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# Violence towards children in the EU

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Current situation

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## IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

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This document seeks to provide an insight into the problem of violence towards children in the EU, focusing on the particular vulnerability of children and their corresponding need for special protection. The qualitative and quantitative definitions of violence are examined, together with the root causes thereof and ways of preventing it, as well as international child protection standards used for reference. Finally, the document sets out the action taken by the EU to support efforts by Member States to protect children from violence.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Children are human beings with rights and dignity. Children's rights are human rights. Because of their fragility and vulnerability, children also need specific protection, which means providing them with an environment in which they are safe from any situation possibly exposing them to abuse.

Violence towards children, as defined in Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, takes numerous forms (physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect) and may take place in various contexts : at home, at school, within institutions, etc. Most child abusers are known to their victims. The short- and long-term consequences in terms of human, economic and social costs can be serious and extremely harmful. The extent of violence towards children in the EU is difficult to assess. However existing estimates are giving cause for great concern. The nature of the problem depends on a wide range of factors, ranging from the personality profiles of victims and perpetrators to their environment. Certain categories of children, such as children with disabilities, children living in special institutions, unaccompanied children, etc. are particularly vulnerable. However, violence is not inevitable and can be prevented. Effective policies to achieve this require a multisectoral approach involving different interlocutors at various levels.

At international level, the United Nations and the Council of Europe have taken a number of measures in a bid to safeguard the rights of children and more specifically protect them from violence. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is of fundamental importance in this connection. Under Article 19 thereof, children are entitled to protection from all forms of violence and Member States are required to take all appropriate measures to protect them.

Over the last few years, the EU has constantly stepped up measures to protect children. With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, this has been recognised as a specific EU objective. While child protection systems are principally the responsibility of the Member States, the EU also plays an important role, given its obligation to promote initiatives to protect the rights of the child. Its actions in this area have a direct impact on the relevant laws and policies introduced by the Member States.

Various parties are involved in raising awareness regarding violence towards children, the importance of effective EU support for national child protection initiatives and the mainstreaming of child protection. Future EU integrated child protection guidelines must set out the areas in which the EU can assist the Member States and encourage exchanges of good practice.

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**List of main acronyms**

**ECHR:** European Convention for Human Rights

**UNCRC:** United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

**ECSA:** European Child Safety Alliance

**FRA:** EU Fundamental Rights Agency

**ILO:** International Labour Organisation

**WHO:** World Health Organisation

**UN:** United Nations

**TFEU:** Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

**TEU:** Treaty on the European Union

**UNICEF:** United Nations Children's Fund

## 1. Protection of children

### 1.1. Vulnerability, rights and protection

Children are particularly vulnerable members of society. Lacking in experience and in physical and psychological maturity, they need to be protected to ensure that they can develop properly and that their rights are defended and upheld.

Children's rights are human rights. Human rights apply to all age groups and children have the same rights as adults. To this extent, children's rights embody the fundamental standards essential for human survival and proper development. Children's rights are basically human rights specifically adapted to children, taking into account the needs of their particular age group. Protection of children is the responsibility of families, society and governments. In this context, one of the first rights which must be guaranteed is the right to life, the survival and development of children<sup>1</sup>. According to UNICEF, the protection of children means placing them in an environment where they are safe from all situations potentially leading to abuse. It also stresses that child protection issues are directly related to the Millennium Development Goals<sup>2</sup>.

### 1.2. Child protection systems

While there is no single agreed international definition of child protection systems, various overlapping definitions have been formulated. According to UNICEF, child protection systems comprise the set of laws, policies, regulations and services needed across all social sectors — especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice, underpinning prevention and protection and including family support<sup>3</sup>. A report commissioned by UNICEF indicates that child protection systems have structures, functions, capacities and other components tailored to a set of child protection goals<sup>4</sup>. They also operate at different levels (from the formal to the informal), exhibiting a nested structure, involving various participants, including children, the family, the community and the State and functioning simultaneously at one or more levels<sup>5</sup>.

World Vision points out that each nation's child protection system is unique and made up of a coordinated set of formal and informal measures to prevent and remedy abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence towards children. Formal measures are decided or approved by the government and dictated by laws, regulations and policies, while informal elements are shaped by attitudes, values, rules of behaviour and, social norms and customs<sup>6</sup>.

#### Child

Article 1 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines a child as meaning 'every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.'

#### Protection of the child

UNICEF defines 'child protection' as measures to prevent and combat violence, exploitation and abuse inflicted on children, including sexual exploitation for commercial purposes, trafficking in children, child labour and harmful traditions such as female genital mutilation and child marriage.

<sup>1</sup> See Article 6 of the [UNCRC](#).

<sup>2</sup> [UNICEF Child protection strategy](#), UNICEF, 2008, pp. 2-5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp 4-5.

<sup>4</sup> [Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations](#), F. Wulczyn, D. Daro, J. Fluke, S. Feldman, Ch. Glodek, et K. Lifanda, UNICEF, 2010, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 21-22.

<sup>6</sup> [A Systems Approach to Child Protection: A World Vision Discussion Paper](#), B. Forbes, D. Luu, E. Oswald et T. Tutnjevic, Word Vision International, 2011, pp. 2-3.

