

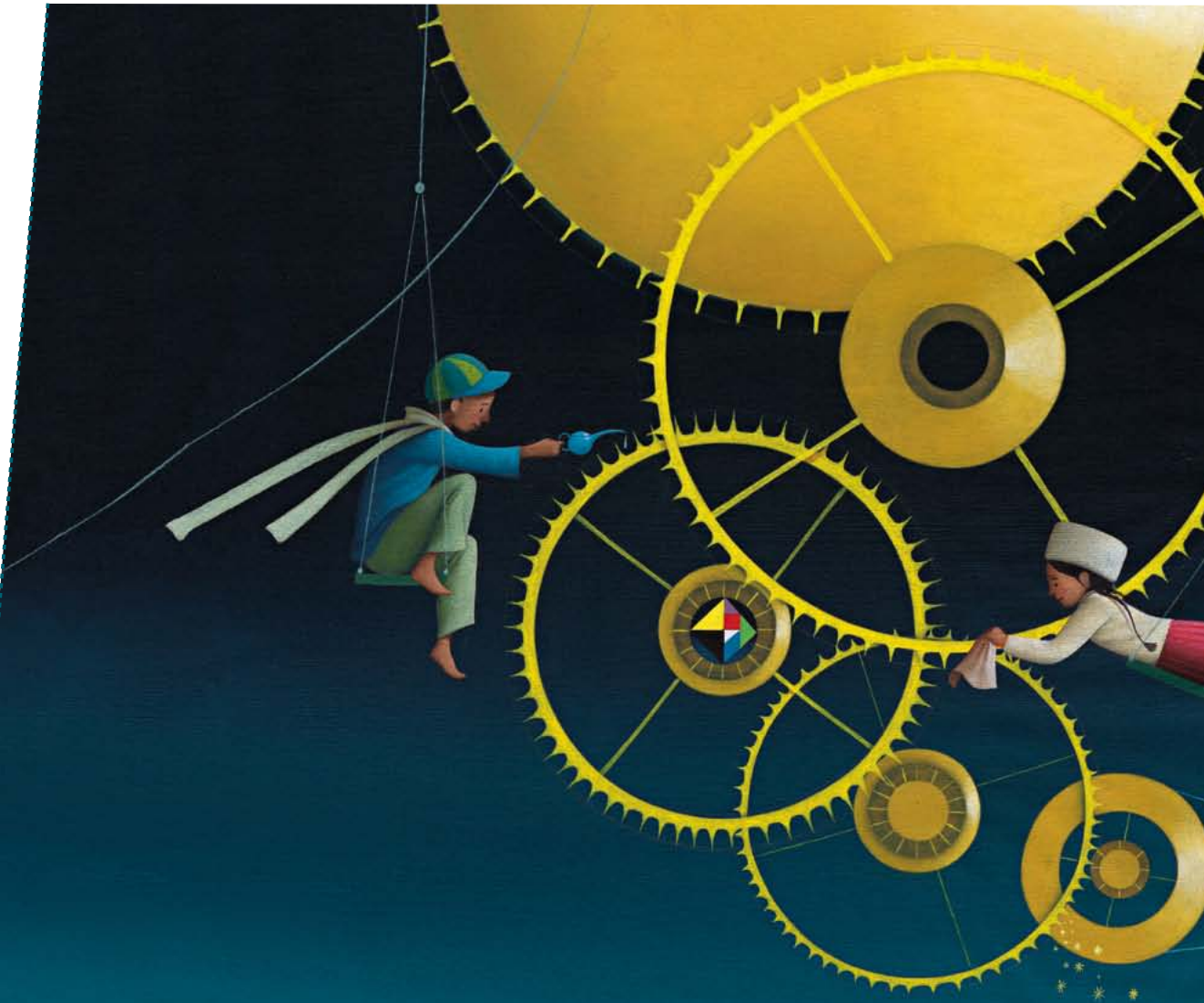


Stepping up progress in combating violence against children

Ankara, 27-28 November 2012

Final report of the Conference

BUILDING A EUROPE FOR AND WITH CHILDREN



T.C.
Aile ve
Sosyal Politikalar
Bakanlığı



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1. Executive summary

This report¹ summarises the core issues discussed during the European Conference “Stepping up progress in combating violence against children”, which took place in Ankara on 27-28 November 2012. The conference was organised by the Council of Europe, UNICEF Turkey and the Government of Turkey, in collaboration with the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) on Violence against Children. The objective of the conference, which falls within the scope of the United Nations² and the Council of Europe’s³ efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against children, was threefold.

Firstly, it represented an occasion to take stock of the situation relative to violence against children in the Council of Europe member states, including a focus on Turkey as the Conference host country, and to accelerate progress of the development of integrated national strategies.

Secondly, this stocktaking also served an important role in the global framework of the United Nations’ work to prevent and eliminate violence against children. For that purpose, the results from the Global Progress Survey 2011, conducted by the SRSG on Violence against Children and to which 27 Council of Europe member states have contributed, was presented during the conference. The conference topic also aligned well with the CRC Committee’s General Comment No. 13 relative to the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, adopted in April 2011. General Comment No. 13 was adopted in view of the alarming extent and intensity of violence exerted on children, and to encourage the strengthening of measures to end such violence. On the European continent, the Council of Europe, UNICEF and international NGOs such as Save the Children play a significant role in promoting and co-ordinating measures to protect children from violence. The Ankara Conference represents one of the milestone initiatives undertaken over the past decade to intensify the exchange of good practices and deepen the reflection on how to combat violence against children in Europe.

Thirdly, the conference allowed for the Government of Turkey to display the significant institutional steps the country is taking to protect children from violence, and offered a possibility to exchange good practices with countries such as Sweden and Estonia, which already have integrated strategies in place. Experiences on tackling violence

1. This report was drafted by Dr Susanna Greijer, European University Institute, Florence.

2. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted by the UN General Assembly 20 November 1989, Article 19.

