

# Children Human Rights Defenders and School Related Gender Based Violence in Romania



## About the Federation of NGOs for Children (FONPC)

Since our foundation in 1997, we have been dedicated to advancing children's rights in Romania. FONPC facilitates dialogue and cooperation to develop, redefine and implement public policies to ensure the well-being of children and young people, using the experience of our member organizations.



26  
years of  
existence



64  
member  
organizations

Romania has not received recommendations **specifically** for Children human Rights Defenders (CHRD) and School Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV), so we encourage member states to include these topics in the future.

## Main Issues

### The lack of centralised data on SRGBV

There is the absence of a **centralized data network** documenting both individual case information and the post-complaint process when it comes to SRGBV.

Between 2018 and 2021, the Police reported 89 cases, The National Agency for the Protection of Children reported 26 cases, the People's Ombudsman reported 12 cases, while the Ministry of Education had paper databases until 2020 which made the number of cases almost impossible to aggregate.

### Excessive and unclear bureaucracy

ROFUIP, the document which provides information that must be included in the Rules of Procedure of the schools, contains no information on reporting cases of sexual violence. **The information is scattered across two or three other documents.**

This makes it hard for professionals working with children and children to understand who they should turn to for support.

## Children's problems treated as trivial

The rhetoric from school professionals minimizes the impact of the problems children are protesting.

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

## Failure of protection mechanisms

Children described push-back from institutions that should have protected them.

During one manifestation from Girl Up Romania, the Gendarmerie forces disrupted the action and failed to intervene when several participants were verbally assaulted by a man in the street.

*“There should be an involvement that is more friendly, without adults taking advantage. No more 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

### 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. This would come in the form of a 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;

### 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;
- Create child friendly platforms of interaction with state authorities which should include but are not limited to local children’s councils, accessible language adopted in documents and digital channels of communication.