## 2. Violence : an omnipresent and multifaceted problem

The United Nations study on violence against children in the world,<sup>7</sup> the first of its kind, shows that the problem exists in all countries, societies and social groups. From the regional consultation between Europe and Central Asia for this purpose, it has emerged that children in Europe are as vulnerable to violence as in any other region and that, despite the existence of good practices in a certain number of countries, the response to violence is all too often fragmented and small-scale and often not documented or shared<sup>8</sup>. Violence towards children is a complex and multidimensional issue relating to human rights and child protection, as well as public health. In this connection, attention is focused on prevention, on the assumption that child abuse and the consequences thereof can be avoided.

### 2.1. What is violence?

There are many different ways of defining violence. Ideas as to what constitute admissible or inadmissible behaviour are influenced by cultural factors progressively adapted to the evolution of social values and standards. The World Health Organisation (WHO) adopts a wide definition of violence as being 'the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community that either results in, or has a high likelihood of resulting in, injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation'<sup>9</sup>. This definition includes many less obvious consequences of violence in terms of emotional deprivation, compromising individual, family and collective wellbeing.

### 2.2. Definition of violence towards children

The definition of violence towards children used in the above UN study is that set out in Article 19 of the UNCRC and includes exposure of children to violence both inside and outside the home. It covers not only acts of violence involving adults and children but also those taking place between children.

#### Violence towards children

Article 19 of the UNCRC defines violence as 'all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse'.

Most perpetrators of acts of violence towards children are known to their victims and in a position of trust: parents, relatives or members of their immediate circle, boyfriends/girlfriends, schoolmates, teachers, employers, child carers, etc.<sup>10</sup>

The WHO definition of child abuse includes 'all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment for commercial or other exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power'<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> [Report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children](#), UN, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> [Stop Violence against Children: Act now, Report of the Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence against Children, 5-7 July 2005, Ljubljana, Slovenia](#), UNICEF, 2005, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> [World report on violence and health](#), WHO, 2002, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> [Report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children](#), Op.cit., p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> [World report on violence and health](#), p. 59.

### 2.2.1. Forms and contexts

Child abuse takes many different forms. Some of them may be visible and highlighted by media coverage (for example child trafficking or organised paedophile rings) while others are less obvious or even invisible, occurring in places where children should in theory be protected.

The problem may take the form of physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect, thus defined by the WHO<sup>12</sup>:

- Physical abuse – acts that cause actual physical harm or have the potential for harm;
- Sexual abuse– use of a child for the purposes of sexual gratification;
- Emotional abuse – failure to provide an appropriate and supportive environment and acts that have an adverse effect on the emotional health and development of a child (for example denigration, ridicule, threats, intimidation, rejection, etc.);
- Deliberate neglect, deprivation or failure to provide the necessary care – where a parent/caregiver fails to provide for the proper development of the child, if he/she is in a position to do so, in one or more of the following areas: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions. Intentional neglect is thus distinguished from circumstances of poverty where reasonable resources are not available to the family/caregiver.

The UN world study of violence against children describes in detail the numerous different situations in which this occurs<sup>13</sup>. Acts of violence towards children may occur in different contexts:

- At home and in the family

The family is the most suitable context in which to provide protection and physical and emotional security for children. However, the home can also be a dangerous place for them and the prevalence of violence against children by parents and other family members has been recognised over the last decades. It is perhaps in this 'private sphere' that it is hardest to eliminate abuse (whether physical or emotional), neglect or harmful customs (such as female genital mutilation<sup>14</sup>, forced marriage or 'honour' crimes). Violence towards children within the family is often inflicted in the name of discipline and may take the form of cruel or humiliating physical punishments<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> [Report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children](#)

<sup>14</sup> Regarding female genital mutilation in the EU see: [Towards the eradication of female genital mutilation](#), COM (2013) 833 final, 25.11.2013.

<sup>15</sup> Council of Europe human rights instruments have for years been denouncing the corporal punishment of children in Europe. See: [Children and corporal punishment: right to physical integrity is also a right of the child](#), Council of Europe, 2009; The [Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children](#) site provides an insight into national legislation in this area in Europe and beyond (see the section entitled "Global Progress"); Certain EU Member States have banned corporal punishment in all contexts (home, school, detention centres and residential establishments), see: [Prohibiting corporal punishment: achieving equal protection for children in EU Member States](#), Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2013, pp. 22-25.



Children may also witness domestic violence<sup>16</sup>, which could also have harmful effects on their development<sup>17</sup>.

- At school and in the educational environment  
Schools have an important role to play when it comes to protecting children against violence. However, the educational environment can sometimes expose young people to violence and occasionally teach them to become violent themselves. Violence in schools can take the form of corporal punishment, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, fights, bullying, etc.<sup>18</sup>.

- Within institutions responsible for the protection of children and the judicial services

The exact number of children in this category is not known<sup>19</sup>. Violence inside such institutions can remain less visible given that residential institutions and detention centres are frequently closed to the public. Children may suffer corporal punishment inflicted in the name of discipline, emotional or sexual abuse, or neglect. Children kept in custody in the same premises as adults are more exposed to the risk of abuse<sup>20</sup>.

- At the workplace

Under international law, children below the minimum requisite age may not work<sup>21</sup>. Furthermore, certain forms of employment included in the category of 'worst forms of child labour' can be regarded as abuse<sup>22</sup>. This includes all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children<sup>23</sup>, forced or compulsory labour, or the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, pornography or other illicit activities.

