



# VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN EUROPE

## A PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF RESEARCH

JUNE 2005

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### 1. Background

This research review of European research on violence against children was conducted in the context of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre's work on the protection of children from violence and the Centre's contributions to the UN Study on Violence against Children (the Study). In November 2001, the UN General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to conduct an in-depth study on violence against children. The request followed the recommendation for such a study from the Committee on the Rights of the Child, based on the Committee's experience and on two days of thematic discussion, in 2000 and 2001, on violence against children.

The goals of the UN Study are to:

- raise international visibility of all forms of violence against children;
- better understand the causes of the problem and its impact on children and societies at large;
- assess existing policies and mechanisms and enhance their ability to prevent and address violence against children;
- identify an international action plan to effectively end these abuses.

In the light of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), "Violence" includes all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, including sexual abuse, bullying in schools and corporal punishment. The Committee recommended that the study cover violence in all contexts in which children find themselves, including within their family and the home, schools, care or residential institutions, work situations, on the streets, in detention facilities and prisons, and in relation to police action and the use of capital and physical punishment.

The UN Study on Violence against Children reaffirms this foundation and is rooted in children's human rights to protection from all forms of violence. The Study aims to promote action to prevent and eliminate violence against children at international, regional, national and local levels. Protecting children from all forms of violence is an obligation enshrined in international law. States must ensure that children are neither subject to violence within the family, the school or community, nor within the confines of the very state institutions established to provide them with the necessary care and protection for their healthy growth and development.

A decisive contribution to this understanding of violence was made by the CRC insofar as it specifically stresses that children are to be protected from all forms of violence "while in the care of parents (s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child"; within the education system where school discipline is to be "administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child"; as well as from "torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment". Violence has to be seen in the context of all aspects of children lives and for that reason, measures to combat violence against children must of necessity address the general life experiences of children and the circumstances in which they grow up.

In this process, children have an important role to play. Children disproportionately suffer violence but they are also particularly well placed to contribute to policies and practices that prevent and address violence. In this spirit, the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that:

"[...] in conceptualising violence, [...] the critical starting point and frame of reference be the experience of children themselves. Therefore children and young people must be meaningfully involved in promoting and strategizing action on violence against children"

It is hoped that this review of research on violence against children will draw attention to the lack and unevenness of research conducted on this topic, as well as to the absence of child participation in research conducted. While there is some sensitive, ethical research in which children have themselves been engaged, there is still a dearth of findings that accurately depict the reality of children. At the same time, this review underscores the importance of investigation and evidence in aspects of violence against children that are researched and better understood. Further study on violence against children need to be funded and pursued in order that programmes for prevention, protection and assistance can be empirically based. On the basis of empiricism there is a greater likelihood that children will neither be harmed in the name of help, nor their violent realities considered trite or unimportant.

### 2. Introduction and outline

Violence against children takes many forms and occurs in all the settings in which children find themselves. Physical, emotional/psychological and sexual violence all occur within the home and in schools, in the neighbourhood, in prisons, police stations and other forms of custody and detention, and in residential institutions and other forms of childcare outside the home. The perpetrators are individuals and groups known and unknown to the child, as well as institutions and larger social organisations. The violence occurs with varying degrees of planning, ranging from spontaneously violent responses to children arising out of the immediate situations in which they are engaged, to highly organized and pre-planned violence. It can impact on the child directly through physical and mental assault or indirectly through the influence of witnessing violence between others, including through the portrayal of violence in the media. Furthermore, these aspects of violence against children are not mutually exclusive but overlap in many ways, and children frequently experience multiple forms of violence in multiple settings. This complexity makes both the

research task of mapping the nature and prevalence of violence against children and the task of presenting research which has already been undertaken extremely difficult.

This initial review of European research into violence against children begins to document what is known about the nature and prevalence of the different forms of violence in Europe, who the perpetrators are, and the effects of this violence on the child victims. Its purpose is to stimulate and inform discussion on what the research tells us about violence against children in European countries and, more importantly, on what future research is necessary in order to help drive forward the imperative to make children's right to protection from all forms of violence a reality in their everyday lives.

The review is not exhaustive, but it nevertheless highlights a number of problematic features of the available research which impede the construction of any accurate national or regional assessment of violent victimisation of children:

**1. Unevenness of research studies across countries.** In-depth research (and even official statistics) covering all forms of violence experienced by children is available for very few countries. Many aspects of violence and its effects will be suffered by children across Europe, but country specific data is critical to determine the extent to which states are meeting their human rights obligations to protect children effectively from all forms of violence, and for the proper development of child protection and preventive services and the targeting of resources to where they are most needed.

**2. Lack of internationally comparable data.** What data is available is not readily comparable across countries because of differences between official data collection and research studies in definitions of key terms, what is considered lawful or unlawful, methods of data collection, and the relative emphases given to criminal or social welfare responses. It can be difficult to marry research and reviews conceptualising violence in terms of its form (physical, psychological, sexual) with those organised according to the setting in which it takes place (home, school, community) or the identity of the perpetrators (family, strangers, acquaintances, individuals, groups, society). Recent Council of Europe reports have included attempts to draw together what has been learned across Europe about child sexual abuse,<sup>1</sup> on gender based violence against women and children,<sup>2</sup> and on abuse affecting disabled children.<sup>3</sup> Another example is the survey of Eastern European countries available on the Child Abuse and Neglect in Eastern Europe website.<sup>4</sup>

**3. Limitations of official statistics.** Official statistics concerning child protection registers, violent crime, rates of prosecution and conviction, etc., invariably represent only the tip of the iceberg of the problem of violence against children. They reflect only those cases which have come to the attention of the authorities, usually the extreme end of forms of abuse considered unlawful. Changes in definitions, categorisations, and procedures over time can also limit what official statistics can reveal even within countries.<sup>5</sup>

**4. Compartmentalised view of violence.** Studies usually focus on specific forms of violence in isolation, with little consideration of the associations between these forms of violence or the fact that children frequently experience multiple forms of violence during their lives. Notable exceptions taking a more holistic approach are the 2000 NSPCC prevalence study in the UK which looked retrospectively at the childhood experiences of almost 3,000 young adults aged

18-24,<sup>6</sup> and the 2000 national prevalence study in Romania which surveyed 1,556 parents of children under 18 and 1,295 children aged 13-14 about practices in child rearing and discipline.<sup>7</sup> In 1995 the Gulbenkian Foundation published a comprehensive view of violence and children which included an attempt at mapping the prevalence of all violence involving children in the UK.<sup>8</sup>

**5. Lack of research involving children.** There are relatively few studies where children themselves have been asked about their experiences and views relating to violence. Retrospective research into adults' childhood experiences is unlikely to reveal the true extent of violence experienced in early childhood which may not be remembered or reported.

