

18th May 2010, Barcelona - The Law on Child and Adolescent Rights and Opportunities was passed by the Catalan Parliament by a unanimous vote but one last Wednesday in Barcelona. This was the fifth bill introduced by the Social and Citizenship Department of the Catalan Government and it gained unanimous support by the current government coalition parties as well as opposition parties.

Invited by the Catalan Government, the GMC contributed to the drafting of the bill by participating in a working session of the commission as an external adviser. The GMC welcomed the introduction of the bill as it considered it an important and timely move within the field of child rights in Catalonia. Overall, it highlighted that the bill addresses all children and adolescent population and not only those in special need and it hailed the institutionalisation of active child participation mechanisms for children to have a voice in those processes that affect them. In addition, the GMC put forward further measures such as putting into place a children's ombudsperson. It suggested gathering disaggregated indicators to better understand the situation of minorities that are often hidden in the usual averages and to use subjective indicators of well-being among children, as it is done among adults.

This new law replaces the previous ones and introduces a proactive approach towards the entire children and adolescent population. It also provides new mechanisms for children and adolescents to be involved in those decision-making processes that affect them. One of the major steps forward the law takes is the recognition of the child as an individual with his own rights and duties, as set forth in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, giving the child the fully-fledged status of citizenship.