3. Council of Europe Strategy in the Rights of the Child, 2012-2015, adopted by the Committee of Ministers in February 2012.

against children, both through government and civil society initiatives, were also shared by several other countries, such as Italy, Belgium, Serbia and Greece.⁴

The main issues raised during the conference were:

1. the need to adopt an integrated national strategy, based on a set of shared principles, to step up progress in tackling violence against children;
2. the co-ordination and co-operation, both internal and international, to ensure the implementation of integrated national strategies for the prevention of and protection from violence against children;
3. the necessity to focus on prevention and of putting into place mechanisms for the prevention and early detection of violence against children;
4. the need to ensure that reporting of violence against children becomes an obligation for all professionals working with children and that a clear procedure for reporting exists;
5. the legal ban on corporal punishment and the work for a zero tolerance of such practices in all environments;
6. the imperative need for research and data on violence against children to better understand the depth of this problem and strengthen the capacity to find effective solutions;
7. the fundamental role of civil society, with its grassroots knowledge and information, in tackling violence against children;
8. the need to grant due importance to child participation, and ensure that children are given a voice in all matters and in decision-making processes that affect them.

The structure of this report is based on the above-mentioned sub-topics, which all address different aspects of the work to tackle violence against children. Other important aspects discussed during the conference, such as gender considerations, the need for child-friendly systems and services, and the importance of media in raising awareness and changing perceptions, are reflected in a crosscutting manner throughout the report.

4. Some of the other countries represented at the Conference were: Albania, Lithuania, Moldova, Norway, Spain, Portugal, and UK.

II. Introduction

In November 2009, the Committee of Ministers adopted the Council of Europe Policy Guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence (hereinafter the Guidelines).⁵ The Guidelines aim to encourage the member states to develop and implement a holistic national framework to safeguard the rights of the child and to eradicate violence against children. Based on a set of general⁶ and operative⁷ principles, the Guidelines support the promotion of a culture of respect and the development of a multi-faceted and systematic national strategy for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

The Guidelines follow the path forged by the United Nations Study on Violence against Children, conducted by Mr Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro and published in 2006.⁸ The Study provided a global picture of various types of violence against children within the family, schools, alternative care institutions and detention facilities, places where children work and communities.⁹ Moreover, the Study called for immediate action and presented a set of recommendations for the prevention of and response to violence against children. Following one of those recommendations, the United Nations Secretary-General announced, in May 2009, the appointment of a Special Representative on Violence against Children (hereinafter SRSO). The work of the SRSO, a position currently held by Ms Marta Santos Pais, has granted unprecedented attention to the topic of violence against children.

Following the adoption of the Guidelines and in co-operation with the SRSO, a European conference on "National integrated strategies to eliminate violence against children" was held in Vienna in May 2010. A second conference, entitled "Combating violence against children: from isolated actions to integrated strategies", was organised in Kiev in partnership with UNICEF in May 2011. Eighteen months later, in November 2012, a third European conference, entitled: "*Stepping up progress in combating violence against children*" (hereinafter the Conference or the Ankara Conference) took place in Ankara, to follow-up on how member states have developed and are implementing a holistic national framework to respond to and to prevent violence against children.


5. Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)10.

6. The general principles of the Guidelines are: protection against violence; the right to life and maximum survival and development; non-discrimination; gender equality; child participation; a state's obligations; other actors' obligations and participation; best interests of the child.

7. The operative principles are: multidimensional nature of violence; integrated approach; cross-sectorial co-operation; and multi-stakeholder approach.

8. Report of the independent expert for the United Nations Study on Violence against Children, United Nations General Assembly, A/61/299, 29 August 2006. Available at: www.unviolencestudy.org last accessed 5 March 2013.

9. Ibid. Summary of report.



The objective of the Conference was threefold. Firstly, it represented an occasion to take stock of the situation regarding violence against children in the Council of Europe member states, and follow-up on the development of integrated national strategies. Secondly, this stocktaking also served an important role in the global framework of the United Nations' work to prevent and eliminate violence against children. For that purpose, the results from the Global Progress Survey 2011, conducted by the SRSO on Violence against Children and to which 27 Council of Europe member states have contributed, were presented during the Conference. Thirdly, the Conference allowed for the Government of Turkey to display the significant institutional steps the country is taking to protect children from violence, and offered a possibility to exchange good practices with other countries that already have integrated strategies in place.

Over the last few years, new institutions have been set up and efforts to tackle violence against children have been made in many countries across the world. Nevertheless, the reality for children has not always changed.

III. Integrated national strategies to tackle violence against children

Violence against children is a violation of the rights of the child, but it is also an obstacle to progress in a society. Experience has shown that only by adopting a holistic approach and working in an integrated manner can violence against children be effectively tackled. Such strategies must be granted due importance and be able to resist political and economic changes. Thus, giving a priority to children's rights should still prevail despite economic crisis or changes of government. Nevertheless, to guarantee consistent and adequate funding to protect children from violence represents a big challenge for many states in today's Europe.

During the Conference, an overview of the European responses to the UN Global Progress Survey on violence against children was presented.¹⁰ The results showed that most European states have a general legal framework covering situations of violence against children, but no specific law on the topic. Despite the development of integrated strategies on violence against children in many countries, a worrying number of children continue to fall through the safety net and it is clear that the efforts made so far have been insufficient. Therefore, developing and implementing integrated

¹⁰ 27 Council of Europe member states replied to this survey, which was launched in 2011 by the UN SRSO on Violence against Children.

national strategies to tackle violence against children represented one of the main themes of the Ankara Conference. An integrated national strategy should, as set forth by the Guidelines, contain a set of principles to be integrated in legislation and policies, and a set of actions to be implemented in line with an action plan.