### Corporal punishment

In its General Comment No 8 (2006) the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child defines corporal or physical punishment as "any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort however light. Most involve hitting ('smacking', 'slapping', 'spanking') children with the hand or with an implement (...). It can also involve for example kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scalding or forced ingestion (...)". The committee stresses that no form of corporal punishment can be anything other than degrading.

The Council of Europe indicates that corporal punishment is the most widespread form of violence towards children.

In 1979, Sweden was the first country to ban the corporal punishment of children in any form.

<sup>16</sup> The EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) has carried out an investigation into violence against women throughout the EU, from which it emerges that 73% of women who are victims of violence perpetrated by a present or former partner indicate that children living with them were aware of this. See: [Violence Against Women: an EU-wide survey](#), FRA, 2014, p. 121.

<sup>17</sup> See: [Behind Closed Doors: The Impact of domestic violence on children](#), UNICEF and the Body Shop International, 2006; [World report on violence and health](#), p. 116.

<sup>18</sup> See: [Violence reduction in schools](#), Council of Europe, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> According to UN estimates, more than one million children in Europe and central Asia are living in residential establishments and a large number of them are in detention centres. See: [Stop Violence against Children: Act now, Report of the Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence Against Children, 5-7 July 2005, Ljubljana, Slovenia](#), p. 25; See also: [Imprisonment of minors in Europe](#) on website "Toute l'Europe".

<sup>20</sup> [Children in residential centres desperately vulnerable to abuse](#), UNICEF press release, 2005.

<sup>21</sup> The [ILO Convention No 138 \(1973\)](#) stipulates that the minimum age for admission to employment shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and in any case shall not be less than 15 years.

<sup>22</sup> Under [ILO Convention No 182 \(1999\)](#).

<sup>23</sup> Child trafficking is a complex problem which can engender various forms of abuse: sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced marriage, removal of organs, etc. Like many other crimes, child trafficking is hard to quantify. The Commission [indicates](#) that in the EU children represent around 15% of those identified and presumed to be victims of human trafficking (12% girls and 3% boys).

Finally, whether they are legally or illegally employed, children are at risk of various forms of abuse.

- Within the community

While the community offers a framework of solidarity and protection, it can also expose children to various forms of violence whether peer violence, gang violence, police brutality, physical and sexual abuse, abduction, trafficking, etc. Children relegated to the margins of society, including street children, are frequently targeted. The problem is also being exacerbated by the media, which frequently play down acts of violence, together with new information and communication technologies (on-line or GSM intimidation).

The WHO draws attention to media impact on violence among young people, referring to the conclusive findings of scientific studies in this area regarding an increase in immediate aggressive behaviour, indicating that findings are less conclusive regarding the effect in the longer term and serious forms of violence<sup>24</sup>.

Finally, it is possible for children to suffer exposure to various forms of violence in more than one of the above situations.

### 2.2.2. Consequences

While the consequences of violence may vary depending on the nature and severity thereof, its impact on children and on society as a whole can be serious and harmful in both the short and the long term.

- Cost in human terms

The cost of violence in terms of human pain and suffering for the children and their families is incalculable. Scientific studies show that violence towards children has numerous consequences for the physical and psychological health of victims, provoking stress associated with brain damage, particularly in the early years but also during adolescence. Children exposed to violence, whether they are the direct victims thereof or merely witnesses, are at risk of disorders affecting their nervous and immune systems, possibly causing cognitive disorders and leading to behaviour dangerous to their health with harmful effects in mental and physical terms. Violence can therefore undermine the wellbeing of children, harm their ability to learn and their development and prevent them from developing normal social relationships, sometimes permanently affecting their future adult lives.<sup>25</sup> Finally, children who are the victims or witnesses of acts of violence are likely to regard it as acceptable to resort to violence. The trans-generational transmission thereof is qualified as the 'cycle of violence'<sup>26</sup>. Finally, it would seem that exposure to more than one form of violence significantly increases the gravity of the effects on victims, suggesting a cumulative effect<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> [World report on violence and health](#), pp. 38-40.

<sup>25</sup> [European Report on Preventing Child Maltreatment](#), World Health Organisation, 2013, pp. 20-23.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Multiple Forms of Child Abuse and Neglect: Adult Retrospective Reports, J. Higgins and M. P. McCabe, 2001, quoted in: [Prevalence and concurrence of violence towards children in the population of Quebec](#), M. Tourigny, M-H. Gagné, J. Joly, M-E. Chartrand, Canadian Journal of Public Health, March-April 2006, p. 1.

- Economic and social costs

In addition to human suffering and the impact on health, violence towards children has a direct and indirect economic cost arising from the cost of health (hospitalisation, treatment, medical consultation and long-term expenditure on health<sup>28</sup>), child protection and criminal justice services, not to mention loss of productivity. To this must be added the inestimable cost in terms of lost lives. It is difficult to put a precise figure on the economic cost of violence towards children and very few studies actually attempt to do so. In the United Kingdom the total economic cost in 1996 was estimated to be £735 million<sup>29</sup>. By way of comparison, in the United States the economic cost of new acts of both fatal and non-fatal violence in 2008 was estimated to be \$124 billion<sup>30</sup>.

Finally, violence towards children is perceived as one of the principal causes of inequality with regard to health. The children at greatest risk are also the most vulnerable in social and economic terms, thereby perpetuating social injustice.

### 2.2.3. Extent of the problem

Reliable information regarding the extent of violence towards children is essential in order to formulate effective policies to prevent and combat the problem. However, it is difficult, not to say practically impossible, to assess the true extent of the problem for a number of reasons.

