregation in schools. Sanctions could be imposed on schools for failure to fulfil their obligations in that regard.

29. With a view to addressing the issue of domestic violence and violence in schools, the Government had developed a national strategy for parental education, which took into account the needs of parents, children and teachers and would be implemented by the various institutions involved in child protection and education. A public debate on that strategy would be held shortly.

30. The basic financing for all schools, from preschool to upper secondary, including private schools and faith schools, was provided by the State. The standard cost included teachers' salaries, which were calculated on the basis of criteria such as level of education and geographical location; it also included the cost of professional training and periodic student assessments. By way of example, in 2016, the standard cost per student in a lower secondary school in an urban area had been €600 per year. Schools and county inspectorates had to provide data to the Ministry of Education annually in November in order to receive funding for the following year. Public spending on education had fallen from 4.13 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2011 to 3.6 per cent of GDP in 2016; the Government aimed to increase that spending to 6 per cent of GDP by 2025.

31. **Mr. Pedernera Reyna** said that the Committee had been informed that legal professionals in the juvenile justice system were not specially trained to handle cases involving children. He asked what steps were being taken to remedy that problem, noting that it was important to explain proceedings to children in a way that they could understand.

32. He said that the Committee had also received reports that children had suffered ill-treatment and torture in the juvenile justice system, especially in police detention centres. Some had been confined with adult detainees; others had been kept in isolation or obliged to share single beds with one another. He asked what steps had been taken to investigate those allegations quickly, effectively and independently; how many allegations of torture had been made; and what was being done to provide redress to victims. He enquired what measures were being taken to support, firstly, children who exited the juvenile justice system and secondly, children with a parent in prison, of whom there were over 16,000.

33. **Ms. Khazova** emphasized that the Committee was committed to the principle of inclusive education and did not support the practice of placing children with disabilities in special schools. She asked whether the Government had developed a strategy to reduce school dropout rates and whether the early childhood development programmes that had been mentioned were available in poor areas.

34. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes**, noting the importance of good nutrition, enquired whether the milk and cookies provided to children in preschools, primary schools and lower secondary schools constituted a main meal or an additional snack. In the light of reports that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons in schools were often subject to physical violence, homophobic insults and other forms of discrimination, he asked whether the Government was aware of the problem and if so, what steps had been taken to address it.

35. **Ms. Otani** (Country Task Force), noting that early childhood rights concerned many areas besides education, as set forth in the Committee's general comment No. 7 (2005) on implementing child rights in early childhood, asked whether the Government had developed a comprehensive strategy in that regard, covering not only education but also health care and other key issues. With reference to paragraph 145 of the State party's report, she enquired whether public funding was available to the private social service providers and contracting authorities that implemented programmes at the community level.

36. **Mr. Lumina** said that it was unclear what legislative measures had been taken to give effect to the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. According to a report published by the International Monetary Fund in April 2016, over the

period 2009-2014, government spending on education had decreased by 1.3 percentage points of GDP and health-care spending had remained below the European Union average. It would be interesting to learn how access to quality health care and education had been affected by those low levels of spending and what measures would be taken to bring expenditure into line with the European Union average. Noting that the country's external debt had been estimated at around €92 billion at the end of 2016, he asked to what extent the Government's obligations in that regard were preventing it from increasing expenditure on health care, education and other social services.

37. **Ms. Coman** (Romania) said that the number of children placed in State institutions had fallen from 100,000 in 1990 to 19,000 in 2017. There were 57,000 children in State care; one third of those children had been placed with relatives, one third were being cared for by foster families and one third were in institutions.

38. In cooperation with UNICEF and the World Bank Group, the Government had undertaken a study of the institutional system and the reasons why children were placed in institutions. It had used the findings of that study to draw up a strategy for deinstitutionalization with two main objectives: the development of community-based services as a preventive measure and the closure of institutions.

39. Institutions were identified as priorities for closure based on the quality of the services provided, the opinions of the children concerned and the views of the relevant local authorities. The number of day-care facilities had risen from 46,000 in 2000 to 57,000 in 2017. Additional measures would be taken to build the capacity of local authorities to provide services for children and their families, so as to reduce the need for institutions.

40. The Government, with support from UNICEF, was in the process of estimating the cost of each activity that would be implemented under the National Strategy on the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights and the related action plan, with the aim of ensuring that sufficient resources were available and that those resources would be used transparently to improve the services provided to children and their families and to increase access to those services.