Discussions were held on how to create the conditions to eradicate violence against children through such national strategies, and how to ensure that states have the appropriate tools to tackle this phenomenon. One of the central issues of this problem regards the need to increase institutional capacity to address violence against children. In order to implement the actions contained in the integrated national strategies on violence against children, there is a strong need for a clear action plan, which all stakeholders can relate to and help implement. Although the European responses to the UN Global Progress Survey on violence against children showed that most states have some kind of action plan to address manifestations of violence against children, it became clear that the content of such action plans differs widely. While this can be understood from a perspective of cultural diversity and the different political and socio-economic realities of the Council of Europe member states, it is also important to find common denominators and have a coherent approach throughout the continent. In other words, integrated national strategies and action plans to tackle violence against children should be context specific but at the same time be based upon a set of shared principles.

A fundamental element of any integrated national strategy is that all actors must take shared responsibility and work for a holistic protection of the child. During the conference, it was pointed out that states commonly have action plans limited to one specific problem, such as child labour or trafficking of human beings, while national agendas in which all issues pertaining to children and violence are addressed in a comprehensive manner are still rare. It was thus suggested that states should develop a comprehensive, integrated, well-co-ordinated and well-resourced strategy to provide an overall framework to effectively address all forms of violence against children. When several strategies exist for different forms of violence, these should not be isolated from one another, but rather be linked together under this common framework.

Lastly, it was pointed out that children in vulnerable situations, such as migrant children, are particularly exposed to violence also in the institutional framework, which poses particular problems in terms of prevention and protection. Therefore, specific consideration for children in vulnerable situations is needed in the elaboration of the integrated strategy. Furthermore, children should be protected from all kinds of discrimination and a gender sensitive approach should guide the development and implementation of any national strategy on violence against children.

Turkey has decided to align its domestic law with the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention).¹¹ A law on the protection from domestic violence, protection of the integrity of the family, and protection of children and women from violence has therefore been adopted. Moreover, the government has been working on an integrated national strategy (2013-2017). In combination with these legislative and policy developments, during the Conference Turkey also announced its plan to open centres for victims of violence, operational at all times. Part of Turkey's efforts to tackle violence against children in an integrated manner is also the Ombudsman's office newly established under the Parliament, which includes one Deputy Ombudsperson on Children and Women tasked to secure independent and effective feedback on child rights-related public sector accountabilities and citizens' complaints.

Recommendations

1. Giving a high priority to children's rights should still prevail despite economic or political difficulties or changes, and appropriate support and funding for child protection should be guaranteed at all times.
2. All Council of Europe member states that have not yet done so should adopt an integrated, well-co-ordinated and well-resourced national strategy on the rights of the child and the protection of children from violence.
3. All stakeholders must take shared responsibility and work in an integrated manner for a holistic protection of the child.
4. Any strategy to protect children from violence should be context-specific, while guided by international human rights standards and based on a set of fundamental principles common to all states, including the best interest of the child, non-discrimination, protection from discrimination and gender equality.
5. Special consideration should be granted to children in vulnerable situations, who suffer an increased risk of institutional violence.

11. Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS 210), adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 7 April 2011. The Convention has not yet entered into force.

IV. National and international co-ordination and co-operation

In order to work in a truly integrated manner for the protection of children from violence, all stakeholders need to come together and feel a shared responsibility. During the Conference, it was repeatedly underscored that co-ordination and co-operation on all levels and between all actors working with children is essential. This is also one of the main features of the Council of Europe Guidelines, which encourage the involvement and co-operation of all stakeholders.¹²

Tackling violence against children is a multidisciplinary task. Therefore, openness to co-operation is fundamental and needs to be constantly encouraged. On the government level, co-operation between services should be strengthened across departments and between central and sub-national authorities. Parliamentarians also play a very important role in raising issues of concern in the public debate and policy agenda. Today, partnerships with civil society and academia are growing stronger and becoming more frequent, and the crucial role these actors can have was emphasised by several speakers during the Conference. The main message was that, in order to effectively tackle violence against children, there is a need for both formal and informal spaces allowing for dialogue, co-ordination and joint action.

Co-ordination and co-operation should be ensured not only on international and national levels, but also on the local level in regions and municipalities. It is often on the local level that victims of violence receive help and support, and where prevention actions can really have an impact. Local actors can often be the ones identifying the concrete challenges and suggesting the appropriate solutions. Both governmental and non-governmental local entities should therefore be included in the development of strategies to tackle violence against children.

One of the experiences shared came from the Serbian Parliament, which adopted a national strategy for prevention and protection of children from violence in 2008. While the topic is still hidden and taboo in several countries, the Conference speakers acknowledged the need to take on a multi-disciplinary approach to tackle violence and protect children. Some of them pointed out that action plans have been or are being developed, but still have to be implemented. Belgium shared the experiences of both the Government and the children's Ombudsman working for the protection of children from violence, and recalled that violence more often than not takes place in the child's family or circle of trust. An approach that favours multi-sectorial work and

12. Op. cit. 3.

includes not only the police and the justice system but also strong social services and family support can have a greater impact on children's wellbeing.

Positive experiences from Estonia's system of inclusion were also shared. The country currently has a development plan on violence against children (2010-2014) as well as a Strategy for children and families (2012-2020). With the Ministry of Justice as co-ordinator, these are based upon a shared vision and common ground, and favour personal involvement and ownership amongst all stakeholders. By so doing, they create the pre-conditions for sustainable co-operation and implementation. Portugal also developed an inter-disciplinary action plan for child protection, with the involvement of academia and experts, regional and local authorities, Parliamentary groups and media, youth and family associations, as well as other social partners.

One of the challenges in ensuring an integrated approach in all actions is to promote a strong sense of ownership by all stakeholders and to share responsibility for its implementation. It was pointed out that some services, such as certain ministries, may be more difficult than others to involve. Another weakness is the tendency of involved actors to reflect their own institutions during the implementation process, rather than coming together as one to adapt to needs and gaps. It was clear from the Conference participants, both speakers and audience, that it is a challenging and demanding task to guarantee effective co-operation in the implementation of national strategies on violence against children.