As the 2003 Innocenti Research Centre Report Card on child maltreatment deaths in OECD countries states:<sup>9</sup> "Ultimately, the only way to view the iceberg as a whole, and to monitor changes in its size and shape over time, would be to conduct in-depth interviews with representative samples of parents and children. If a consistent method and approach to such interviews were to be adopted, then national statistics would become more refined and reliable, and like-with-like international comparisons would become more possible." Such an approach would also, of course, ensure the realisation of children's right to a voice in matters affecting them.

## 3. Physical violence

### 3.1 Child killings

The most extreme form of violence against children is homicide. A report by UNICEF in 2003 examined child maltreatment deaths in rich nations, looking at data for the 30 member countries of the OECD.<sup>10</sup> Based on World Health Organisation mortality statistics, the report gives figures for child maltreatment deaths for children under the age of 15, per 100,000 over a five year period, ranging from 0.1 in Spain to 3.7 in Portugal. The key findings from the report are:

- Almost 3,500 children under 15 years die from maltreatment (physical abuse and neglect) every year in the industrialised world – including two a week in Germany and the UK, and three a week in France.
- The risk of death by maltreatment is about three times greater for the under-ones than for those aged 1-4, who in turn face double the risk of those aged 5-14.
- A small number of countries – Spain, Greece, Italy, Ireland and Norway – appear to have an exceptionally low level of child maltreatment deaths. They also have low rates of adult deaths from assault.
- Belgium, Czech Republic, Hungary and France have levels of child maltreatment deaths 4-6 times higher than the average for the leading countries. Portugal has a rate 10-15 times higher and a high rate of adult death rates.

It is important to note that these figures represent deaths and do not straightforwardly indicate overall levels of abuse and violence. In fact, studies have found that in many homicide cases there is no evidence of previous abuse,<sup>11</sup> and that the more significant context for the deaths is the poor mental health of parents.<sup>12</sup> The lack of comparative data and proper in-depth studies means that no certain inferences can be drawn from the maltreatment death data to the violence experienced by children who do not die.

### 3.2 Physical violence, including corporal punishment, in the family

Prevalence and incidence data for physical violence are difficult to obtain, not least because the use of some arbitrary level of physical violence in the home is in a majority of states still justified as a means of “disciplining” children. This ensures that much of the violence remains hidden within the private sphere of the home and that official figures which are published reflect legal definitions of “abuse” rather than the real extent of violence experienced by children.

Physical “abuse” of children in the family is almost invariably physical or corporal punishment,<sup>13</sup> violence administered in a context of discipline, punishment or control.<sup>14</sup> Children who are physically punished are many times more likely to experience severe violence than those who are not punished physically,<sup>15</sup> and are more likely to grow up to abuse their own children or spouses.<sup>16</sup> A 2002 meta-analysis of 88 studies on corporal punishment demonstrated that there were no positive effects, while negative effects include poorer child mental health, eroded parent-child relationships, weaker internalisation of moral standards, and increased child aggression and anti-social behaviour.<sup>17</sup> Corporal punishment is associated with poorer adult mental health and higher levels of adult criminal and antisocial behaviour. Research which has addressed “disciplinary” violence against children has found consistently high levels of corporal punishment in the home.<sup>18</sup> However, it has also indicated the positive effects on children’s lives in those countries where it has been prohibited.<sup>19</sup>

The traumatic effects of physical violence are well documented.<sup>20</sup> Children who experience it have shown poorer physical and intellectual development, more difficult and aggressive behaviour, poorer relations with peers and more arrests for juvenile and adult crimes than their non-abused peers.<sup>21</sup> There is some evidence that parents who abuse their children are more likely to have been themselves abused as children than non-abusing parents, but recent research suggests this theory of intergenerational transmission of abuse has been overstated.<sup>22</sup> There is also more recent evidence of neurological damage in maltreated infants.<sup>23</sup>

#### ■ Research studies and prevalence data:

A UNICEF opinion survey in 2001 included 15,200 interviews with 9-17 year olds in 35 countries in Europe and Central Asia.<sup>24</sup> 59% of children were found to have experienced violent or aggressive behaviour within their families, with 61% of children in Eastern and Central Europe and Central Asia reporting such behaviour compared with 54% of children in Western Europe. Children reported that parents scold, insult or beat them when they do something “wrong”. For 11% of the children this happened “very/quite often”. 79% of all children, more girls than boys, felt that hitting was never a good solution to problems, and 11% felt that it was rarely a solution.

In **Armenia**, a 2002 survey of 550 parents and 550 children aged 7-18, together with interviews with 100 teachers, 100 neighbours, and 50 social, educational, health and legal professionals, found a high prevalence of physical abuse in families.<sup>25</sup> 33.3% of parents, especially young mothers, were in favour of slapping and beating in disciplining children.

Government commissioned research in **Austria** in 1991-2 revealed that around 29% of mothers and 26% of fathers occasionally resorted to violence in childrearing; 4% of mothers and 5.2% of fathers frequently used “stronger”

forms of violent discipline.<sup>26</sup> Corporal punishment was more common for boys than for girls. 67.5% of mothers and 68.8% of fathers rejected beatings as a means of education.

In 1988, government commissioned research in **Belgium** into women’s experiences of violence found that of 58% who had experienced violence in their lives, 65% of it was at the hands of their parents.<sup>27</sup> 35% of the total sample had experienced violence before the age of 16, typically at a young age (41% in infancy, 21% between the ages of 6 and 12).

In **Croatia** in 1997-8, over 1,000 university students aged 18-29, were surveyed about their childhood experiences of physical and sexual abuse, including witnessing domestic violence between adults.<sup>28</sup> 93% reported corporal punishment or abuse, 27% reported assaults causing injury, and 40% had witnessed violence between adults in the family. Just over a third reported that they had never been hit with an implement, 40% had been hit “rarely” and 20% “sometimes, several times a year”. 18% said they had never been slapped on the face, 45% “rarely” and 30% “sometimes, several times a year”.

In the **Czech Republic** in 1994, the 3rd Faculty of Medicine of the Charles University conducted a study showing that 21% of the total of 884 school aged children surveyed had often been physically punished by beating, 70% sometimes.<sup>29</sup> 10% had often been punished by kicking, 17% sometimes.

A survey in **Denmark** in 2000 by the National Institute of Social Research found that 12% of 3 year-olds were spanked “sometimes” or “seldom”, contrasting with a survey by the same Institute in 1968 which found that 40.2% of children aged 9-12 were hit “sometimes”.<sup>30</sup> Milder physical violence such as slaps on the fingers and hard gripping of the arms was more prevalent.

