

7.7 Social Awareness (Πολιτική Παιδεία Α' Λυκείου, σελ. 94-95)

1. The Rights of the Child

The **Convention on the Rights of the Child** is the first **internationally binding Convention** on children's rights. It establishes fundamental principles for the well-being of children at the various stages of their development and is in force in almost all countries of the world. The **54 articles** included in the Convention can be grouped into **four broader categories**:

→ **a. Survival Rights**

These cover the child's right to life and the needs that are most essential for their existence. They include:

- an adequate standard of living,
 - housing,
 - nutrition,
 - and access to medical services.
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→ **b. Protection Rights**

These require that children be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. They cover issues such as:

- special care for refugee children,
 - torture,
 - abuse within the correctional system,
 - involvement in armed conflicts,
 - child labour,
 - drug use,
 - and sexual exploitation.
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→ **c. Development Rights**

These include everything children need in order to fully develop their potential. For example:

- the right to education,
- play and recreation,

- participation in cultural activities,
 - access to information,
 - and freedom of thought, conscience and religion, etc.
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→ d. Participation Rights

These allow children to play an active role in their societies and nations. They include:

- the freedom to express opinions,
 - the right to have a say in matters that concern their lives,
 - participation in organisations,
 - and peaceful assembly.
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It is emphasized that the Convention:

- **Protects all children**, without any discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other beliefs of the child or their parents.
- **Defines a child as every human being under the age of eighteen**, unless maturity is attained earlier according to the law applicable to the child
- **Requires states to take all appropriate measures** to ensure that children are effectively protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment.

2. The Rights of People with Disabilities

People with disabilities belong to many different categories. They have many needs, including educational needs, which the state is obliged to meet. Many people with disabilities are capable of achieving remarkable things. The example of the Nobel Prize-winning Professor **Stephen Hawking** (who could not speak but “spoke” — and even gave lectures — through the use of a special computer) proves this point.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can offer a great deal to these individuals and can work “miracles.” Of course, among people with disabilities there are many differences that must always be taken into account.

For this reason, education is of particular importance for people with disabilities. Education is a social good and at the same time a right for all. The state has a constitutional obligation to provide education free of charge and under equal conditions to everyone. It supports students who excel, as well as those who need assistance or special protection, depending on their abilities.

Moreover, the level of civilisation of a society is judged by the care it shows for its fellow citizens who face disability-related difficulties. The Greek state has incorporated Special Education into the educational system. As a result, Special Education is treated on an equal footing with mainstream education at all levels of schooling.

The interest shown by the state and by citizens in people with disabilities is a matter of social justice and therefore a matter of top priority. These individuals will feel that they are not on the margins of economic and social life and will be able to make use of their abilities. If one considers that many people overcome their difficulties without assistance, it becomes clear what they could achieve if they were provided with the appropriate means.

The **United Nations (UN)** has established **3rd December** as the **International Day of Persons with Disabilities**. It is observed with the aim of promoting understanding of disability-related issues and encouraging action in favour of the dignity, rights and well-being of people with disabilities. It seeks to increase the level of inclusion of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

Social sensitivity and special treatment are also required for gifted individuals. Certain views, even those expressed “in the name of equality,” have not allowed such special treatment. However, it should be emphasized that gifted individuals have the same need for differentiated support.