

UPR 43rd Pre-Session

Federation of NGOs for Children Romania

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This is us:



In over **26 years of existence** and with the help of our **64 member NGOs**, we have been facilitating dialogue and cooperation between children and the state, monitoring children's rights in Romania, and ensuring the well-being of children and young people by direct involvement.

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Sexual harassment and abuse in schools

Children Human Rights Defenders in Romania

Reported cases of sexual harassment in schools by state institutions

Police - 89 cases

National Agency for the Protection of Children - 26 cases

People's Ombudsman - 12 cases

Ministry of Education - no statistics could be provided*

*Justification of the Ministry of Education as per 51/SRPC/23.03.2022: In the records (...) we have not identified any statistical data. In addition, the storage formula for this information used until April 2020 (physical registers) makes it almost impossible to identify and quantify this information in a timely manner.

However, World Vision Romania has identified that **one in four children** had been subjected to sexual comments about their body at school.

The reality of sexual harassment in schools in Romania

“In 6th grade I was sitting at the school desk, a classmate grabbed me by the head and started hitting me with his penis in the face, it was quick, I didn't even have time to react. I was in tears of shock and all the head teacher did was to tell me to stop crying because that spurred the boy on. She said I was an easy target and that's why he was doing what he was doing. He didn't face any sanctions.” - testimonial received by Girl Up Romania.

“I was 13 and on the school volleyball team. The teacher we were training with was old. One day he came up behind me and rubbed up against me under the guise of teaching me how to do the right move. He had an erection. I told a teacher about it and she told me I couldn't do anything because the headmistress would say I was exaggerating.” - testimonial received by Girl Up Romania.

“What do you do when you are 17 years old and your professor tells you to not come in a skirt to school anymore because your butt attracts him? What do you do when your professor touches you during the classes?” - testimonial by a protestor during the 8th of June manifestation against sexual abuse in schools.

Children Human Rights Defenders in Romania

CHRD have reported fear of facing backlash from teachers, insults about their future from figures of authority, derogatory comments on their abilities or appearance or discouragement and marginalization.

1) Minimization of the pain and problem they are fighting against:

“This is a reality that exists, unfortunately. But it is isolated, it cannot be generalised.” - response given to the press by the spokesperson for the Bucharest’s School Inspectorate after a protest organized by students against sexual abuse in schools.

“More important than anything is school and children should not protest on a day when there were classes.” - response given to one of the organizers of the aforementioned protest by Bucharest’s School Inspectorate.

1) Assertion of authority:

“There should be an involvement that is more friendly. Not the boss-child kind. In the form of, *I make the decisions so you have to do as I do. Even if you are right, I’m the boss, you have to do as I do.*” - child testimony collected by SOS Children’s Villages Romania.

Recommendations

Recommendations on sexual harassment in schools

- Corroborate legislation to form a single document on protection against sexual abuse and harassment in schools;
- The existence of a trauma-informed person on sexual abuse in each school to help victims through the reporting procedure - support person;
- Implement a mechanism for collecting and centralising data on sexual harassment and assault in schools, with the aim of publishing up-to-date statistics on the phenomenon;

Recommendations on Children Human Rights Defenders

- Give children human rights defenders the same protection as whistleblowers, either by integrating them into the Whistleblowers Law from 2004 or by creating a new law based on the Whistleblowers Law;
- Create a protection service for child activists in consultation with civil society and taking into account that young people expose abuses including those carried out by local and national governments. The programme should be developed in such a way that their safety is not compromised when they bring cases to light;
- Create child friendly platforms of interaction with state authorities which would include but are not limited to local children's councils, accessible language adopted in documents and digital channels of communication.

Thank you for your attention!

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