Surveys of 874 children aged 14-16 in **Estonia** in 2000 revealed that one third had experienced slight physical abuse (pinching, poking), 16% severe abuse (biting, beating with hand or instrument).<sup>31</sup>

In **Finland**, a survey of 7,400 students aged 15-16 in 1992 found that 72% had occasionally experienced mild corporal punishment (pushing and shoving, hair-pulling, slapping, beating with a switch) at home, with 8% reporting more severe punishment (using other implements, hitting with fist or kicking, threats with weapons).<sup>32</sup>

In interviews with 16,190 children aged 14-15 in **Germany** in 1999, 43% reported that they had never been hit, 47% reported being smacked occasionally, and 10% reported more severe corporal punishment.<sup>33</sup> Government commissioned national surveys in 2001 and 2002, involving interviews with parents and with young people aged 12-18, and a postal survey of professionals working in child protection organisations, revealed a significant decrease in the prevalence of corporal punishment, compared with research data from the 1990s.<sup>34</sup>

In **Georgia** in 2000, 39% of 4,382 children aged 6-17 interviewed by the Red Cross Committee reported being subject to corporal punishment at home, usually by the mother.<sup>35</sup>

A 1993 study of 8,158 7 year-olds in **Greece** found that 37.7% were spanked at least once a week and 18% daily.<sup>36</sup> Research between 1994 and 1997 at the Department of Family Relations in the Institute of Child Health in Athens, involving 591 structured interviews with mothers of 6 year-old and



12 year-old schoolchildren, revealed that 65.5% of mothers used physical punishment to discipline their children, with mothers of 6 year-olds three times more likely to use such punishment than mothers of 12 year-olds.<sup>37</sup> Of the children physically punished, 4% suffered minor injuries and 1.2% suffered injuries needing stitches and/or hospitalisation.<sup>38</sup>

In a 1993 study in **Ireland**, 86% of children reported experiencing physical punishment, with 46% feeling humiliated or degraded by it.<sup>39</sup> 37% had been hit with a rigid implement, 10% with a closed fist. In a 1999 survey, 45% of the 1,400 respondents aged 15 and over were in favour of slapping children, with 27% supporting prohibition of corporal punishment.<sup>40</sup>

Official crime statistics for **Italy** between 1986 and 1996 show that in cases where criminal action was initiated by the judicial authority there was an increase in the prevalence of maltreatment within the family (for both adults and children) and of abuse of children by means of punishment.<sup>41</sup> Analysis of calls to the helpline Telefono Azzurro between 2000 and 2002 indicated that over 40% of abuse was physical and 78.6% of all child abuse takes place in the home, with children under 10 being most at risk.<sup>42</sup>

A survey of adolescents conducted by the Department of Clinical Psychology at the University of **Latvia** and the NGO Centre Against Abuse: Support for Families and Children revealed that 13% experienced severe physical abuse (beating, burning, using a knife or gun), 23% less severe physical abuse (hitting, slapping, kicking, throwing something).<sup>43</sup>

In **Luxembourg** in 1993, 49% of 508 parents surveyed considered corporal punishment to be useful in disciplining children; 29% felt it was not particularly useful but was not harmful; 22% believed it should be banned.<sup>44</sup>

Government commissioned research in the **Netherlands** in 1997 found that almost 47% of the population had experienced repeated violence within the family, most commonly between the ages of 10 and 25.<sup>45</sup> In 1999, 8% of 2,000 mothers surveyed revealed slapping or shaking their 2 month-old babies to stop them crying.<sup>46</sup>

A nationwide survey of adults in **Poland** in 2001 found that 80% had experienced beatings in the home as children, by parents or guardians, more commonly for men than for women.<sup>47</sup> The higher the level of education of respondents, the less often they had experienced physical punishment and the less frequently they used corporal punishment on their own children. Corporal punishment was most often used on children aged 7-14. 20% had also experienced corporal punishment by teachers during their childhood.

In the national prevalence study in **Romania** in 2000, 1,556 parents of children under 18 years and 1,295 children aged 13-14 years responded to questionnaires on child rearing and discipline.<sup>48</sup> According to parents' reports, the prevalence of physical abuse within the family was 18.4%; according to children's reports the figure was 24.4%. According to official statistics for Romania in 2000 only about 2% of children under the age of 18 were receiving specialised public services for child protection.

**Romanian** research by Save the Children in 2000 found that of 423 children aged 11-13, 75% had been subject to corporal punishment, with 5% reporting that they needed medical treatment following the abuse.<sup>49</sup> A national survey of 1,556 households with children, 1,295 school children aged 13-14,

and 110 professionals, found that 47% of parents reported using corporal punishment as a disciplinary method while 84% of children stated that they had been subjected to corporal punishment by their parents, including 20% who reported being beaten with objects and 15% who were afraid to go home because of the beatings.<sup>50</sup> An opinion poll of 1,200 children aged 8-13, carried out by Save the Children Romania during the national campaign "Beating is not from Heaven" in 2002, found that 81% considered beating to be an inefficient method of education, 70% believed that child protection against violence was inadequate, 76% believed that adults should be punished by the state for beating children, and 83% felt that corporal punishment should be prohibited by law.

In a 1989 survey of 7,000 school children in the **Russian Federation**, over 50% reported experiencing corporal punishment by their parents.<sup>51</sup> According to the Child Abuse Network, official statistics show that the number of offences in which young people were the victims has remained constant between 1995 and 1998 (over 17,000) but the main weight of the offences has shifted into the sphere of family and domestic relations.<sup>52</sup> There was a substantial increase in the number of successful actions for deprivation of parental rights between 1992 and 1996 (6,724 compared with 24,359), and in the number of children removed from their parents without deprivation of parental rights in cases of threat of violence or cruelty and also of improper care between 1993 and 1996 (3,401 compared with 6,724).

Government analyses of the work of social work centres in **Slovenia** from 1997 to 2000 show that physical violence against children accounted for about one in ten cases, and over half of these concerned children aged 7-14.<sup>53</sup>

In **Slovakia** in 2000, research involving 2,433 children aged 13-17 found that beating by parents was said to occur "very often" for 0.3% of children, "often" for 0.9%, "rarely" for 14.1%, and "never" for 73%. Parental slaps were said to occur "very often" for 0.5%, "often" for 1.9%, "rarely" for 35%, "never" for 52.9%.<sup>54</sup> A survey of 856 adults in 2002 revealed that 98.6% believe that parents should be allowed to use a "smack on the buttock from time to time"; 75.3% believe that parents should be allowed to use "occasional slaps"; 41.7% believe that occasional beating with an implement is acceptable; 22.9% believe that repeated beating is acceptable.<sup>55</sup>

A national survey in **Spain** in 1997 found that 2% of parents considered corporal punishment essential, with 47% believing it to be necessary sometimes.<sup>56</sup> 53% felt it was not necessary but this did not mean they never used it. Women were more likely to administer corporal punishment, especially on very young children. In retrospective interviews with 426 undergraduate students, 57% reported experiencing corporal punishment before the age of 13, with 7.8% reporting severe physical abuse.<sup>57</sup>

Government commissioned surveys in **Sweden** in the 1990s showed a decline in the experience of corporal punishment reported by school children and in its public support, compared with data from the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>58</sup> In 2000, interviews with parents of 1,609 children, a questionnaire completed by 1,764 children aged 11-13 nationwide, and a national postal survey completed by 1,576 20 year-olds found that fewer children (20%) reported experiencing corporal punishment than in previous studies, and less frequently than before.<sup>59</sup> 4% of children aged 11-13 and 7% of young adults aged 20 reported experiencing severe corporal punishment

with some sort of instrument. Only 6% of young adults believe in even the mildest forms of corporal punishment.