On the one hand, while serious cases of violence may have come to the attention of national child protection authorities, the problem also takes less obvious forms recurring over long periods. Act of violence may go unreported for a number of reasons<sup>31</sup>. Child victims and/or their parents may, through fear, shame or lack of confidence, choose to erect a wall of silence. The social acceptance of certain forms of violence, such as corporal punishment for the purposes of discipline and a number of traditional customs, is also an important factor.

On the other hand, as revealed by a UNICEF study, attempts to investigate the extent of the problem in Europe encounter a number of problems, in particular the lack of comparable data at international level, the limitations of official statistics, disparities between countries regarding investigation procedures, the compartmentalised approach to violence and failure to involve children themselves in inquiries<sup>32</sup>. These difficulties may have many different causes, for example lack of uniformity regarding definitions, the extent and quality of official statistics used by national administrations and data collection methods.

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<sup>28</sup> It would appear that victims of domestic and sexual violence during their childhood have more health problems, significantly higher health care costs and more frequent visits to emergency departments throughout their lives than those without a history of abuse. See: [World report on violence and health](#), p. 12.

<sup>29</sup> Report of the National Commission of Inquiry into the Prevention of Violence to Children, London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1996, quoted in: [Preventing Child Maltreatment in Europe: A Public Health Approach](#), Policy Briefing, World Health Organisation, 2007, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> [The Economic Burden of Child Maltreatment in the United States and Implications for Prevention](#), X. Fang, D. S. Brown, C. S. Florence, J. A. Mercy, Child Abuse and Neglect, 36: 156-165, 2012, p. 161.

<sup>31</sup> For this reason, retrospective surveys of the adult population are also essential to assess the extent of the problem.

<sup>32</sup> [Violence Against Children in Europe: A Preliminary Review of Research](#), UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, June 2005, p. 4.

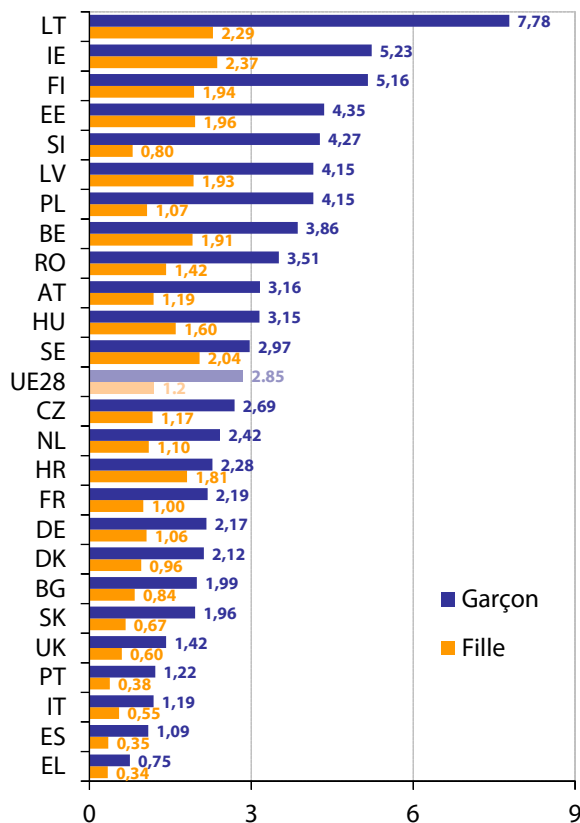
The Council of Europe recently attempted to collate information regarding the sexual abuse of children in Europe and concluded that about one child in five has suffered this type of abuse and that, in 70-85% of cases, the perpetrator was known to the victim<sup>33</sup>.

At EU level, the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) has carried out an unprecedented study into violence against women in the 28 Member States, in which around 12% of women indicate that they suffered some form of sexual abuse before the age of 15 and 27% that they suffered some form of physical abuse before the age of 15. Around 10% of them indicated that they had suffered emotional abuse before the age of 15. The FRA stresses that the EU should focus on the extent of childhood abuse and unreported violence, in order to deal with the consequences present and past violence towards children<sup>34</sup>.

- UNICEF and WHO estimates

**Figure 1. Child deaths resulting from abuse**

European age-standardised death rates in the 0-19 age group, by gender, per 100 000 inhabitants



Source of data: [What are European countries doing to prevent intentional injury to children?](#), ECSA, 2014, p. 12.

In 2003, the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre published findings regarding the number of children less than 15 years of age dying as a result of abuse in wealthy countries including a number of EU Member States. The resulting table showed, for example, that there were two victims per week in Germany and the United Kingdom and three per week in France. Figures for Belgium, the Czech Republic, Hungary, France and Portugal were above average for the best performing countries and much lower for Spain, Greece, Italy and Ireland. In around one-third of cases the cause of death was classified as 'undetermined'<sup>35</sup>. The findings also reveal that younger children are more at risk of death from acts of violence<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> ["One in five"](#): website for Council of Europe campaign to stop sexual violence against children. Further information: [Protecting children from sexual violence – a comprehensive approach](#), Council of Europe, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> [Violence Against Women: an EU-wide survey](#), FRA, 2014, pp. 12-14 and pp. 32-34.