Recommendations

6. The integrated national strategy should be developed and implemented through a widely participatory process, involving all relevant stakeholders and providing for a genuine process of inclusion and feedback, which takes due account of each stakeholders' constraints and contributions.
7. The integrated national agenda should constitute a framework for engaging all relevant state institutions, departments and authorities, including at the provincial and federal level, and bridge relevant sectors and disciplines.
8. Effective co-ordination should be led and secured by a high level institution with the requisite authority, resources and influence to lead the design and implementation of the national agenda, and one that can provide the required guidance to relevant actors.

V. Prevention and early detection

The human, economic and social cost of millions of children exposed to violence is high, as the impact goes beyond the direct victims to touch society as a whole. While most states have put in place some form of system to respond to violence, one of the main concerns expressed during the Ankara Conference was how to *prevent* violence against children. It was underscored that by focusing on early childhood, good parenting and family support, the risk for violence against children can be visibly reduced. This can be done, partly, by approaching parents or future parents and influencing the way they see their parental role, e.g. by information campaigns, instructive brochures and messages through the media. Training should also be offered to professionals such as paediatricians, psychologists and teachers, to ensure they have the adequate knowledge both to detect and react to violence, and to inform and guide parents towards non-violent parenting. Furthermore, it was suggested that the children's Ombudsman could take national initiatives for awareness raising and to enhance a better understanding of positive parenting and non-violent education and upbringing.

The Council of Europe has made it into one of its priorities to promote the social, legal and economic protection of families. By developing family-friendly policies aimed at reducing parental stress and favouring positive parenting, it seeks to reduce the risk of children being subject to violence.¹³ Moreover, with the best interest of the child as its guiding principle, the Council of Europe encourages the development of child-friendly social services, through the training of social services staff on the rights of the child.¹⁴

During the Ankara Conference, it was repeatedly stated that prevention is one of the keys to put an end to violence against children, and a clear will to engage further in this area was manifested throughout the Conference. To this end, it was agreed that states must put this issue at the forefront and invest in solid prevention and early detection systems. Integrated approaches should be institutionalised and extended down to the local level. Decisions must, at all times, be based upon the best interests of the child, but questions regarding children should also be addressed within the cultural context of each community. Only when decisions come from within, including when they are aimed to overcome the social acceptance of violence against children and to promote positive discipline alternatives, can they lead to a lasting change.

Good practices on prevention of violence against children were shared from Greece, Serbia and Belgium. In Greece, a co-ordination system has been developed, and focus

13. Recommendation Rec(2006)19 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on policy to support positive parenting. See also: http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/familypolicy/enfance/parenting_en.asp last accessed 5 March 2013.

14. http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/familypolicy/default_en.asp last accessed 5 March 2013.

has been placed on empowerment, information, specialisation and training at the local/community levels. Some of the main challenges were the lack of social workers in the municipalities, a certain level of conflict of powers between social workers in regions and municipalities, political intervention in the content of social reports and risk assessments, as well as the lack of available measures to detect child abuse and/or harmful parenting. Lastly, the lack of reporting of incidents of violence against children was emphasised as a big problem, due to the fear of being condemned or stigmatised for having reported. As a partial solution to some of these problems, the need for further study and research to gather data on violence against children was mentioned. Moreover, a suggestion was made from Serbia to enable independent institutions such as Ombudsman's offices or child right parliamentary committees to assess and evaluate public measures.

Experiences outlined by Belgium indicated that there were difficulties encountered by the police and justice system in co-operating with the psycho-medico-social sectors. This has proven particularly true with regard to individual cases, and behind this difficulty lies the question regarding confidentiality. Nevertheless, it was pointed out that, alone, the justice system could not do much. Therefore, co-operation must be enhanced through training of all involved professionals; they should know how to detect a situation of violence against children and how to respond to it. The response should be formulated in an integrated plan of procedure, which explicitly mentions each phase of the process, such as: detection, diagnosis, reporting, investigation and protection. Moreover, a crosscutting dialogue on all levels, from national to local, is necessary. It was pointed out that, so far, attention has mainly been focused on reactions against violence, whereas the need for effective prevention measures has been underestimated. Too little has been done to reduce the risk of children becoming victims of violence.

The current situation of the economic crisis in Europe has made unemployment rise and has plunged many families into a situation of poverty or economic distress. These are all factors that increase the risk of violence within the family structure. To counter this negative effect, the knowledge and services of social workers, who will have to do the work in the communities, must be increased. They, as well as other professionals who come into contact with children and families, need training and specialisation to guide parents in the right direction. A positive approach, which avoids negative or pejorative terminology, should preferably be chosen. If prevention of violence and measures such as family support receive more attention, the chances that children can stay with their families and grow up in a safe environment also increase; this should be a main priority.

Recommendations

9. States should increase family support and positive parenting initiatives in order to provide advice and information to all parents on models of parental upbringing and discipline free from violence.
10. A positive approach, focusing on positive rather than negative terminology, should be chosen to prevent violence.
11. All professionals working and in contact with children and families should receive special training on how to promote positive parenting and education and how to detect and respond to violence.
12. Clear standards should exist for the treatment and education of children in institutional care in order to prevent violence against children in such settings and effectively address incidents that may occur.

VI. Reporting obligations

The strong support for prevention mechanisms, emphasised throughout the Conference, was also accompanied by concern regarding existing mechanisms to report violence against children. In order to overcome social conceptions that violence is necessary, efforts to protect children through reporting and accountability mechanisms are needed. Positive developments can already be seen in terms of legal prohibitions of violence against children, and the fight against impunity has already begun. Nevertheless, much is still to be done, and even when the law is perfect (which is not always the case) the question of implementation needs to be resolved. Sometimes, the co-ordination or the resources needed to use existing laws are insufficient. Bridging the gap between legislation and practice remains one of the most fundamental challenges in child protection.

