

Zurich and the Z Zurich Foundation support the Swiss Ombudsman Office for Children's Rights

Zurich, September 23, 2020 - Zurich is committed to helping children and young people. Over the next three years, Zurich, together with the Z Zurich Foundation, will support the Swiss Ombudsman's Office for Children's Rights with a maximum of CHF 1.3 million.

Children and young people should be better informed about their rights. In addition, access to the legal system should be made easier for them in cases that directly affect them. After the Council of States, the National Council has also approved a motion by Ruedi Noser (FDP; Zurich) to create an ombudsman for children's rights. The ball is now in the Federal Council's court. It has to work out the legal basis for this and secure funding.

Thanks to the commitment of Zurich Insurance Company Ltd ("Zurich") and the Z Zurich Foundation, children and young people do not have to wait until a public law solution is available: over the next three years, they will support the private national ombudsman for children's rights in Switzerland with a maximum of CHF 1.3 million: In the first year with a total of 700,000 Swiss francs and in the following years with a maximum of 300,000 Swiss francs each. Zurich employees support the ombudsman's office with voluntary work, as ambassadors and with fundraising campaigns.

Juan Beer, CEO Zurich Switzerland, emphasizes: "This commitment is a matter of the heart for us. As a Swiss insurer, we not only have economic interests, but also want to make a commitment to society and the environment. The empowerment and best protection of children and young people is a central concern for us".

Contact point for children and young people

The ombudsman's office works for a legal system that is more child-friendly. It ensures that children receive the necessary information in all proceedings affecting them, recognize their rights and can participate.

Because children usually do not find access to the legal system themselves, they are dependent on such an offer. The ombudsman's office helps to ensure that every child can exercise its right to participate in matters that affect it.

The contact point can be contacted directly via an information line by children and young people from all over Switzerland, but also by adults in their environment (parents of small children, but also, for example, youth workers). Specialists from the ombuds office analyze the situation, inform and advise the children and their caregivers. However, the ombudsman's office does not accept any legal mandates or lodge complaints. It only makes recommendations and conducts mediation talks or refers the children to other suitable institutions.

100'000 children affected in Switzerland every year

Around 100,000 children in Switzerland are directly or indirectly affected by legal or administrative proceedings every year. In most cases, these cases concern child protection law (placements, visiting rights) and divorce law. Somewhat less frequently, cases are related to school law, immigration law and criminal law. The ombuds office can advise up to 3,000 children and young people in critical situations.

In Switzerland, the Swiss Association of Child Attorneys has so far offered legal advice, and this exclusively in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. In the future, Kinderanwaltschaft Schweiz will focus on the quality assurance of legal representatives. To ensure that there is no gap for children and young people until the public ombudsman's office takes up its activities, the private foundation Ombudsstelle Kinderrechte Schweiz was founded in the summer of 2020. It will begin its operational activities in January 2021 and will offer its consulting services throughout Switzerland. The ombudsman's office is located in Winterthur.

Irène Inderbitzin, Managing Director of the Ombuds Office for Children's Rights Switzerland: "Parliament has taken the first step by approving the motion. It will take several more years before the legal foundations are in place. We are therefore all the happier that we have found allies in Zurich and the Z Zurich Foundation who already support our efforts and do not want to leave a gap for children".

In addition to contributions from Zurich and the Z Zurich Foundation, the private ombudsman service will be financed by voluntary contributions from the federal and cantonal governments.

Z Zurich Foundation

Z Zurich Foundation is a charitable foundation with registered office in Zurich established by Zurich Insurance Company Ltd and Zurich Life Insurance Company Ltd in accordance with Swiss law.

The Z Zurich Foundation aims to support a fairer, more open and sustainable society by empowering vulnerable people within its communities to better protect themselves from risk, and to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

It focuses its efforts on three powerful and relevant topics of today's societal challenges: adapting to climate change, improving mental well-being and inclusion, by funding grant programs in collaboration with Zurich's business units and charities worldwide and by developing Zurich employee engagement initiatives. As of today, the Foundation supports about 30 local grant programs worldwide.