41. Almost 4,000 of the 50,000 children in State care had been declared suitable for adoption. Some of the children in State care remained in contact with their biological parents or relatives and were thus in care only as a temporary solution. Following the introduction of the new law on adoption, the duration of the adoption procedure had been reduced to an average of 8 months. In addition, ethnicity was no longer a factor in deciding whether the adoptive parents and the child in question were suitably matched. Adoptive parents were assessed by groups of experts, including a case manager, social worker and a psychologist, at local level. Under the adoption law, accredited NGOs could also play a role in the process.

42. Access to data contained in the national adoption register, giving information on children and potential adoptive parents, was possible through user accounts that restricted the type of accessible data; thus, adoptive parents were granted access to information on potentially adoptable children. Only statistics compiled on the basis of the data, such as the numbers of adoptive parents and children, were publicly accessible. All data was handled securely.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.25 a.m. and resumed at 11.50 a.m.*

43. **Ms. Morar** (Romania) said that the previous year, only 25 minors in detention centres had addressed complaints to the custodial surveillance judge, none of which had concerned mistreatment or torture. The report by the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture had mentioned that children were detained along with adults in Iași prison; however, those minors were in pretrial detention in special areas of the prison and could only be held there for not more than of 10 days. They were accommodated separately from adults.

44. In order to protect the relationship between prison inmates and their children, child-friendly visiting areas had been set up in 35 prisons. The Government was cooperating with NGOs to facilitate the social reintegration of inmates. Scholarships had been offered, as of the previous year, to minors whose parents were in prison. The number of recipients was expected to double in the current year. In addition, help was provided, in conjunction with

the Social Alternatives Association, to children whose parents were in prison to reduce the impact of the negative effects of separation from their parents, such as stigma, social isolation and delinquent behaviour. Another programme was set up in cooperation with a Christian association which helped detained parents to maintain a relationship with their child.

45. **Mr. Stoica** (Romania) said that if it were true that children had shared a bed, it would have been because it might be considered in their best interests.

46. Over one million euros had been spent on repairs and equipment in twelve detention centres, half of which had been spent. Training had been provided to enable police officers to identify signs of torture and mistreatment. In addition, over 700 police officers had received training in the prevention of all forms of discrimination over the previous seven years. All detention centres run by the police had booklets in every room to inform detainees of their rights. The booklets had been translated into the country's most widely-spoken minority languages, and efforts were being made to provide more translations, mostly into English. On the recommendation of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, 40 posts had been established in prisons for doctors who were not in the police force. However, since the salary for working in the prison was half that of a standard doctor's wage, only a tenth of the aforementioned positions had been filled.

47. **Ms. Stoian** (Romania) said that improving nutrition for mothers and babies and reducing infant mortality were two of the main objectives of the 2014-2020 National Health Strategy. Action to be taken in that regard involved improving the methodological guidelines, increasing the capacity of health-care providers, ensuring early diagnosis, and raising awareness of preventive measures among high-risk groups. The country had achieved a reduction in infant mortality in line with the Millennium Development Goal within the established time frame. Nevertheless, the level remained high in comparison with other European Union countries because the starting level had been very high.

48. Pathologies associated with babies who were underweight at birth accounted for 50 per cent of deaths of infants within the first year of life. A regionalized care system had thus been introduced to ensure that births took place in medical units that were equipped to care for such children. Intensive care neonatal units received funds directly from the Ministry of Health budget, in addition to financing from the health insurance fund and national programmes received by general health care services. The allocation of funds from both the European Union and the Government were under consideration to train professionals specializing in maternal care. The Institute of Mother and Child Health had been set up in 2016. Given that genetic malformations were the third cause of child mortality, six regional centres had been set up, with government funding, to increase prenatal diagnosis and genetic counselling capacity. The subprogramme for child health, part of the mother and child health programme and implemented with the support of UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), aimed to address issues such as malnutrition and provided neonatal screening and monitoring of chronic child illnesses. Provisions to address inequalities in terms of children's access to health care had been added to the programme in 2017.

49. The aggressive advertising of breast-milk substitutes had recently been prohibited on the basis of the World Health Organization (WHO) International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. Furthermore, advertisements were broadcast on national television to encourage breastfeeding in the first six months after giving birth. Iron supplements were prescribed to infants and pregnant women, according to age and diet, by family doctors and other specialists, free of charge. Babies up to the age of 18 months also received vitamin D supplements. According to a report by the Institute of Mother and Child Health in 2015, over half of infants received iron supplements and over 90 per cent received vitamin D. Children in fact were given bread and milk in schools rather than sugary snacks.