A UNICEF study¹⁵ presented at the Conference showed that many professionals lack knowledge of what their obligations in terms of reporting really are. While the study showed that there is generally a good knowledge on how to identify different types of violence against children, the question of whether professionals working with children would report such cases to the appropriate services received much more uncertain

15. UNICEF Regional Office for CEE-CIS, "UNICEF sub-regional research on system responsiveness in identifying, reporting and referring cases of violence against children".

responses. Many professionals do not know if they have a legal duty to report incidents of violence against children, and although there was a strong endorsement for such a requirement, they were more reluctant with regard to reporting obligations for incidents of violence in homes or schools. Where reporting does take place, the study showed a certain incoherence in the way in which cases of violence against children are handled, and the need for a formal procedure to make the system more coherent was strongly felt.

Another issue connected with the reporting of violence against children is that those who report, such as teachers or doctors, often lack knowledge of the consequences of their reporting. Follow-up is rare and no one returns information to the person who initially filed the report. This can represent an element of worry for professionals working with children, who have no way of knowing whether the act of reporting was beneficial or detrimental to the child, and may lead to their refraining from reporting violence in future cases. This type of under-reporting could be avoided by adopting a transparent and integrated system of child protection, which follows the same formal procedure everywhere, while still maintaining the flexibility to adapt to individual children's varying needs. Wider reporting by professionals could also be encouraged by ensuring that those who report violence against children are protected from liability in cases of reasonable mistakes, as well as by ensuring that confidentiality norms do not hamper reporting.

Furthermore, the importance of support (psychological, social and/or medical) to families in which there is a risk of or tendency to violence, before a permanent decision to remove the child from his/her family is taken, was underscored. From Belgium it was pointed out that prosecution should not be the first step, but rather a last resort. The justice system, which needs to maintain a certain distance to the population, is not always the best placed institution to intervene directly in family affairs. As long as it is considered in the best interest of the child to stay within the family setting, a mechanism with specialised professionals to actively help and support the family may represent a better choice. Thus, providing family support should always represent the first option, and only when such mechanisms fail should the judicial system step in and make the appropriate decisions.

Another type of under-reporting of violence against children was identified during the Conference, linked to the taboo that still surrounds the topic. Violence against children is considered something difficult to bring into the open, and in many countries there is a tendency to try to hide this phenomenon. The new institutions for child protection currently being set up in Turkey, such as the Ombudsman's office, are aimed at ending the taboo on violence against children. In addition, awareness-raising campaigns through media and the Internet can be used to make people more aware and draw

attention to the topic. As pointed out by Turkey, such campaigns should encourage families and children not to refrain from reporting violence. In order to change the society and reduce violence against children and women, these problems must be addressed; keeping them hidden will serve no one any good.

Lastly, with regard to the justice system, the need for special training of judges, in particular youth court judges, was again highlighted. Often, these professionals receive no special training whatsoever in how to address, hear or communicate with minors, and are thrown into their role without any prior preparation. More than ever, Europe needs to invest in child-friendly services and a child-friendly justice-system. Only then can re-victimisation and re-traumatisation of children be avoided, and the system can serve its purpose: to provide children victims of violence with an opportunity to receive recognition, care and support for rehabilitation, thus increasing their chances of growing up to become peaceful adults who have trust in institutions and who are respectful of others.

Recommendations

- 13.** States should ensure that there is a legal obligation for professionals working with children to report violence against children, and that this obligation is not in conflict with confidentiality clauses.
- 14.** There should be clear and coherent procedures for professionals to follow when reporting incidents of violence against children and, while taking into account the specific situation of each individual child, all cases should be treated in line with such procedures.
- 15.** Guided by the best interests of the child, methods outside traditional court structures should be encouraged to address cases of violence against children and, where possible without putting the child at risk, prosecution should be a last resort.
- 16.** Follow-up or feedback to victims and professionals responsible for reporting an incident of violence against children should be ensured, in order to enhance transparency and avoid under-reporting due to uncertainty regarding the treatment of the child.

VII. Corporal punishment

One of the most debated issues concerning violence against children is that of corporal punishment. Many European states have prohibited corporal punishment in all spheres, including in the home.¹⁶ Nevertheless, even in those states that have achieved a full ban, no consensus against corporal punishment exists in all layers of society. Such a value-building process takes a long time, and strong support is needed for professionals and parents to change their mentalities. How to make the necessary change was an issue raised with concern by some of the participants at the Conference.

A society that accepts no form of violence amongst adults should not accept violence against children. The Council of Europe launched its campaign against corporal punishment, “Raise your hand against smacking”, in 2008.¹⁷ Since then, it has pushed for a commitment from all its member states to ban corporal punishment, in line with expert opinions and in respect of their obligations under international law. In Sweden, which was the first country to put a total ban on corporal punishment,¹⁸ a national campaign to raise awareness on the ban was run by the Ministry of Justice, and resulted in more than 90% of the Swedish population knowing about the law two years after it was passed. Since then, 22 other Council of Europe member states have introduced complete bans of corporal punishment, but more than half are still lagging behind.¹⁹ Considering these statistics, it is clear that Europe still needs a “zero tolerance” message on violence against children.

During the Ankara Conference, several ways of preventing corporal punishment, both by parents and professionals working with children, were mentioned. Some of them were: to praise or award children when they reach good results or do good things on their own; to change the environment, not the child (for instance by removing expensive objects from the child’s reach instead of punishing his/her curiosity); to teach the child the importance of saying sorry when you do something wrong; or to set up “time-outs” for young children when they behave badly. Allowing corporal punishment, including humiliating treatment, is a form of acceptance of violence against children, and undermines the effectiveness of any training or information and awareness raising initiative on positive parenting.

16. For more information on corporal punishment, see: <http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/> last accessed 5 March 2013.

17. http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/corporalpunishment/default_en.asp last accessed 5 March 2013.

18. The Swedish legal prohibition of corporal punishment came into force in July 1979.

19. 24 of the Council of Europe member states still do not have a full ban on corporal punishment.

