

Child Rights Connect
Attn. Fanny Chappuis, CRC Reporting and Programme Support
1, rue de Varembé
1202 Geneva, Switzerland

Sent by email

Subject: Update from the Ombudsman for Children in the Netherlands

Dear Members of the Child Rights Committee,

I am writing in response to the opportunity you so kindly offered to provide an update on the issues and recommendations which I outlined in my report dated 30 April 2021.

Update on issues and recommendations

Let me start by saying how much I appreciate this opportunity to update you on the current situation in the Netherlands. This is all the more relevant given that our country has had a caretaker government since 15 January 2021. As a result, important policy dossiers are at a standstill until the elected parties succeed in forming a new coalition.

As the Ombudsman for Children, it is my job to promote and protect children's rights in the Netherlands. The government's caretaker status means, among other things, that to date little progress has been made on the issues identified in my earlier report. In some cases, the situation has taken a turn for the worse, with deterioration in certain areas. I outline some of these issues below.

What are my concerns?

- In my earlier report, I expressed my concerns about the access to and availability of specialist forms of youth care (p. 6). I am now hearing reports that the situation with regard to these specialist forms of care for children and young people is becoming even more urgent.¹ For standard types of youth care, there is now talk of a crisis due to the length of the waiting lists.² In other words, assistance can no longer be provided to those who need it.

¹ <https://www.kinderombudsmanrotterdam.nl/aanhoudende-zorgen-over-de-jeugdhulp/>; Jeugdautoriteit (Netherlands Youth Services Authority), 4 November 2021. An in-depth study into the financial position of youth service providers

² <https://www.rtvnoord.nl/nieuws/867892/nieuwe-acties-jeugdzorg-op-komst-we-zitten-tegen-code-zwart-aan>

date

13 December 2021

our number

1635563

your letter

-

your reference

-

contact person

direct number

correspondence address

P.O. Box 93122
2509 AC The Hague
The Netherlands

visitors' address

Bezuidenhoutseweg 151
2594 AG The Hague
The Netherlands

telephone and fax

T +31 (0)70 356 35 63
F +31 (0)70 360 75 72

www

info@dekinderombudsman.nl
www.dekinderombudsman.nl

*The Ombudsman for Children
is part of the
National Ombudsman's Office*

- In my earlier report, I expressed my concerns about the availability of assistance to children who are growing up in poverty (p. 6) and about the integral nature of the poverty action plan (p. 3). I am deeply worried that, due to the measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost of these measures, more children are growing up in poverty and that poverty is increasing. As a result, a growing number of children will have to ask for this assistance.³ I am also concerned about how long it is taking the government to develop its new integral policy on child poverty.⁴
- The consequences of the measures taken to alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are having a particular impact on the educational position of vulnerable young people, a group that was already the subject of a specific recommendation in my earlier report (p. 15). Despite a national recovery programme, I am seeing evidence of a disproportionately large learning disadvantage among vulnerable children and young people.⁵ This group is also experiencing psychological problems.⁶
- Finally, I am increasingly concerned about the situation of children with links to the Netherlands in Syrian refugee camps and the overall position of children in the migration chain, as the situation in which they find themselves is becoming more and more hopeless. I made a number of recommendations in this area in my earlier report, more than six months ago, and the need for these to be followed up is becoming ever more urgent (p. 9).

date

13 December 2021

our number

1635563

Conclusion

In summary, I regret to inform you that the issues and recommendations as they appear in my report of 30 April 2021 remain unaffected. Where changes have been observed, as outlined above, they only represent a deterioration of the situation as previously described.

Yours sincerely,

Margrite Kalverboer
Ombudsman for Children

³ Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (8 July 2021). First report on the ambitions for tackling child poverty

⁴ Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (8 July 2021). First report on the ambitions for tackling child poverty

⁵ Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (28 October 2021). National Education Programme. First progress report

⁶ Netherlands Youth Institute (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on youth, family and the youth field. A literature survey. Utrecht: Netherlands Youth Institute