In **Turkey**, 23% of 1,800 children aged 10-18 reported experiencing physical punishment by their parents, more commonly for children under 14 years of age.<sup>60</sup>

The **UK** prevalence study by the NSPCC found that of the nearly 2,869 young adults surveyed, 7% reported experiencing serious physical abuse by their parents, with a further 14% experiencing intermediate abuse and 3% receiving physical treatment or discipline causing concern.<sup>61</sup> The levels of serious physical abuse were higher for girls than for boys. Another study found that parents of 0-12 year olds had used physically abusive methods (including "hitting with an implement, punching, kicking, beating up or burned or scalded on purpose") in 6% of cases in the last year and 11% during the child's lifetime.<sup>62</sup> Perpetrators were mostly male (father, stepfather, father substitutes).<sup>63</sup> According to official statistics, 8,000 children were registered for physical abuse in England in the year ending 31 March 2001, a recorded incidence of 0.07% (7 per 10,000 children).<sup>64</sup> The rate of physical injury to registered children is highest among the under one year olds and boys.

UK research in 2000 by Save the Children in **Scotland** found that of the 1,249 children aged 6-18 who completed questionnaires, 93% said there were other ways that parents could discipline their children, without hitting them, and 76% believed that it is wrong for a parent or other adult to hit a child.<sup>65</sup> Similar research in 2002 by Save the Children in **Northern Ireland**, involved questionnaires and interviews with 189 children aged 4-11 and found that two thirds believed children were hit because they are "bad, bold, cheeky, doing things wrong or doing wrong things"; 25% believed that children are hit because of how the adult is feeling.<sup>66</sup> More than 80% of children used words like "hurt, sad, sore, upset, unhappy, unloved, heartbroken, awful" to describe how they felt when they were hit. 94% said they would not smack their children when they themselves became parents. Fewer than three in 20 thought it was acceptable for an adult to hit a child. Comparable findings were revealed in similar research by Save the Children in **England** and in **Wales**.<sup>67</sup>

### 3.3 Other forms of "domestic violence"

"Domestic" or family violence is most commonly taken to refer to violence (usually gender based) between adults. However, it should rightly include all violence within the family, including both direct and indirect violence by adults against children. There is mounting evidence that where there is violence between adults in the home there is also child abuse.<sup>68</sup> According to a UNICEF report 40-70% of men who use physical violence against their partners also physically abuse their children.<sup>69</sup> Around 50% of women who are physically abused by their partners also abuse their children, in 30-60% of homes where either women or children are physically abused, both forms of abuse co-exist, and the greater the frequency and severity of violence between partners, the greater the risk to the child.

In addition, simply witnessing such violence affects children negatively. One study found that infants exposed to such violence displayed poor health, poor sleeping habits, excessive screaming and attachment disorders.<sup>70</sup> Children experience a variety of emotions in witnessing violence, including fear, powerlessness and intimidation,<sup>71</sup> although the immedi-

ate effect of witnessing violence are mediated by the child's sex, age, stage of development and role in the family,<sup>72</sup> the extent and frequency of the violence, frequent separations and moves, economic and social disadvantage and any special needs the child has,<sup>73</sup> and ethnic background.<sup>74</sup>

A review of the effects of domestic violence on children suggest this is influenced by the individual characteristics of the child; the nature and extent of the violence; and the level of support offered to the child.<sup>75</sup> The immediate impact of domestic violence on children includes: being secretive, silent and afraid to tell; inappropriately advanced maturity, regression, imitative abusive behaviour towards the mother and siblings; ambivalent attitudes to the father or stepfather, and confusion; being fearful, hyper-vigilant, mistrustful, anxious and sometimes excessively agitated; experiencing feelings of guilt and helplessness, and thinking the violence is their fault, e.g. if it follows an argument related to the child; experiencing nightmares, bedwetting, sleep disturbances, eating difficulties leading to weight loss or obesity; long periods of sadness which may progress to depression; and delay in developmental milestones.<sup>76</sup>

Long term effects may include: the development of behavioural problems in pre-school children, especially in boys; expression of anger and distress in ways considered inappropriate by others; adolescent boys can be more prone to running away, and to use physical violence against their mothers; suicidal thoughts and behaviours, or interfamilial homicide.<sup>77</sup>

Research also suggests that growing up in a violent home has a negative effect on children's future parenting abilities, although some theorists believe that because of their negative experiences, such parents work extremely hard on parenting skills.<sup>78</sup>

#### ■ *Research studies and prevalence data:*

It has been estimated that in European countries, from 20 to 50% of women are victims of domestic violence, from all sectors of society and all ages.<sup>79</sup> The recorded number of cases has risen over the past decade, though this probably reflects more approaches for help in the 1990s than an increase in the prevalence/incidence.

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights has documented the prevalence of domestic violence in some European countries, based primarily on interviews with women, professionals, and government officials. Figures are not given specifically for children and they were not a main focus of the research, but they are frequently mentioned as being present when violence takes place. Given the impact of witnessing domestic violence on children and on the links between domestic violence and child abuse, it is certain that very large numbers of children are being exposed to and suffering from this form of violence. Domestic violence has been found to be a serious problem, often underreported and inadequately addressed, in Albania,<sup>80</sup> Armenia,<sup>81</sup> Bulgaria,<sup>82</sup> Macedonia,<sup>83</sup> Moldova,<sup>84</sup> Poland,<sup>85</sup> Romania,<sup>86</sup> and the Ukraine.<sup>87</sup> These country reports include cases of girls below the age of 18 being beaten by their partners, as well as the involvement of children in the relationships.

The following prevalence figures for "wife abuse" have been reported for selected European countries:<sup>88</sup> Belgium 25%; Bosnia and Herzegovina 24%; Finland 22%; Lithuania 42%; Netherlands 21%; Norway 25%; Switzerland 20%; UK 26%.

In a 1999 study in **Liechtenstein**, 41% of 689 young people

aged 12-20 reported experiencing slaps and 3% thrashing in the context of family violence.<sup>89</sup> It was not specified whether the violence was carried out by siblings or parents.

Analysis of police and court files concerning domestic violence in the 1990s in **Poland** show an increase of almost 100% in the number of cases of violence towards family members (including children).<sup>90</sup> In 1990, there were 11,503 persons suspected of this crime; this number later exceeded 20,000. During the period 1990-1996 the number of crimes against the family increased at a faster rate than other crimes (62% as opposed to the total increase of crimes of 2%). Most perpetrators are men. A 1993 survey by the Centre for the Examination of Public Opinion found that 65% of divorced women reported having been hit at least once by their ex-husband; 25% reported repeated violence.<sup>91</sup>

In the **UK**, figures for it was calculated that in the year ending March 2001 there were 17 recorded domestic violence attacks every hour in England and Wales<sup>92</sup> – and only one in nine assaults are ever reported to the police.<sup>93</sup> A study into children's experiences and attitudes towards domestic violence involved 1,300 children aged 8-16 from Durham, Bristol and North London and found that most considered fighting between parents to be wrong and most, especially older children, considered threats to be as bad as actual violence.<sup>94</sup> Over 75% of boys aged 11-12 thought that women get hit if they make men angry, and more boys than girls of all ages believed that some women deserve to be hit; boys aged 13-14 were even less clear that men should take responsibility for their violence.