Recommendations

17. All Council of Europe member states should ban corporal punishment in all environments, including in the home.
18. Alternative, non-violent means to bring up children and teach them what is right and wrong should be promoted, and children should be informed that they have the right to be free from violence.
19. Efforts to change social perceptions that violence against children is necessary or acceptable must continue until a real change can be seen.
20. All Council of Europe member states should develop policies to encourage and support positive parenting and positive discipline approaches.

VIII. Research and data

An important topic addressed during the Ankara Conference is the need to base long-term decisions upon reliable data on violence against children. Collection, analysis, and dissemination of data remain an issue of concern, and many states do not keep any specific data on violence against children. In those member states that have some kind of statistics on the issue, the data is often provided in a partial manner by different entities, and is rarely, if ever, brought together to form one comprehensive database on violence against children. Again, the main reason for this seems to be the lack of co-ordination between different departments and institutions. Sharing information is still more an exception than a rule, and the Conference participants agreed that this is something that must change. A full picture of what the situation is like in each member state may allow for a better understanding of root causes and consequences of violence, and would make more appropriate and efficient legislative and policy choices possible.

In order to make the right choices and assess whether those choices contribute to an improvement, data must not only be collected and compiled, but also correctly analysed. Such analyses require professional expertise and a solid set of indicators against which the situation can be measured. An indicator can serve as marker to indicate progress, revealing whether certain legislative or policy changes have been successful or not and what their impact has been. Indicators can also help to increase the understanding of what kind of legal amendments are necessary, or what type of policies should be adopted. Different types of indicators were presented during the

Conference, such as qualitative and quantitative indicators, fact-based and judgement-based ones, and performance and compliance indicators. Their structure can be based, for instance, on the number of ratifications of relevant legal instruments or legal reforms to ban violence against children. The sources of information for the indicators can range from administrative data, statistical surveys and censuses, to perception surveys and events-based information.

Jointly with assessment based on indicators, a continuous monitoring mechanism is needed. Monitoring can provide an overall picture of the real situation, and may show if the measures taken are producing an effect, and if the resources invested seem sufficient and effectively allocated. More reliable and comprehensive data and research on violence against children helps understand the extent of the problem, contributes to better assess how many children are affected in a society, and is indispensable to ensure that children's rights are respected.

Recommendations

21. Research on the topic of violence against children should be encouraged and, where possible, benefit from some degree of public funding.
22. States should set up a comprehensive national database on violence against children.
23. Data collected by different institutions or government services should be shared and data sources integrated into one national database.

IX. Civil society

Civil society plays a fundamental role in protecting children from violence and promoting and strengthening their rights. This role was underlined at the Ankara Conference, and it was acknowledged that the increasingly active NGO sector should receive state support. Often, civil society actors have context-specific information and knowledge that can be extremely precious for local and national authorities that need to make the right policy decisions. Moreover, this "grassroots" knowledge is often a key to work for the prevention of violence against children.

NGOs perform a long series of activities, from encouraging public debate, advocacy and raising awareness, to training of professionals, and care and support for victims.

An interesting example of civil society work was provided from Turkish university hospitals, which since 2008 have set up centres for the protection and support of children in seven hospitals. The aim of the centres is to reach children threatened by abuse and work actively with them. Moreover, the centres carry out training and research. Efforts have recently been made to co-ordinate the approaches of the centres so ensuring a coherent approach and method of work.

Save the Children provided another example of important NGO work, through a study on and campaign against corporal punishment in four of the Council of Europe member states.²⁰ The study showed that in countries where corporal punishment is still legal, social tolerance of violence is widespread and deeply rooted, including amongst parents and even amongst children themselves. Save the Children thus started an advocacy campaign to change this popular misconception and promote positive parenting. Parents get their information about children from television and the Internet more than from training courses and similar initiatives; therefore, the campaign was run with the help of commercial spots in the media. This way, the campaign also reached out to a broader public, increasing the chances of contributing to social change.

The results from a survey among 40 NGOs in Turkey were also presented, and some of the challenges in working with public institutions were highlighted. Among these were the lack of trust between the administration and civil society, as well as the lack of previous public policy on children's rights and of co-operation between public institutions. The survey results also showed a lack of co-operation between NGOs themselves, and a certain lack of self-reflection. It was suggested that all actors involved in protecting children from violence, whether public institutions or civil society actors, must take joint responsibility for the work to be done. In order to work in a truly integrated manner, it was also suggested that the involvement of civil society in the government's development of child rights policies should be further institutionalised.

Recommendations

24. A relationship based on trust must be built between all actors involved in the work of ending violence against children.
25. To ensure that the role of civil society actors in tackling violence against children is taken seriously, states should set up clear rules that guarantee the involvement and/or consultation of such actors in the development of child protection policies.

²⁰ The study and campaign "Educate, do not punish" was carried out in Sweden, Lithuania, Romania and Italy.

26. Assessment of state measures should be effectuated on a periodical basis by independent institutions.

X. Child participation

Children's right to participate in shaping decisions and measures that concern them is increasingly recognised in the Council of Europe member states. With its legal basis in Article 12 of the CRC, this right is still often neglected in state policy. However, experience has shown that granting children a voice can have a positive impact that goes far beyond the mere fact of granting children one of their human rights. It often leads to a better understanding of the underlying problems that children are faced with, which in turn can lead to more appropriate decisions being taken as well as accelerating progress.

In the specific context of violence against children, children are, for the most part, not treated as rights holders.²¹ They are normally not the ones who report violence, and are rarely involved in assessing what should be done to end it. In order to step up progress and have meaningful child participation, reflection upon how children's reporting of violence can be facilitated is needed. States and civil society actors should provide stronger platforms where children can have a voice. Children's Ombudspersons should also make sure that they listen to children in their work. One idea that was launched during the Conference was to establish a European Children's Rights Commissioner. Furthermore, the importance of signing and ratifying the Third Optional Protocol to the CRC on a communications procedure²² was recalled during the Conference. The entry into force of this Protocol would grant the setting up of an individual complaints mechanism for violations of children's rights, and would be a sign that children are truly becoming recognised as rights holders.