<sup>35</sup> It is possible that the death of a child may not be attributed to an act of violence if the investigation is not sufficiently thorough. In certain cases, the conclusion is death due to 'undetermined intent', it being widely acknowledged that the cause is generally abuse. See: [European Report on Preventing Child Maltreatment](#), p. 9.

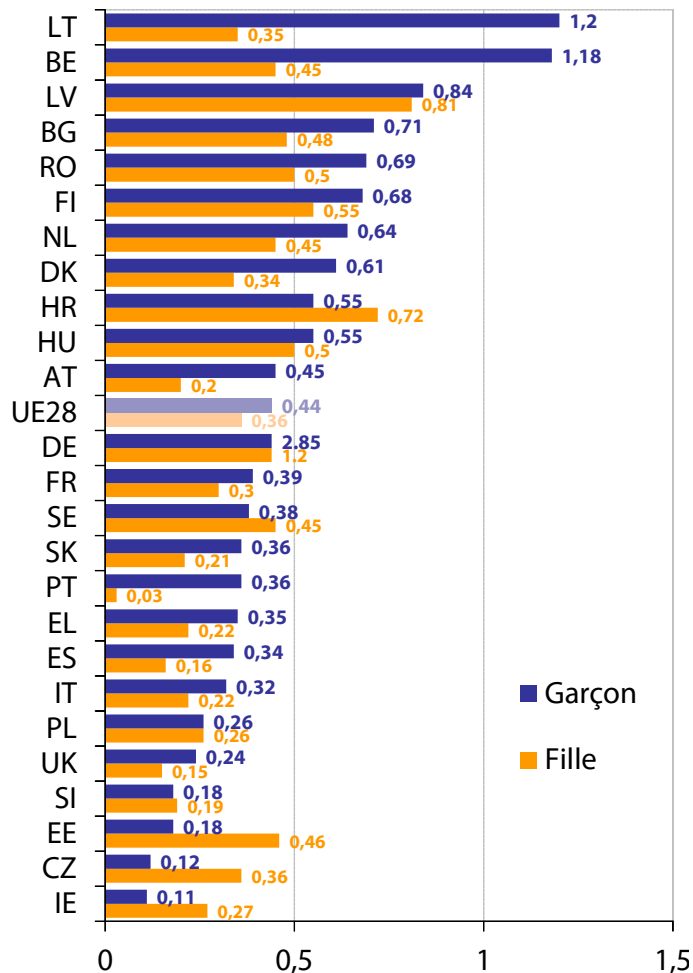
<sup>36</sup> [Child deaths by injury in rich nations](#), Innocenti Report, No 5, UNICEF, September 2003, pp. 2-12.

Furthermore, a recent WHO study has shown that with 9.6% of children suffer sexual abuse (13.4% of girls and 5.7% of boys) 22.9% suffer physical abuse and 29.1% suffer psychological abuse (no significant differences between boys and girls for the last two). In other words, around 18 million children in Europe<sup>37</sup> suffer sexual abuse,

44 million suffer physical abuse and 55 million suffer psychological abuse resulting each year in the deaths of at least 850 children under the age of 15<sup>38</sup>.

**Figure 2. Child homicides**

European age standardised death rates in the 0-19 age group, by gender, per 100 000 inhabitants



Source: [What are European countries doing to prevent intentional injury to children?](#), ECSA, 2014, p. 15.

- European Child Safety Alliance report

In March 2014, the ECSA (European Child Safety Alliance) expressed concern at the problem of 'injuries intentionally inflicted on children', that is to say injuries resulting from acts of violence in the EU Member States. Its report revealed that around 24%, that is to say around 9 100 of the over 35 000 deaths reported each year in the European Union among children and adolescents in the 0-19 age bracket are due to injuries, almost one-third of which are reported as 'intentional or of indeterminate Intentionality'.<sup>39</sup>

The report reveals that the percentage of deaths from intentional injury varies widely throughout the EU. Figure 1 shows the percentage of deaths resulting from intentional injury in the EU Member States<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> Including [53 countries](#) of which 28 are EU Member States.

<sup>38</sup> In addition, a high-level of neglect has been recorded, 16.3% with regard to physical neglect and 18.4% with regard to effective neglect [European Report on Preventing Child Maltreatment](#), p. 83.

<sup>39</sup> [What are European countries doing to prevent intentional injury to children?](#), European Child Safety Alliance, March 2014, p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> Except for Cyprus, Malta and Luxembourg, where the numbers are very small.

Figures 2 and 3 show the percentages of homicide and suicide respectively. Annex 1 shows the proportion of deaths resulting from homicide and suicide for children in the 0-14 and 15-19 age brackets, by gender, in the 28 EU Member States.

However, the report stresses that deaths from intentional injury are only the tip of the iceberg regarding violence towards children. Furthermore, according to certain sources, reported deaths from abuse classified as homicide may only amount to between 20% and 33% of the real number<sup>41</sup>.

- Information from Child Helpline International

The European Child Helpline Network indicates in its 2013 report that, over the last ten years, child helplines have received almost 58 million calls. The report sets out the reasons for the children seeking assistance, indicating that 2.1 million of the calls have been to report abuse and acts of violence, the number having increased since the onset of the economic crisis<sup>42</sup>. Annex 2 sets out the various reasons for such calls over the period 2003-2012.