50. Efforts had been made in primary care centres to avoid unnecessary hospitalizations and raise awareness of preventive care measures in order to increase cost-efficiency. Parental education was part of a national strategy to reduce the number of deaths of newborn babies at home. Another of the objectives of the 2014-2020 National Health Strategy was to reduce the rate of mortality from infectious diseases through vaccinations.

The measures to be taken in that regard included recovering the national capacity for vaccine production, raising the management capacity of the vaccination programme, and increasing the rate of vaccination among the population, with the assistance of a newly established emergency committee. Funding for such activities accounted for 25 per cent of the overall budget for national health programmes.

51. The National Strategy aimed to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies, abortions and deaths of women following abortions by monitoring the distribution of free contraceptives, ensuring access to contraceptives for eligible groups, increasing nationwide coverage of family planning support and reproductive health-care providers, and raising awareness among and informing the general public on family planning options, as part of programmes to improve access to health care. A working group had been set up to establish guidelines and practice protocols for midwives working at health-care facilities and in the community, in the hope of reducing the number of births by caesarean section and teenage pregnancies.

52. Action had been taken at community level to ensure that children from disadvantaged groups, including the Roma community, had access to health-care services, with a particular emphasis on preventive health care and vaccination for women and children. The Government would issue an emergency ordinance in 2017 regarding community health care, the implementation rules of which were currently being written and were subject to subsequent approval.

53. An online data collection application had been developed for community health care, which a quarter of the country's counties had adopted in 2016. That type of reporting would be implemented nationwide in 2017.

54. At present, funding was provided for 1,500 nurses and over 400 health mediators, some of whom were of Roma origin, for the Roma community. Services were provided to persons who were unable to meet their daily living needs due to disability, illness, poverty, drug addiction, or other causes of economic vulnerability. A project for 2014-2017 had been implemented to provide health mediators to the Roma population, with a grant from Norway. The project had been implemented at 45 locations in six counties.

55. In 2016 the Government had adopted the Strategy on Children's and Adolescents' Mental Health to provide integrated services for promoting, preventing, identifying and taking action concerning such issues in schools and in a variety of health-care institutions. Steps had been taken to address mental health disorders affecting children and adolescents as part of the National Programme for Mental Health and Prophylaxis of Psychiatric Pathologies.

56. **Mr. Madi** said that sharing a bed could never be in the best interests of the child, since it could lead to violence or the sexual exploitation of children, among other concerns. He expected the Government to take measures to rectify that situation.

57. **Ms. Aho Assouma** said that she wondered whether the high mortality rate at birth might be high due to the high number of women who gave birth at home. She would welcome an explanation as to why the vaccination rate was low, in spite of the many vaccinations strategies in place, and asked whether there were vaccination campaigns in remote areas. Lastly, she wished to know whether there were tests to diagnose disabilities early especially in rural areas, in view of the inequalities that existed in terms of access to health care.

58. **Ms. Khazova** said that, in her understanding, children could have access to medical services only subject to parental consent until the age of 18, or 16 in the case of reproductive health-care services. She would thus like to know whether there were plans to revise the law to allow children to access health services irrespective of parental consent or to lower the age at which children could make consultations concerning reproductive health.

59. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** asked whether any impact studies had been carried out with particular regard to improving conditions for all vulnerable children, since the 2011 publication of the report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, on her mission to Romania (A/HRC/18/30/Add.1). She would appreciate further information on the strategy to combat the sexual exploitation



of children, including whether there were standardized rehabilitation measures such as the use of child psychiatrists.

60. **Mr. Stoica** (Romania) said that children were never forced to share beds, and bed sharing would be reported.

61. **Ms. Stoian** (Romania) said that the majority of births took place in hospitals, and that the new emergency committee would help to address the low vaccination rate, in addition to awareness-raising campaigns. In cooperation with the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights, a comprehensive system had been established for the early detection of disabilities. Although parental consent was not necessary for most medical services, it was required for children under the age of 16 to access reproductive health services. Changes to consent requirements were under consideration, although they were opposed by a number of parents' associations.

62. **Mr. Petrescu** (Romania) said that the National Authority against Trafficking in Persons had tried to synergize social protection measures in order to improve the protection of young people. It had developed a project with civil society to address the trafficking and exploitation of children, of which sexual exploitation was the most common type, through a network of specialists, as well as a multi-agency procedure for identifying child victims of trafficking. Another project had been established to increase knowledge of forced labour, including begging, improve the provision of assistance to victims and prevent the trafficking of children from vulnerable communities. The law on children travelling abroad had been amended as Romania was a source country for trafficking in persons.