A good practice shared during the Conference was that of the *Barnahus*, the Icelandic model of "children's houses". In the *Barnahus*, the child is placed at the centre, surrounded by specially trained professionals who know how to communicate with children, and in a child-friendly setting. There, the child can be examined by doctors and psychologists, be heard by police and talk to a lawyer, and can share his/her views without feeling threatened. The *Barnahus* model, which is strongly promoted by the Council of Europe, currently represents one of the most effective ways to handle children who

21. This was clear from the 27 European states' responses to the UN Survey on violence against children.

22. The third Optional Protocol to the CRC on a communications procedure was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 19 December 2011 and was opened for signature in 2012.

have fallen victims of sexual abuse. It is a good example of different professional sectors co-ordinating themselves and coming together to work in the best interest of the child. The model could easily be extended to cover all forms of violence against children.

Article 12 of the CRC particularly mentions children's right to participate in any judicial or administrative proceedings affecting them. Experience from Belgium has shown that children attach great importance to this kind of participation, but that many of them were disappointed with the way they were treated by the justice system. In many cases they felt that the judge did not take the time to listen, that they were not able to say what they wanted to say or were not listened to. Moreover, children often lack understanding of how the judicial procedures work and what will happen next, and they need to have the process explained to them in a child-friendly language that they can fully understand.

When Serbian children were asked how they view corporal punishment, they answered that children should be protected from corporal punishment both at home and in school. Parents and teachers should explain what is right and wrong instead of using violence. In order to enable children to participate, the system needs to contain accessible ways for children to make their voices heard. This means that children must be taught where to turn if they experience violence. The school environment is an essential place, where children should be able to find persons they can trust to be able to talk to in confidence.

Recommendations

27. States must acknowledge that child participation is a human right of all children, which they are under a legal obligation to ensure.
28. Children should always and easily be able to seek counselling and find a trusted person to talk to and/or report incidents of violence, and all services and mechanisms involving children, whether judicial or not, should be child-friendly.
29. The development, implementation and evaluation of integrated national agendas on violence against children should be promoted through an active and genuine participation of children.
30. To step up progress in the prevention and elimination of violence against children, governments should mainstream child participation in their decision-making processes.

XI. Conclusion

The Ankara Conference enabled representatives from 26 Council of Europe member states to come together and take stock of the progress achieved in the work to tackle violence against children. With the UN Global Progress Survey on violence against children and the responses of 27 European countries as a framework, a number of good practices were discussed. The development of integrated national strategies, the *Barnahus* model and other child-friendly services, as well as civil society actions and campaigns, were among the experiences shared. Numerous weaknesses and issues of concern were also identified and discussed, and a strong commitment to improve was manifested by the participants who, together, identified the priorities for further action. One of the main issues of discussion was co-ordination and co-operation, both between public institutions and between public institutions and civil society. How to work for the prevention of violence represented one of the main challenges to the participants, and a lot of interest was shown in the discussion on how to set up new or improve existing methods of prevention.

Where violence cannot be prevented, effective remedies must exist to hold those who exercise violence accountable and to support the victims in their redress, recovery, and reintegration. When judicial and administrative proceedings affect children, such proceedings must be child-friendly and take into account the child's views and fundamental rights. Periodic and independent evaluations of the system, followed by revision and amendments where problems are detected, are necessary. In the process of evaluation, children should be consulted as well, since the matters concern them first and foremost.

Repeatedly, it was affirmed that child protection must stand above politics, and children's rights should not be compromised because of economic difficulties that have little or nothing to do with children in the first place. Clear children's rights- and child protection policies, based upon research and data, are needed to provide sound evidence and to give a sense of direction and an adequate time frame to this important work, and allow for a reliable assessment of progress to be made. Having an integrated national strategy, where all involved stakeholders have a clear role and take a shared responsibility will provide this sense of direction for the work. Furthermore, inclusion is a key element to succeeding in eliminating violence against children; all stakeholders must know what their role in the framework is and feel that they can make a difference.

The UN SRSG on Violence against Children complimented the European states for their self-criticism and will to accelerate progress in the protection of children from violence, underlining Europe's leadership role in this area. She highlighted the importance of

sharing experiences and good practices, and recalled that training and awareness raising activities should be a continuous part of the work to prevent and eliminate violence against children. Violence against children is like a "virus" that must be combated, and our efforts must never falter. Violence against children compromises all children's rights and has a serious and long lasting impact on the victims, while entailing high social and economic costs. Although it remains widespread and sometimes socially accepted or hidden, violence against children is not inevitable; it can be effectively prevented.

In the Council of Europe member states, the social perceptions of violence against children are slowly changing, and the Ankara Conference showed both that progress has been made and that the will exists to do more to protect children from violence. That will must now turn into action.

Appendix 1 – Programme

Tuesday, 27 November 2012

- 08.30** Registration
- 09.30** Official Opening
Mr Ayman ABULABAN, UNICEF Turkey Representative
Ambassador Anica DJAMIC, Council of Europe Committee of Ministers
Thematic Co-ordinator for Children's Rights
Ms Marta SANTOS PAIS, UN Special Representative of the Secretary
General (SRSG) on Violence against Children
Mr Ahmad GHANIZADEH, State Secretary, Ministry of Children,
Equality and Social Inclusion, Norway
Ms Fatma ŞAHIN, Minister of Family and Social Policies, Turkey
- 11.00** Coffee break
- 11.30** 1st Session: International, European and national level responses
to violence against children
Moderator: Ms Elda MORENO, Head of Department, Gender Equality
and Human Dignity, Council of Europe
Panelists:
Ms Marta SANTOS PAIS, UN SRSG on Violence against Children,
"Impact of the 'UN Study on Violence against Children' worldwide and
follow-up at country levels"
Dr Ruth FARRUGIA, Lawyer and Lecturer, Faculty of Law, University of
Malta, "Key results of the European responses to the UN progress study
on Violence against Children"
Ms Aşkın ASAN, Deputy Minister of Family and Social Policies, Turkey,
"Turkey's responses to violence against children nationwide"
Presentations followed by discussions
- 13.00** Lunch

