**AT Input on “Children´s Rights and Alternative Care”**

**Federal Ministry of Justice**

**@ Full and meaningful involvement of children and young people in decision-making to prevent family separation and provide quality alternative care**

The Austrian Federal Ministry of Justice has just completed a **pilot project aimed at establishing a clearly structured procedure** regarding the alternative care of children. In this procedure, all parties involved are to be heard in court at a first hearing without delay, only then the further course of action is to be discussed.

In addition, the specialist department of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Justice is currently working on a major reform of family law, which included young people in a participatory manner, as part of a get-active process.

Besides, adolescents from the age of 14 onwards can act independently in court (file petitions, etc.) in matters of care and upbringing and personal contact with their parents.

**@ Strengthening cross-border cooperation and coordination to facilitate improved protection and care for children**

The 1996 Hague Convention and the recently revised EU Regulation on Parental Responsibility form a **well-suited basis for cross-border cooperation**. Policy makers should focus on facilitating the application of these instruments, in particular by providing sufficient human and financial resources to central authorities, courts and child welfare authorities.

**@ Measures to ensure a well-trained, supported and supervised cross-sector workforce**

The Austrian Federal Ministry of Justice is aware of the importance of children's rights. Therefore, measures to raise awareness are already taken in the initial training of trainee judges. In addition to in-depth general training in family law, the special importance of children's rights is taken into account in particular through a mandatory two-week internship in a victim protection or welfare institution and mandatory participation in the fundamental rights seminar.

Seminars on the welfare of children and children's rights are also regularly offered in further training for judges and public prosecutors. These further training courses are organized and conducted in close cooperation with experts from the fields of medicine, psychology, victim protection, and child and youth welfare.