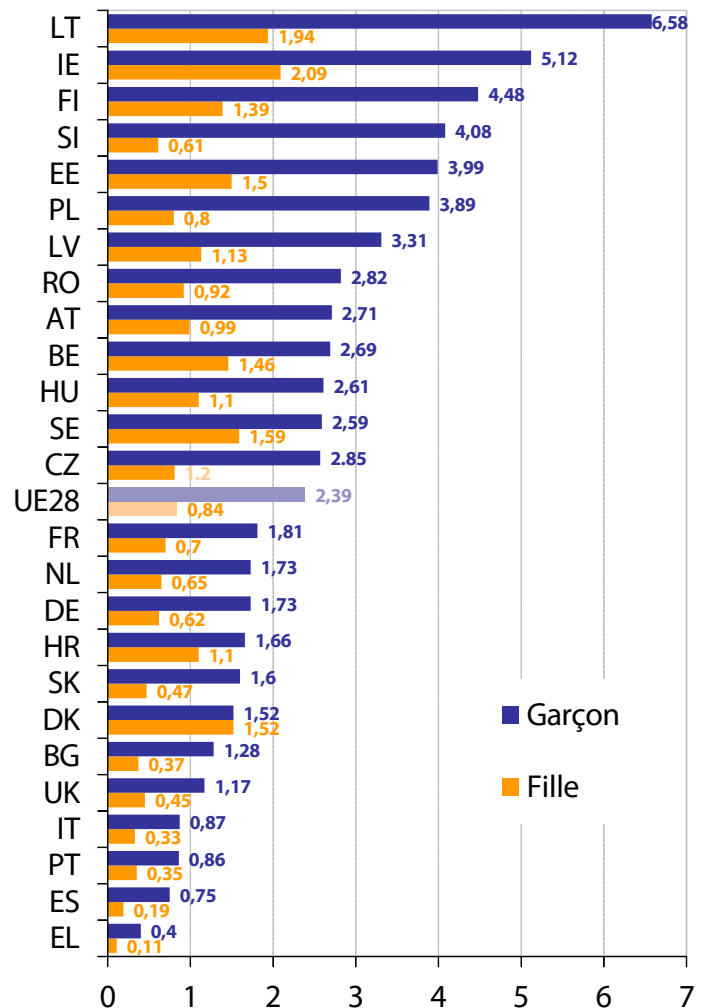
## 2.3. The root causes of an avoidable problem

### 2.3.1. Risk factors

Child abuse depends on a large variety of specific factors ranging from the personality profiles of victims and perpetrators to their environment. According to the WHO, no single factor can explain why certain individuals abuse others or why abuse in certain situations is more common than in others. It is regarded as a complex interaction of factors relating to individuals, human relations and social, cultural and environmental factors. The 'ecological' model, examining the relation between individuals and their environment, considers abuse to be the result of factors influencing behaviour at

**Figure 3. Child suicide**

European age-standardised figures for the 0-19 age bracket, by gender, per 100 000 inhabitants



Source: [What are European countries doing to prevent intentional injury to children?](#), ECSA, 2014, p. 18.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-19. In France, for example, an investigation into hospital cases revealed a rate of infanticide (homicide of infants less than one year of age) 15 times higher than the official statistics. Furthermore, the level of child homicide where victims are under 15 also varies considerably, depending on the sources. See: [Definition and figures. Preconceptions and established facts](#), A. Tursz, National Colloquy on child abuse, Paris, Senate, 14 June 2013, pp. 3-4.

<sup>42</sup> [Voices of Young Europe](#), Child Helpline International, 2013, pp. 2-4 RWD.



multiple levels<sup>43</sup>. This is set out in Figure 4, in which the various risk factors concerning child abuse are listed.

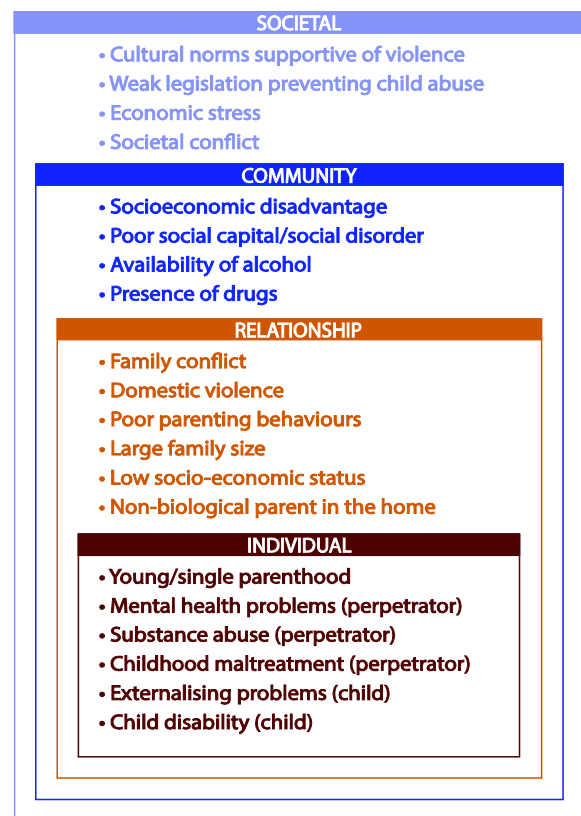
On the other hand, factors likely to reduce the risk of abuse include: a healthy family environment, a supportive community, parental focus on child development and the emotional and social capacities of children themselves<sup>44</sup>.

Certain categories of children are particularly at risk of abuse, including children with disabilities, children in care, abandoned and non-accompanied children, refugee children, children outside the law and children belonging to ethnic and other under-represented minority groups.

