

Infringement of Children's Rights in Cseppkő Children's Home - The Ombudsman's follow-up review with an old result

The inspecting colleagues of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Civil Rights experienced verbal aggression against children living in Cseppkő Children's Home; furthermore a suspicion was raised concerning the use of physical abuse against children in the institution. The follow-up examination of the Ombudsman has also ended with a new result as the fluctuation of the staff has been increased and there are less organized leisure programmes for children; thereby the rights for care and protection of the "habitants of the Children's Home" are violated.

The Parliamentary Commissioner for Civil Rights, Prof. Mate Szabo has commenced an investigation in the institution by a complaint received. Based on recent press reports that repeatedly raised the suspicion of violation of children's rights, Prof. Szabo has requested a follow-up examination of the situation in Cseppkő Children's Home. For this reason, he asked for information from the children's guardians, legal representatives and made research using technical materials and summaries. The Ombudsman's colleagues had also made inspection at the institution. However, the work of these external experts was impeded by late disclosure of several numerical indicators, practical and functional information concerning the operation of the institution. Moreover, the asked information was only handled tardily and after several repeated requests.

In October 2010, after the change in the management of Cseppkő Children's Home, the staff's fluctuation has been increased, which resulted in new schedule of psychologists who had lack of time to deal with the little children. The inspection also revealed the inclusion of group of children is not well-managed; aggression between children still exists; the tutors cannot fulfill their duties accurately; and the managerial control is not appropriate for the leisure time.

The external experts also experienced verbal aggression against children; moreover, a suspicion was raised concerning the use of physical abuse. Therefore, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Civil Rights, Prof. Mate Szabo found the violation of children rights and human dignity.

According to the current regulation, the parental custody and the legal representation of children living in children's homes is carried out by the head of units of these institutions; however the relevant rules do not clearly regulate every aspects of this question. Therefore the Parliamentary Commissioner for Civil Rights, Prof. Szabo asked the Minister of National Resources to revise the relevant laws on children protection. Also acting as an Ombudsman for Children, he expects the minister to study and implement the international practices in selecting and training of professionals dealing with children. The care of children without family is a duty of the state; therefore the most appropriate professionals are needed to provide the children's rights for protection and care.

Moreover, as the inspection has highlighted that the small number of guardians and professionals in the children's homes pulls back the development of children and violates the children's rights; therefore, the ombudsman has also recommended to increase the

number of professionals in these institutions at the director of National Office of Social Rehabilitation.

Source: Parliamentary Commissioners' Office, Budapest