



## A NOTE FROM THE CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN IN GREECE



In the difficult times we are going through, times of violence, discrimination, hate rhetorics, phobias and insecurity, what we really need to learn is to communicate peacefully. To coexist, to cooperate, to overcome what separates us. To defend individual and collective rights without letting anyone near us suffer, be deprived or excluded. And most importantly, to educate our children with these principles, with our example and through positive actions and experiences whose availability in and out of the school environment we will ensure.

The **EMB Anti-Bullying Guide** which resulted from the excellent Erasmus+, School-to-School Partnership project **“EMB, Erasmus Minus Bullying, Practices in Prevention and Intervention in European Schools”** is an important teaching aid for educators. I pleasantly responded to the request of the coordinators of the project and editors of this guide to write the present note in relation to what the Children's Ombudsman does and proposes concerning issues tackled in this publication.

Children's Ombudsmen are independent authorities existing in numerous countries in the world (including 35 countries of the Council of Europe), with the goal to defend and promote children's rights, namely all persons under 18 of age. In Greece that role was assigned in 2003 via a special law to the Ombudsman, by appointing a Deputy Ombudsman for the Child and with the establishment of a department dealing with issues of defence and promotion of children's rights.

Since the beginning of operation of the Children's Ombudsman in Greece, we have examined countless cases of violations of adolescents' rights, we have met with more than 700 groups of children and teenagers, in schools, institutions, prisons, youth centres, campsites etc and we have cooperated with all types of professionals working with children. In the course of our actions and ascertainties, we have addressed proposals to parents, professionals in different administrative departments and pertinent authorities of the State (Ministries and The Parliament). Our claims and proposals are based on the scientific approach to children's rights as well as on what the children and the volunteers standing by them actually tell us.

The Children's Ombudsman major interventions and proposals are presented on its website: [www.0-18.gr](http://www.0-18.gr) There, amongst others, can also be found instructions for a report



submittal and the concomitant e-forms as well as a special form for children who wish to raise a question concerning their rights to the Ombudsman. ([www.0-18.gr/rotao](http://www.0-18.gr/rotao)).

Our experience supports that society wisely worries about children's situations and the problems which influence and threaten their lives. However, the emphasis given by the mass media on the presentation of negative events is totally wrong since it contributes to the increase of phobias and tense relations among parents, children and educators, a common case being that of parents unjustifiably addressing the prosecuting authorities. At the same time, educators encounter difficulties to handle in serenity potential conflicts, spot causes and seek for peaceful restoration of relationships among children.

Discriminations, violent behaviours, hate speech. Aggression and bullying among children, in real coexistence or on the Internet, must be correlated to what is really happening in the whole society and, most naturally, the radical socio-economic transformations of the recent years as well as the resulting insecurity which afflicts children and adults.

The Children's Ombudsman estimates in the most assertive way that, through the total of communications and case researches we have done, the best "weapon" against all the above mentioned undesirable situations is the **children's empowerment**, through learning by experiencing different aspects of social life: the culture of rights, responsibilities and mutual respect, the development of relations of trust and bonds in the places of daily interaction, and the cultivation of skills for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and difficulties management. At the same time, parents awareness and sensitization of what is taking place in the school environment is of utmost importance so that they place more trust and rely upon the school framework. The above mentioned goals have obviously been respectfully served by the conductors of the EMB, Erasmus Minus Bullying project.

We urgently need to cooperate in our schools towards the development of a culture of responsibility, mutual understanding and interaction. To listen to each other. To agree on rules that define our everyday life and support together the effort of their application, with respect to particularities and weaknesses of some of us. To emphasize on collectivity and minimize antagonism and isolation. To build together, to the full of our potential, **the democratic profile** of our schools.

To sum up, we do not profess that all the above are easy and simple to do just by wishing and hoping. New ideas and trials are needed, exchanges of practices, constant invigilation, resilience and readiness to fight, since the expected aids by the system seem to be more



---

and more limited. However, the example of educators who constantly struggle and try to give a meaning to their service proves that what makes children-students happy, positive and successful takes a lot of time and energy.

The saying is once again proven: “What is worth takes effort.”

**George Moschos**

Deputy Ombudsman for Children’s Rights  
Independent Authority “The Greek Ombudsman”