14.30 2nd Session: Implementation of integrated national strategies on violence against children: success stories and pitfalls

Moderator: Ms Marta SANTOS PAIS, UN SRSG on Violence against Children

Panelists:

Mr Per-Anders SUNESEON, Deputy Director-General, Division for Family and Social Services, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Sweden

Ms Anniki TIKERPUU, Head of Department of Children and Families, Ministry of Social Affairs, Estonia

Ms Teresa BOMBA CORREIA, Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, Portugal

Mr Peter NEWELL, Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, United Kingdom

Presentations followed by discussions

16.00 Coffee break

16.30 3rd Session: Preventive, protective and child-friendly services on violence against children – improving their availability and capacity for child- and family-support

Moderator: Ms Gülsün BILGEHAN, Member of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Panelists:

Ms Tamara LUKSIĆ-ORLANDIĆ, Deputy Ombudsperson for the Rights of the Child, Serbia, “Supporting children and families through positive parenting”

Mr Abdulkadir KAYA, Director General of Child Services, Ministry of Family and Social Policies, “Alternative care institutions and combating violence against children”

Ms Maria DOUKAKOU, Clinical Psychologist, National Centre for Social Solidarity, Head of the SOS child-line and Register of children in danger, Greece

Ms Christel DE CRAIM, Head of juvenile justice unit, Service for criminal justice, Federal Public Service Justice, Belgium

Presentations followed by discussions

18.00 Close of the first day

Wednesday, 28 November 2012

09.00 4th Session: Reporting, complaint and referral systems and the enhancement of inter-sectorial collaboration on violence against children

Moderator: Ms Aşkın ASAN, Deputy Minister of Family and Social Policies, Turkey

Panelists:

Mr Bernard DE VOS, Children’s rights delegate of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels, Belgium

Prof. Dr. Turkan DAĞOĞLU, Member of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Head of the Parliament Child Rights Committee, “The role of the Parliament Child Rights Committee and recent developments concerning the Children’s Ombudsperson in Turkey”

Ms Cinzia GRASSI, Expert of the Italian National Observatory on Childhood and Adolescence, Italy

Mr Valeriu GHILETCHI, Member of Parliament, Republic of Moldova, and member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Presentations followed by discussions

10.30 Coffee break

11.00 5th Session: The role of civil society and the media in building a culture of respect for the rights of the child and strengthening public awareness on violence against children

Moderator: Mr Nail Abdülgazi ALATAŞ, Deputy Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, Turkey

Panelists:

Mr Şahin ANTAKYALIOĞLU, Chair of Ankara Bar Association Children’s Rights Center, Co-ordinator of the Turkish Network Combating CSEC Ankara, “The role of NGOs in building a culture of respect for the rights of the child”

Ms Kristina STEPANOVA, programme manager, Save the Children Lithuania, “Educate, do not punish, European campaign on corporal punishment”

Mr Altin HAZIZAJ, General Director, Children’s Human Rights Centre of Albania

Appendix 2 – List of participants

Dr Sevgi USTA, Faculty of Political Sciences, İstanbul University
“Lessons learnt from a review of Civil society organisations active on Violence Against Children in Turkey”

Presentations followed by discussions

12.30

Lunch

14.00

6th Session: Monitoring – controlling, data collection and data sharing systems on violence against children

Moderator: Ms Çiğdem Münevver ÖKTEN, Member of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Turkey

Panelists:

Mr Adem ARKADAŞ-THIBERT, International Children’s Centre, Turkey, “Violence against children – indicators and monitoring”

Ms Anna NORDENMARK, Programme specialist, UNICEF Regional Office for CEE-CIS, “UNICEF sub-regional research on system responsiveness in identifying, reporting and referring cases of violence against children”

Dr Hakan SARI, General Director, National Ministry of Education, Turkey, “Data collection on violence in schools”

Presentations followed by discussions

15.30

Coffee break

16.00

Conclusions

Ms Marta SANTOS PAIS, UN SRSG on Violence against Children

Mr Nail Abdülgazi ALATAŞ, Deputy Under-Secretary, Ministry of Family and Social Policies, Turkey

16.30

Closing remarks

Ms Elda MORENO, Head of Department, Gender Equality and Human Dignity, Council of Europe

Mr Ayman ABULABAN, UNICEF Turkey Representative

Mr Abdulkadir KAYA, Child Services General Director, Ministry of Family and Social Policies, Turkey

Albania

Mr Altin HAZIZAJ

General Director
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Azerbaijan

Ms Jeyran RAHMATULLAYEVA

Deputy Chairperson of the State
Committee on Family, Women
and Children’s Affairs

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Mr Bernard DE VOS

Délegué général aux droits de l’enfant
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Ms Christel DE CRAIM

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Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mr Elmedin MURATBEGOVIĆ

Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security
University of Sarajevo
Criminal Policy Research Center
(CPRC)

Milena JURIC

Expert Advisor for Monitoring
Children Rights
Ministry for Human Rights and
Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bulgaria

Ms Kalina KOSTOVA

Chief expert in Directorate
“State policy for child”
State Agency for child protection
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Croatia

Ms Martina STABI

Ministry of Social Affairs and Youth

Estonia

Ms Anniki TIKERPUU

Head of Child Rights and Services
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Finland

Ms Marjatta HIEKKA

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms Reetta PELTONEN

Secretary to the Advisory Board
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Ms Ekaterine SANEBLIDZE

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Italy
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<p>Ms Susanna GREIJER PhD student, European University Institute</p>
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<p>Ms Turkan DAĞOĞLU Member of the Turkish Grand National Assembly Head of the Parliament Child Rights Committee</p>

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