### 2.3.2. Importance of prevention

Violence towards children is not inevitable and can be avoided. At the same time, the extent and the serious consequences of the problem highlight the importance of prevention. According to the WHO, the costs of preventive measures are likely to be exceeded many times over by the combined total of long-term and short-term costs of child abuse and neglect to individuals, families and society.<sup>45</sup> It therefore calls for a public health strategy based on solid facts and seeking to adopt a multi-sectoral approach to cost-effective prevention, encompassing education, the social services and the legal system and involving representatives of the local authorities, carers and non-governmental organisations<sup>46</sup>.

**Figure 4: Causes of abuse – ‘ecological’ model**



Source: [European Report on Preventing Child Maltreatment](#), WHO, 2013, p. 35.

## 3. Principal international instruments and references

Adopted in 1924 by the League of Nations, the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child<sup>47</sup> was the first international document to set out the human rights of children. Since then, many instruments have been adopted to safeguard the rights of children, and more specifically to protect them from violence<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> [European Report on Preventing Child Maltreatment](#), p. 34-50.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 51-54.

<sup>45</sup> [World report on violence and health](#), p. 70.

<sup>46</sup> [European Report on Preventing Child Maltreatment](#), p. 90.

<sup>47</sup> [Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child](#), League of Nations, 1924.

<sup>48</sup> For a list of some of the relevant international treaties see: [Council of Europe Policy guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence](#), Council of Europe, 2009, pp. 35-36; [EU Framework of Law for Children's Rights](#), European Parliament, 2012, pp. 40-43.

### 3.1. The United Nations framework

The 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child marked a consensus within the international community on the universal principles of children's rights by highlighting need for children to enjoy special protection and safeguards<sup>49</sup>.

#### 3.1.1. *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*

Adopted in 1989, this Convention was the first legally binding international text to proclaim the entirety of children's fundamental rights. The numerous rights enshrined in the UNCRC include those aimed at protecting children from all forms of violence. In particular, Article 19 requires the States Parties to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence while in the care of parents, legal guardians or any other person who has care of them. These measures 'should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment (...), and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement'.

The Convention lays down demanding standards of protection in both the public and private spheres. Children's right to be protected from violence is also reflected in other UNCRC articles in addition to Article 19. Article 24(3), for example, lays down the right of children to be protected from traditional practices prejudicial to their health; Article 28(2) establishes the right of children to be protected from corporal punishment at school, while Articles 32 to 36 provide for children to be protected from all forms of economic or sexual exploitation. Other articles seek to ensure that children are protected against torture and cruel or degrading treatment and promote the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of children who are victims of violence.

In its General comment No 13 (2011), entitled 'The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence', the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child set out a broad range of measures needed to establish a protective environment for children in all settings (for example, establishing laws prohibiting *all* forms of violence; national strategies and action plans involving all stakeholders; various social measures aimed at reducing risks and preventing violence; and educational measures addressing attitudes, traditions, customs and behavioural practices which condone or promote violence against children). The Committee stressed that an integrated, cohesive and interdisciplinary system to protect children from violence was required, and that child participation in the development, monitoring and evaluation of protection measures was essential<sup>50</sup>.

#### 3.1.2. *Additional protocols to the UNCRC*

Two optional protocols to the Convention provide for protection of children from certain forms of violence:

- The Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography requires States Parties to enact legislation to criminalise these offences, close premises used to commit such offences and to seize or confiscate the proceeds of such activities and the instrumentalities used to facilitate them;

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<sup>49</sup> [Declaration of the Rights of the Child](#), United Nations, 1959.

<sup>50</sup> [http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/sites/default/files/documents/docs/crc-c-gc-13\\_EN.pdf](http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/sites/default/files/documents/docs/crc-c-gc-13_EN.pdf).



- The Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict limits the recruitment of children in armed conflicts and requires States Parties to provide children who have been involved in an armed conflict with all appropriate assistance for their physical and psychological recovery and their social reintegration<sup>51</sup>.

In April 2014, a third optional protocol to the UNCRC entered into force<sup>52</sup>. This new protocol marks a significant advance in the rights of the child because it allows children individually to lodge complaints against their country before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for violation of their rights.

### 3.2. Council of Europe standards

Although it does not refer explicitly to children's rights, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)<sup>53</sup> recognises the right to life (Article 2), the right to be protected from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 3), the right to be free from slavery and forced labour (Article 4), the right to liberty and security (Article 5), the right to a fair trial (Article 6) and the right to respect for private and family life (Article 8) of everyone within the jurisdiction of the Council of Europe's member states, including children.

In addition, the revised European Social Charter<sup>54</sup> lays down in Article 17 the right of children to be protected against negligence, violence or exploitation. Other relevant Council of Europe instruments are the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings<sup>55</sup>, the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse<sup>56</sup> and the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence<sup>57</sup>.

The European Court of Human Rights has also issued a number of judgments condemning violence against children on the basis of the relevant articles of the ECHR<sup>58</sup>.