### 3.4 Physical violence outside the home

Physical violence takes place not only in the home but in other contexts, including schools, settings associated with the criminal justice system, institutions and forms of child-care outside the home, on the street and in the community. These settings include both private and state-run provision.

There is evidence that disabled children are more vulnerable to abuse than non-disabled children,<sup>95</sup> and disabled children living in residential institutions have been found to be particularly vulnerable to abuse.<sup>96</sup> In addition to the risk factors that exist for all children in residential settings, disabled children are at risk from over-medication, poor feeding and toileting arrangements, issues around control of challenging behaviour, and lack of stimulation, information and emotional support.<sup>97</sup>

#### ■ *Research studies and prevalence data:*

In **Albania**, research interviews with 35 children in detention centres revealed widespread use of torture by police officers during arrest and investigation.<sup>98</sup> Interviews with juveniles in prisons revealed that corporal punishment was commonly used as a disciplinary punishment in that setting.<sup>99</sup>

The 2002 survey in **Armenia** of parents and children aged 7-18 found that beating and slapping is common in schools as well as in the home.<sup>100</sup>

In 2000, a study in **Georgia** on child abuse and physical and psychological violence against children in the family, institutions (schools, study groups, sport groups) and neighbourhoods found that, of the 4,382 6-17 year olds interviewed, 31.8% reported experiencing physical punishment in schools, predominantly (in 96% of cases) by school teachers.

In **Hungary**, Roma children have been reported as experiencing racially motivated violence at the hands of extremist groups.<sup>101</sup>

An inspection by the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture of the penal institution for minors in Naples, **Italy**, found that staff believed in and administered slaps to the child detainees, for their "educational function".<sup>102</sup>

A survey in **Poland** in 2001 found that 20% had also experienced corporal punishment by teachers during their childhood.<sup>103</sup>

Save the Children **Romania** in 1999 published research involving street children which found that 35.4% of street children were running away from abusive violence in the family.<sup>104</sup> A 2002 national survey of 3,164 children in residential care (7.8% of the overall population in residential care) by UNICEF investigated child abuse in residential care institutions.<sup>105</sup> 37.5% of the children aged 7-18 reported receiving severe physical punishment or "beatings"; more commonly for boys than girls, in the majority of cases (77%) from residential care staff.

An investigation by Human Rights Watch in 1998 found that children in state-run institutions in the **Russian Federation** suffered extremely high levels of physical abuse and neglect.<sup>106</sup> According to UNICEF figures for 1997, 611,034 children are "without parental care", of which 337,527 are housed in baby houses, children's homes and residential homes for disabled children. Of the disabled children, 30,000 are committed to state-run locked psycho-neurological boarding houses for "uneducable" children.<sup>107</sup> The remaining children are placed in alternative custody. Baby houses hold 18-20,000 children aged 0-4 years.

In **Turkey**, research involving children living and working on the streets, found that one third of children living on the streets reported leaving home because of violence they had to face at home.<sup>108</sup>

Research in the UK has found that children in residential care are at greater risk of physical and sexual assault from their peers than from staff.<sup>109</sup> Analysis of 223 questionnaires from children in 48 different children's homes found that 13% of children had been sexually taken advantage of by a peer and 40% had been bullied.<sup>110</sup> A UK study of abuse by strangers found that of 2,420 children and young people, 51% had at some point been a victim of physical abuse outside their home.<sup>111</sup> 25% of these had been kicked, 19% struck with an implement, and 9% slapped. Stranger-perpetrated physically and/or sexually abusive incidents were estimated to comprise 11% of the total incidents of this type of harm, making these the least frequent form that young people were likely to encounter. At the same time, 1 in 8 young people had been victims of a theft or attempted theft, and 1 in 3 had been harassed by a stranger. A 2001 study found that of 550,000 incidents of mobile phone thefts in England and Wales during 2000-2001, 44% of victims were aged 14-19.<sup>112</sup>

## 4. Emotional / psychological violence

### 4.1 Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is an extremely prevalent form of child maltreatment. It is a constituent element of all forms of child maltreatment, and has severe long-term consequences which



may be the most damaging compared to other forms of child maltreatment.<sup>113</sup> It occurs in families at all levels of society, and is known to be associated with domestic violence, adult mental health problems, and parental substance misuse.<sup>114</sup> Indirect forms of other types of abuse might also be viewed as constituting emotional abuse. For example, witnessing violence between parents (see above under “domestic violence”) has been identified as “the most dramatic form of emotional abuse,”<sup>115</sup> and it is likely that viewing pornography and exposure to violence in the media might also be considered in this way. However, emotional abuse is also the most hidden and underestimated form of child maltreatment, and is relatively little researched.

Emotional abuse encompasses a range of behaviours, on a continuum of severity, which are repeated and sustained in the abusive relationship. The ill-treatment involved has been categorised into five types: (i) emotional unavailability, unresponsiveness and neglect; (ii) negative attributions and misattributions to the child; (iii) developmentally inappropriate or inconsistent interactions with the child; (iv) failure to recognise or acknowledge the child’s individuality and psychological boundary; and (v) failing to promote the child’s social adaptation.<sup>116</sup>

#### ■ Research studies and prevalence data:

Emotional abuse was experienced by 14% of the sample of adolescents surveyed in **Latvia** by the University’s Dept of Clinical Psychology and the NGO Centre against Abuse.<sup>117</sup>

The NSPCC’s 2000 **UK** prevalence study found that “terrorising” (e.g. threats of harm) was the most common form of emotionally abusive behaviour (34%), then “psychological domination and control” (almost 25%).<sup>118</sup> 17% reported some psycho/physical control causing distress rather than pain or injury, and 18% experienced humiliation and/or attacks on self-esteem. In 6% of the sample, the experiences were of the number and severity to constitute emotional maltreatment. The study found that levels of emotional maltreatment were higher for girls than for boys.

The 2000 national study in **Romania** revealed prevalence figures for emotional/psychological abuse of 25.6% according to the reports of the 1,556 parents completing questionnaire and of 21.2% according to the reports of the 1,295 children aged 13-14 surveyed.<sup>119</sup>

## 4.2 Bullying

Bullying is included here under “emotional/psychological violence” because it concerns a significant amount of verbal and social abuse. However, it should be noted that physical violence is also an important element of children’s experiences of being bullied. The overlap with sexual violence (e.g. in sexual harassment) seems to be inadequately investigated in research in the case of child victims of bullying.