63. Under the European Commission's Together Against Trafficking in Human Beings network, Romania had participated in the "No Project", which encouraged young people to express themselves through art and music to address and prevent trafficking and exploitation. Children, parents and teachers received regular information about preventive measures. Moreover, Romania had one of Europe's highest rates of conviction for trafficking-related crimes, and, following an amendment to the Criminal Code, applied stringent penalties in cases of trafficking in children.

64. **Ms. Cuculas** (Romania) said that legislation had been amended so that children with disabilities under 3 years of age were placed with families rather than institutionalized. Consequently, the number of children with disabilities in institutions had been reduced dramatically. Institutionalization remained an option for older children with disabilities, some of whom were dependent on the medical care provided.

65. Thanks to collaboration between the Ministries of Labour, Education and Health, legislation had recently been approved on the criteria and methodology used to assess children's disabilities. The legislation clearly identified the differences and similarities between approaches to disabilities and special educational needs. It also reduced the administrative procedures that needed to be completed by the families of children with disabilities. The legislation was in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities because the ministries had cooperated with the National Authority for Persons with Disabilities, the focal point for application of the Convention. While there was no national strategy for children with disabilities, the Government had established objectives to ensure the accessibility of public places and improve living standards.

66. Although there was no available information regarding, inter alia, the school attendance of children with disabilities, data was publicly available on matters including the number of people with disabilities disaggregated by age and type of disability, and the living conditions of children with disabilities. Ministries collected data relevant to their competencies, and public administration authorities used a common standard model of reporting in order to avoid the collection of redundant data. Steps had been taken to ensure that all data transfers between authorities were secure.

67. There were two toll-free helplines in operation to receive allegations of violations of children's rights, which were investigated and monitored in accordance with relevant legislation. The two helplines were respectively managed by private NGOs and local authorities, which could dispatch mobile teams to take appropriate action whenever violations occurred.

68. The growing numbers of reported cases of child abuse was an indication not necessarily of an increase in abuse itself, but rather of the success of awareness-raising campaigns and information targeting children, parents and others. Legislation on child protection contained information on the criteria used by judges and childcare professionals to assess the best interests of children. Training had been provided on those criteria, based on practices and previous cases.

69. Regarding Romanian children habitually resident in Romania found in situations of risk or removed from their parents in foreign countries, the Government had an obligation to ensure that the best interests of the children were respected. If their parents were no longer able to care for them, they would be placed with other relatives or in special protection in Romania. Although the Romanian authorities were not always provided with information on the children, repatriation requests were regularly filed, but were sometimes rejected. The majority of minors whose repatriation had been denied were in France, Italy and Spain. It was of concern that some of the children were put up for adoption; there had been cases in which a child had been repatriated to Romania but the child's sibling had been adopted abroad.

70. Children living on the street had been classified as vulnerable according to a recent government strategy, and measures had been developed to devise services adapted to their specific needs. Moreover, the Government had a comprehensive national strategy for the integration of Romanian citizens of Roma ethnicity. A 2012 study by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights and the United Nations Development Programme on the situation of Roma in 11 European Union member States had shown that Romania had the lowest number of Roma who had faced discrimination on the grounds of their ethnicity. No data were available on discrimination faced by the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, although the Government was considering launching appropriate awareness-raising campaigns.

71. The code for regulating the content of audiovisual material established conditions for the participation of children in the media, taking into account their vulnerability and sensitivity. Children and their parents must receive all relevant information before consenting to appear in a media programme. Programmes featuring children or issues related to children were sanctioned by the National Audiovisual Council, which monitored how children were presented in the media.

72. **Ms. Todorova** said that concerns remained about discrimination, children with disabilities, violence against children, institutionalization, and the accessibility and quality of education and health care. She hoped that the Committee's concluding observations would be disseminated publicly, particularly to children and NGOs, and that civil society organizations would be involved in implementing the observations. She urged the State party to submit reports under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

73. **Ms. Coman** (Romania) said that the Government prioritized combating violence against children, institutionalization and problems faced by children with disabilities. Local authorities were supported when closing down institutions, and assistance was provided for children leaving institutions. Cooperation with the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children would allow the Government to learn from other countries and find solutions for combating violence. The views of children were taken into account in decision-making processes, and training was provided to professionals working with children. Child welfare would be further improved through work with UNICEF, NGOs and the children themselves.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*