**Turkey: Comments on Children’s Rights in Relation to The Digital Environment**

**III. General principles**

**C. Right to life, survival and development (art. 6)**

**15**. Online experiences and opportunities provided by the digital environment are of crucial importance for children’s development, and may be vital for children’s life and survival, especially in situations of emergency.

States should develop implementations designed for children in situations of emergency.

**16**. States shall take all appropriate measures to protect children from the risk and threat to their right to life, survival and development in the digital environment. These include content, contact and conduct risks, and threats that include bullying, gambling, sexual exploitation and abuse, persuasion relating to suicide and other life-threatening activities including by criminals, armed groups and those designated as terrorist groups. States should identify and address emerging risks children face in diverse contexts by consulting them as children have an important insight into the particular and emerging risks they face.

Protective and preventive measures should be taken regarding these risks that children face through digital games and social media, which are among the most used digital environments by children.

**17**. States should pay specific attention to the earliest years of life, when brain plasticity is maximal and the social environment, particularly the relationships with parents and caregivers, is crucial in shaping the child’s cognitive, emotional and social attitudes and skills. Moreover, although there is insufficient evidence that early use of digital devices may increase the risk of later digital addiction, a precautionary approach should be taken also in this respect. Uses of digital technologies may help or hinder children’s development, depending on their design, purpose and use. Since direct social relationships play a crucial role in shaping the child's cognitive, emotional, and social attitudes and abilities, the use of digital devices should not substitute for direct, responsive interactions amongst children themselves or between children and their parents and caregivers, such as talking, reading and playing. When determining the appropriate use of digital devices, and advising parents, caregivers, educators and other relevant actors, States should take into account research on the effects of digital technologies on children’s development, especially during the critical neurological growth spurts of early childhood and adolescence.

States should prepare guiding materials on the benefits and harms of the digital environment for families, other people who have contact with children and children, and arrange trainings in this regard.

**V. General measures of implementation by States (art. 4)**

**G. Dissemination of information, awareness-raising and training**

33. States should disseminate information and conduct awareness raising campaigns on the rights of the child in the digital environment. States should facilitate educational programs for children, parents and caregivers, as well as the general public and policy makers, to enhance their knowledge of children’s rights and develop their digital literacy and skills. This should include how children can benefit from digital services, how to minimize risks and how to recognize a child victim of online harm and respond appropriately.

Awareness should be created for children and families on the concept of digital privacy and how to ensure digital privacy and trainings should be organized.

**I. The business sector**

Businesses internationally operating should take into consideration cultural differences in content and designs on their digital platforms.

**Comments for the Paragraph 125-126 Under the “XII. Special protection measures *(C.Protection of children in armed conflict, migration and other vulnerable situations)*”:**

The main problems faced by children under the status of refugee, asylum seeker or temporary protection are that they do not feel safe; they are stay away from their family and environment; they are in a different culture; they have language problems; they cannot continue their education life; they lose their social status in the society and they don't feel connected to the community.

Intergovernmental “Social Cohesion Programs in Digital Environment” should be considered and designed in order to overcome the problems faced by children in armed conflict, migration and other vulnerable situations (to improve life skills, to minimize social adaptation problems, to increase their awareness of risks and resources in society, to ensure that they live a life in accordance with their rights and at the same time to develop mutual understanding and tolerance between cultures).

**Comments for the Paragraph 128 Under the “XIII. International and regional cooperation”:**

In accordance with the Article 42 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the states parties undertake that the principles and provisions of the convention are learned by children as well as adults. In this context, “Child Rights Provincial Child Committees[[1]](#footnote-1)” have been established in each province (in 81 Provinces of Turkey) under the coordination of the General Directorate of Child Services in order to learn and implement the principles and provisions of the Convention in all segments of the society, including adults and children, and to enable children's participation in all matters concerning children. The activities of the “Provincial Child Rights Committees” create opportunities for the participation of child in family, society and public life. Additionally, it provides opportunities to increase awareness of children's rights and to participate in decision-making processes at all levels. A “Child Advisory Board[[2]](#footnote-2)” has been also established to ensure the coordination between the “Child Rights Children's Provincial Committees” and to plan activities to be carried out at national and international levels. The duties of the Advisory Board are to create an action plan every year, to share and follow-up with the Provincial Committees of the Rights of the Child, to determine the agenda of the Board meetings, to take a recommendation about the children's field and to present them to the relevant authorities, to make publicity and awareness raising activities. In addition, all kinds of decisions to be taken about the child at the national level, to express opinion in the determination of the legal regulations and policies, and promotion and awareness activities at national and international level are carried out.

For this reason, it is thought that it would be appropriate to evaluate the “Provincial Child Rights Committees and the Child Advisory Board” of Turkey as an international model project for the member States.

1. The number of children who are members of the Child Rights Provincial Child Committees is over 25,000 in 2020 in Turkey. This number includes vulnerable children such as children in care, children with disabilities or migrant. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Children's Advisory Board consists of 20 children, including children's coordinator elected by the members of the Provincial Children's Rights of the Child Committees for 2 years. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)