Bullying is the repeated exposure of a child over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other children.<sup>120</sup> It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, stealing and deliberate exclusion.<sup>121</sup> Most students who are bullied do not report the bullying to adults or only after a long time.<sup>122</sup> Boys are more frequently victims of bullying than girls; direct physical assault decreases with age, while verbal abuse tends to remain constant.<sup>123</sup> The first systematic study of bullying was in the late 1970s in Scandinavia.<sup>124</sup> Then in 1987 data from 140,000 students in 715

schools in Norway revealed that 15% of children were involved in bullying, 9% as victims.<sup>125</sup> Most studies have looked at bullying in schools and it has been found that bullying occurs more inside school than on the way or way home from school.<sup>126</sup>

The effects of bullying on victims include feelings of fear, anxiety and low self-esteem, avoidance of school and of social interaction, and, in extreme cases, suicide and attempted suicide.<sup>127</sup> Long term consequences include poor self-confidence and depressive tendencies. Children are also negatively affected by witnessing bullying of their peers. Being bullied leads to depression and low self-esteem that can carry into adulthood.<sup>128</sup>

#### ■ Research studies and prevalence data:

Studies in **Norway** have found that around 15% of students are involved in bully/victim problems, with around 9% of these victims.<sup>129</sup> Just over 3% were bullied once a week or more. 80,000 school children are regularly involved in bullying, with a larger group involved occasionally, and the latest studies in Oslo suggest that bullying is a growing problem in Norwegian schools. Studies from other countries confirm similar rates in England, Ireland, and the Netherlands. In a sample of 83,000 students in Norway, research found that being bullied decreased with age, with 16-17% of children in grade 2 reporting being bullied compared with 3% of girls and 6.5% of boys in grade 9. Most of the younger children were bullied by older children. In a study of bullying in grades 5-7, 60% of girl victims were bullied by boys, while a further 15-20% were bullied by both boys and girls. 80% of boy victims were bullied by boys only.

In the **UK** prevalence study in 2000, 43% of respondents reported having experienced being bullied, discriminated against or made to feel different by other children.<sup>130</sup> A study of 26 schools in Sheffield in the UK, involving 2,500 pupils, found that 27% of primary school children and 10% of secondary school children reported being bullied “sometimes” or “frequently.”<sup>131</sup> In other research 51% of primary and 28% of secondary pupils reported that they had been bullied.<sup>132</sup> Children from ethnic minorities are at greater risk of bullying than their white peers: analysis of calls from ethnic minority children to Child Line in 1994-1995 found that of 1,616 callers, 496 reported racial abuse, the majority (430) in the school setting.<sup>133</sup> Often this racial bullying involved physical as well as verbal violence. There is also evidence of racial bullying of ethnic minority children in the community outside of school, although research is relatively scarce.<sup>134</sup>

## 5. Sexual violence

Sexual violence against children (child sexual abuse) occurs in a wide variety of contexts, from the economic and market context of commercial sexual exploitation to the domestic context of the family, and includes incest, prostitution, pornography, date rape, peer sexual violence and institutional sexual abuse.

### 5.1 Sexual abuse

It has been estimated that between 10 and 20% of people will be sexually assaulted during their childhood, with children being most at risk from family, friends and neighbours.<sup>135</sup> Within the family, links have been found between child sexual abuse and other forms of physical and emotional

abuse.<sup>136</sup> However, some children are more vulnerable than others, including children in the care system, children living in homes with a history of violence or neglect, children who live with or close to men who themselves were sexually abused, disabled children and those living in a context of extreme economic and social deprivation. Most victims of child sexual abuse are girls, and most perpetrators are male, although there are also female perpetrators and boy victims.<sup>137</sup> Research shows that more (known) perpetrators of sexual abuse were themselves abused in childhood than non-abusing adults.<sup>138</sup> However, many abusers have not experienced child sexual abuse.<sup>139</sup> There is no indication that child sexual abuse is declining over time, and may even be increasing (though rising figures may be due to better data collecting methods and increased awareness). Most abuse is not reported, especially to authorities.

Systematic reviews have found effects of sexual abuse in the short, medium and long term.<sup>140</sup> Short term effects for pre-school children include extreme aggression or withdrawal, sudden explicit sexual behaviour, onset of sleep disturbance, and enuresis. For school-age children these include truancy, school performance problems, boundary disturbances, socialisation difficulties, and confusion about sexual identity. Physical symptoms are under researched, although there are the obvious ones of sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy and genital bruising. Effects in adolescence and early adulthood include depression, anxiety, psychiatric disorders, emotional-behavioural problems, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts. In the long term, research has found that 20% of women who experience child sexual abuse suffer from serious psychological problems. Other long term effects (and similar to medium term effects) include PTSD, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, fear of men, sexual difficulties, self-harming behaviour, alcohol and drug misuse, and increased likelihood of victimisation in adulthood.

For men who were sexually abused, short and long term effects also include difficulties with the concept of masculinity and social and cultural expectations concerning how men are expected to respond to stress and emotions, and must deal with common perceptions and assumptions that they will therefore go on to abuse others and/or become gay.<sup>141</sup>

There is emerging research concerning the influence of mediating factors on the effects of child sexual abuse, e.g. concerning witnessing domestic and neighbourhood violence or the presence of a secure attachment to somebody.<sup>142</sup>

Although a seriously under-researched area, the World Health Organisation has identified some of the costs of child sexual abuse to society, including medical care and complications, mental health and substance-misuse care for victims, perpetrators and families, inappropriate medical care for unrecognised abuse, criminal justice system expenditure, other legal costs, social welfare organisations costs, cost to the education system caused by poor school performance, years of life lost because of death, disability and long-term effects, marital and relationship breakdown costs, costs to future generations association with poor parenting capacity.<sup>143</sup>

#### ■ *Research studies and prevalence data:*

The Council of Europe reports give prevalence figures for selected European countries, ranging from 7% (Ireland) to 36% (Austria) for girls and 3% (Sweden, Switzerland) to 27% (UK) for boys.<sup>144</sup>

In **Germany**, a 1992 survey of crime by the Criminological Research Institute involving 3,289 people aged 16 to 59 found that of the 69.7% who answered the questions relating to child sexual abuse, up to 7.3% of male and up to 18.1% of female respondents reported experiencing sexual abuse before the age of 16, with 90% of perpetrators male, 41.9% known to the respondent and 27.1% a member of the immediate family.<sup>145</sup> In a survey of 1,085 university students, 23% of women and 4% of men stated that they had been sexually abused before the age of 12, and 28% of women and 14% of men stated that they had been physically abused.<sup>146</sup> A survey of 932 students (412 males, 520 females) in university or vocational training found that 6.3% males and 25.2% females recalled abusive contacts.<sup>147</sup>

In 2000 there were 935 child victims of crime reported in **Latvia**. Of these, 80 involved rape, 93 involved violent satisfaction of sexual drive, 16 involved sexual intercourse with minors below the age of 16, and 2 involved cruelty and violence against a minor.<sup>148</sup> 330 cases involved girls, 171 involved minors below the age of 14 years. According to Ministry of Welfare statistics, in 2000 in the Riga region, there were 33 cases of child sexual abuse. The same source says that 500 abused children received rehabilitation services in 2000 and 100 parents participated in the rehabilitation process.

Most evidence of child sexual abuse in **Poland** comes from a research programme run by Nobody's Children Foundation.<sup>149</sup> A 1998 survey of 500 12-year-old children found that 3.6% of those from Warsaw and 5.5% of those in Glogow had had at least one sexual contact with an adult; and 8.4% of the children from Warsaw and 18.9% of those from Glogow had been persuaded by an adult to look at pornography at least once.<sup>150</sup> In 2001, 1,058 adults were asked about their experiences of sexual abuse in childhood (under the age of 15 and committed by adults).<sup>151</sup> Exhibitionism was experienced by 6.5% of the sample; witnessing adult sexual intercourse by 5.8%; being touched on intimate parts of the body by 3.7%; being persuaded to look at pornography by 3.3%; and having sexual intercourse with an adult by 1.3%. In all cases, the majority of perpetrators were male acquaintances or strangers rather than members of the family. Most had not talked about the abuse: almost half of those experiencing direct sexual contact with adults had never disclosed this to anyone.

In a **Romanian** study involving 796 schoolchildren aged 11-16, 4.6% reported having been subject to sexual harassment or sexual abuse.<sup>152</sup> A larger study in 1999 involved interviews with 1,267 high school students (851 girls, 416 boys) aged between 14 and 19 from 24 schools.<sup>153</sup> This found that the most common form of sexual abuse was forced touches (62%), followed by attempted rape (19%), rape (9%) and verbal harassment (4%). Of the whole sample, 18.8% of girls had experienced sexual abuse or harassment, compared with 4% of boys. The abuse began when the child was below the age of 10 in 12% of cases, between 10 and 14 years in 36% of cases, and between 14 and 18 years in 52% of cases. The perpetrator was most often the father (36.7%). About half of all perpetrators were known to the victim. In a 2001 study, 16 out of 1,054 school children aged 11-18 reported experiencing sexual abuse by teachers, with 2.8% reporting they had experienced attempted rape, while 1.6% had actually been raped.<sup>154</sup> The 2000 National prevalence study on child abuse and neglect revealed prevalence figures of 0.1% according to the reports of 1,556 parents, 9.1% according to the reports of 1,295 children aged 13-14.<sup>155</sup>

A Romanian study in 2000 involving 3,164 children living in institutions examined the extent of sexual abuse by children in institutions and found that the most common forms of abuse were homosexual practices, and these were seen as abusive and painful by the victims.<sup>156</sup> In 1.3% of all the cases of sexual violence the perpetrators were institutional staff and in 1.3% of cases adults from outside the institution (the majority of cases were perpetrated by other residents). A 1999 study by Save the Children estimated that 2% of children on the streets were escaping sexual abuse in the family.<sup>157</sup>

According to CANEE.net, more than 2,500 sexual offences were recorded in 1996 in **Russia**, including indecent assault by adults on juveniles.<sup>158</sup> The number of recorded offences concerning juveniles and pornography (1,005 in 1996) "has increased practically tenfold since 1992". In 1995 there were 4 recorded crimes of the sale of juveniles; 10 in 1996. Between 1992 and 1996 there were 221 offences concerning the abduction or substitution of children (59 in 1992, 79 in 1993, 42 in 1994, 19 in 1995, 22 in 1996). In a survey of 174 boys and 172 girls aged 14-17 in school in St Petersburg, Russian Federation, 25% of girls and 11% of boys reported unwanted sexual contact.<sup>159</sup>

Of the young adults surveyed in the **UK** prevalence study, 1% had been sexually abused by parents or carers, 3% by other relatives, 11% by others known to the child, 4% by strangers, 3% by more than one person.<sup>160</sup> Only 25% of those who experienced child sexual abuse told anyone at the time; 25% told someone later; 31% had never told anyone by early adulthood.<sup>161</sup> Of the 9,857 calls to the telephone hotline Child Line regarding sexual abuse, 90% of the children knew their abuser.<sup>162</sup>

## 5.2 Child pornography

The internet is the prime medium for the collection and distribution of child pornography. According to one estimate, there are 14 million pornographic sites, some carrying as many as 1 million images of children, and in the US there have reportedly been 1,000 convictions every year for online offences against children.<sup>163</sup> In 2002, of the 3,774 reports to the Internet Watch Foundation where action was taken, 3,768 concerned child pornography.<sup>164</sup> In addition to the use of the internet for child pornography, its use as a means for other forms of sexual abuse of children, such as sexual solicitation, is coming to light and requires research.

The impact of involvement in child pornography on the young people themselves is an under-researched area but information is available from small scale clinical and survivor studies which indicates that many of the short and long term symptoms are similar to those associated with other forms of sexual exploitation, with some (such as feelings of powerlessness and difficulty in disclosure) being exacerbated by involvement in pornography.

### ■ Research studies and prevalence data:

The University of Cork COPINE (Combating Paedophile Information Networks in Europe) project has established a database of pictures of child pornography collected from the internet, and has been conducting research into the volume and characteristics of internet child pornography, with the youngest so far to be convicted being a 13-year old boy.<sup>165</sup> Of the 40,000 newsgroups studied 0.07% contained "child erotica" or "pornography", and from about 50 million web pages, 238 were related to girl-child pornography or erotica. By

2000, they had concluded that over 1,000 illegal photographs were posted weekly. This figure has continued to increase. Over a six week period in 2002, 140,000 child abuse images were posted, of which 35,000 were new – and 20 new children had been abused to produce them.

Research on children's involvement in the production of pornography – as opposed to viewing pornography – has been scarce. In the **UK** prevalence study, less than 1% of the sample of 2,869 young women reported having pornographic photos or videos taken of them before the age of 16.<sup>166</sup> Some incidence studies have included a question on child pornography – e.g. in one study of child abuse in Northern Ireland, of the sample of 316 children under the age of 16, nine (2.7%), all girls, had been photographed in a sexual pose.<sup>167</sup>

## 5.3 Trafficking

Trafficking is associated not only with commercial sexual exploitation but also paedophilia, domestic slavery, illegal adoption and organ trafficking. It is an increasing problem throughout Europe.<sup>168</sup>

### ■ Research studies and prevalence data:

There is relatively little research and official figures represent only those cases brought to the attention of the authorities. In the Netherlands in 2000, 129 children were "registered" victims of trafficking.<sup>169</sup> In Germany in 2002, 38 children were registered. A UNICEF report in 2003 stated that at least 250 children had been trafficked to England over the past five years, based on reports from social services and other organisations. A study by the Swedish Migration Board in 2003 concluded that in 11 of the 103 cases where asylum seeking children disappeared before the completion of their applications, trafficking was probably involved.

Research by Save the Children has identified that trafficking is a growing problem in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.<sup>170</sup> A 2001 report by the International Organisation for Migration found in 2001 that trafficking in children for sexual exploitation is an increasing problem in northern Europe.<sup>171</sup>

The victims of prostitution come in increasing numbers and at ever younger ages from Eastern European countries (Ukraine, Russia, Albania, Moldova, etc), and all the countries involved – whether origin, transit or destination – are members of the Council of Europe.<sup>172</sup> An estimated 200,000 victims are trafficked from East to West every year; in Italy there are a reported 10,000 Moldovan girls, 30% under age, working as prostitutes. According to the Moldovan NGO, Salvati Copiii, 250 girls were returned to Moldova in 2000 and over 150 in the first quarter of 2001. 27% of these girls were between 17 and 19 years of age and were returned to Moldova after several months, in some cases several years. 20% of them fall back into the hands of traffickers.

Child trafficking and prostitution have been documented by the Council of Europe in Belgium, Austria and France, and sex tourism is a recognised problem in Romania and Poland.<sup>173</sup> Child prostitution has developed at an alarming rate in Central and Eastern Europe. According to one report in 1996, 100,000 abandoned children were engaged in prostitution in Eastern Europe, Russia and Romania, some as young as 7 years of age.<sup>174</sup> Child prostitution networks have been set up whereby girls are recruited in Russia, Ukraine,



Belarus and Romania and sent into prostitution in Poland, Hungary, the Baltic States, and other Central European countries, including the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Networks of young boys follow different routes and end up in western capitals, e.g. there are said to be 2,000 in Berlin.

Research by Save the Children in **Denmark**, involving interviews with professionals and organisations uncovered four cases of trafficking of children for commercial sexual exploitation during the period spring to December 2003 and at least 20 cases of trafficking for criminal exploitation (shoplifting, pickpocketing etc).<sup>175</sup> The countries of origin were Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and the Czech Republic. Children themselves were reluctant to be interviewed for this research. In addition, official figures from the police and social services show that an increasing number of boys, mainly from Romania, have been trafficked to Denmark for the purpose of crimes such as pickpocketing and shoplifting.<sup>176</sup> It is not certain whether or not these boys are also exploited sexually.

In **Romania**, official figures for the years 1997-2001 show that the proportion of those accused of prostitution who were children fluctuated between 17% (69 children) and 29% (112 children).<sup>177</sup> Unpublished research in which girls were interviewed on the reasons for turning to prostitution, revealed that economic reasons often lay behind the turn to prostitution, whether as an escape from poverty or simply as a potential for a better income.<sup>178</sup> Escaping poverty was an important motivation for girls from large families and those from child-care institutions. 55% of the sample belonged to a prostitution ring led by a man, and a third gave all their income to a 'pimp', who would often beat them. One third began their sexual life around the age of 15. 10% said their first sexual contact had been rape, 15% said they had been paid for their first sexual act. Interviews with 70 street children (40 girls and 30 boys) carried out by Save the Children revealed that 91% were victims of physical and sexual violence in their families of origin or in care institutions.<sup>179</sup> 80% were regularly involved in sexual relations at the time of the interview; 54% had had their first sexual experience before running away to the streets; the age of first sexual experience was 11-12 years. Of those from residential institutions, 44% had had their first sexual experience as being raped by older children (91%) or staff (9%). Of those running from the family home, 29% had been sexually abused by family members or an older/younger person.

Domestic slavery has been recognised by the Council of Europe as a relatively new problem.<sup>180</sup> In France, the Committee against Modern Slavery has taken up the cases of over 200 domestic slavery victims, most (95%) females who arrived in France while still children and most suffering physical violence or domestic abuse. There are an estimated several thousand victims of domestic slavery in France. In the UK, the NGO Kalayaan has dealt with over 4,000 domestic workers from 29 countries. That organisation found that 84% had suffered psychological duress, 54% had been locked up, 38% beaten and 10% sexually abused. Approximately 100 domestic workers fled their employers' homes between 1985 and 1990. Cases have also been found in Belgium, Spain, Italy, Austria. One of the groups of victims of domestic slavery are children who are trafficked from West Africa and sent to Europe between 8 and 15 years old to work for west African employers.

#### 5.4 Harmful traditional practices

Female genital mutilation is reportedly on the increase in

Council of Europe member states.<sup>181</sup> No research identified.

Honour killings have also been reported.<sup>182</sup> No research identified.

Early marriage is practised in some European countries. It has been reported as being practised in Albania.<sup>183</sup> It is practised by Roma people.<sup>184</sup> In Macedonia, 27% of the women married in 1994 were aged between 14 and 19.<sup>185</sup>

## 6. Other forms of violence

### 6.1 Media violence

There is a general consensus internationally that a heavy diet of media violence has a negative effect on child development, though the extent to which media violence causes children to become violent is a more controversial issue.<sup>186</sup>

No specific research studies/prevalence figures identified.

### 6.2 Armed conflict

Violence against children in the context of armed conflict will not be covered by the present UN violence study. However, its exacerbation of many of the forms of violence addressed above should be noted as a significant element of future research concerning the violence experienced by children in countries where there is, or has been, armed conflict. It is likely to be particularly relevant in connection with police and other state authority violence in the community and in custody, and in detention centres, prisons, and other similar settings, as well as in connection with the nature and prevalence of sexual violence. Through its effects on levels of poverty, employment, social and health provision, it impacts on levels of violence within the home.

## 7. Conclusion

While this is by no means an exhaustive review of the research on violence against children it does lead one to a number of conclusions. First, that violence against children in Europe occurs in a variety of settings, and in many forms. Accordingly, violence knows neither gender nor bias, though there may be gendered distinctions in the degree of violence in some contexts.

A second general finding is that there is considerable research on violence against children in some areas (geographic and/or subject matter) and a dearth in others. Media violence and early marriage have, for example yielded little in the way of studies. At the same time, this review draws attention to the absence of the voices and views of children in the research. While this is admittedly a methodological and ethical challenge in research of a sensitive nature, it is nevertheless important.

Finally, reviewing the European research on violence against children in the context of the UN Study on Violence Against children gives scholars and practitioners an opportunity to reflect on future agendas for both research and action. The UN Study encourages States parties and other actors to enhance the efforts to protect children from violence, and to assist those who have been victimized. It is therefore important that all interventions in the name of helping children do not inadvertently harm them because they are undertaken on the basis of assumption rather than empiricism.



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## The UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre

The UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, Italy, was established in 1988 to strengthen the research capability of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and to support its advocacy for children worldwide. The Centre (formally known as the International Child Development Centre) helps to identify and research current and future areas of UNICEF's work. Its prime objectives are to improve international understanding of issues relating to children's rights and to help facilitate the full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in both industrialized and developing countries.

The Centre's publications are contributions to a global debate on child rights issues and include a wide range of opinions. For that reason, the Centre may produce publications that do not necessarily reflect UNICEF policies or approaches on some topics. The views expressed are those of the authors and are published by the Centre in order to stimulate further dialogue on child rights.

The Centre collaborates with its host institution in Florence, the Istituto degli Innocenti, in selected areas of work. Core funding for the Centre is provided by the Government of Italy, while financial support for specific projects is also provided by other governments, international institutions and private sources, including UNICEF National Committees.

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