In November 2009, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a set of 'Guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence', which aim to promote the development and implementation in the Council of Europe's member states of a holistic national framework for safeguarding the rights of the child and eliminating all forms of violence against children. The guidelines are based on eight general principles (protection against violence, the right to life and maximum survival and development, non-discrimination, gender equality, child participation, a state's obligations, the obligations and participation of other actors (institutions and professionals working for and with children, parents and the extended family, the media, the private sector, religious communities and civil society) and the best interests of the child) and four operative principles stressing that the eradication of violence against children requires an integrated (systemic and holistic) and multi-stakeholder approach<sup>59</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> [https://treaties.un.org/doc/source/docs/A\\_Res\\_54\\_263-E.pdf](https://treaties.un.org/doc/source/docs/A_Res_54_263-E.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> [Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure](#).

<sup>53</sup> [http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf).

<sup>54</sup> <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/treaties/html/163.htm>.

<sup>55</sup> <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/treaties/html/197.htm>.

<sup>56</sup> <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/treaties/html/201.htm>.

<sup>57</sup> <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/treaties/html/210.htm>. (As used in this Convention, the term 'women' includes girls under the age of 18.)

<sup>58</sup> [Protection of minors: fact sheet](#), European Court of Human Rights, January 2014.

<sup>59</sup> [Council of Europe Policy guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence](#), op. cit., pp. 9-13.

## 4. The European Union and violence against children

The EU has constantly sought over past years to increase the protection afforded to children, chiefly through a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to the issue.

### 4.1. The European Union and the rights of the child

Before the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty children's rights were addressed by the EU as part of its general obligation to respect fundamental rights<sup>60</sup>. The EU introduced a variety of measures to safeguard and promote children's rights (legal acts, guidelines, political dialogue, financial assistance)<sup>61</sup>. A certain number of these initiatives focused particularly on combating violence against children<sup>62</sup>.

When the Lisbon Treaty came into force protection of children's rights was explicitly recognised as one of the goals the EU had to pursue both internally and in its external relations. Article 3 of the TEU states that the EU has an obligation to promote the protection of the rights of the child<sup>63</sup>. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) for its part also contains important provisions: Article 79 states that the European Parliament and the Council are to adopt measures to combat trafficking in persons, in particular women and children; under Article 83 they may adopt minimum rules to combat the trafficking and sexual exploitation of children; Article 82 makes it possible for minimum rules to be established concerning the rights of individuals in criminal procedure and the rights of victims of crime<sup>64</sup>.

Lastly, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union recognises in its Article 24 that 'children shall have the right to such protection and care as is necessary for their well-being'. This Article goes on to say that '[i]n all actions relating to children, whether taken by public authorities or private institutions, the child's best interests must be a primary consideration'. The Charter also establishes specific rights such as the right to education (Article 14), prohibits child labour, and imposes guarantees to protect young people at work (Article 32)<sup>65</sup>.

While the EU does not have any specific powers to legislate on the rights of the child, the actions it takes in regard to children's rights<sup>66</sup> have a direct impact on the law and policies introduced in this area by Member States.

#### The [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#)

The Charter is now legally binding: Article 52(5) stipulates that provisions containing principles may be implemented by acts taken by the EU and by acts of Member States when they are implementing Union law.

<sup>60</sup> Introduced in 1992 by the Maastricht Treaty (see Article 6(2) of the [Treaty on European Union](#) (TUE), consolidated version 1997).

<sup>61</sup> [EU Framework of Law for Children's Rights](#), Op.cit., pp. 13-18.

<sup>62</sup> Commission Staff Working Document Accompanying the Communication from the Commission: [Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child: Preliminary inventory of EU action affecting children's rights](#), SEC (2006) 889, p. 4 and pp. 17-21.

<sup>63</sup> [TEU](#) (consolidated version 2012).

<sup>64</sup> [TFEU](#) (consolidated version 2012).

<sup>65</sup> [EU Framework of Law for Children's Rights](#), Op.cit., pp. 18-24 and pp. 44-45.

<sup>66</sup> All the legislation and regulations on the rights of the child, the main policy documents and other documents referring in particular to children can be found in: [EU acquis and policy documents on the rights of the child](#) available on the website of the European Commission's DG Justice.

## 4.2. Protecting children from violence

The EU has no general responsibility in regard to protecting children in Europe from violence. Member States have primary responsibility for child protection systems. However the EU does have an important role to play in view of its overall objective of promoting the protection of the rights of the child.

### 4.2.1. Political framework

In its 'Communication on Strategic Objectives 2005-2009', the European Commission emphasised that particular priority had to be given to 'effective protection of the rights of children, both against economic exploitation and all forms of abuse, with the Union acting as a beacon to the rest of the world'<sup>67</sup>. The EU took decisive steps in this direction when it set up the Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the Agenda for the Rights of the Child.

- Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2006)

The foundations for promoting and protecting children's rights in the EU's internal and external policies were laid in 2006 in a Communication<sup>68</sup> to mark the EU's launch of a long-term strategy to support the efforts of the Member States in this field. The Strategy is structured around specific objectives, backed up by tangible measures. It has introduced structures to help the EU institutions tackle children's rights issues (eg. the European Forum on the Rights of the Child and the European Commission's Children's Rights Coordinator). In its Communication the Commission says that in recent years violence suffered by children in the EU, which can take a variety of forms (violence in the family and at school, trafficking, exploitation, sexual tourism and child pornography on the Internet), has become increasingly worrying. Measures introduced by the Strategy include the creation of an EU-wide single-number child helpline (116 111) and missing child hotline (116 000), and the collection of comparable EU-wide data<sup>69</sup>.

#### **Child protection in the Stockholm Programme (2010-2014)**

The programme stresses that specific attention has to be paid to children in especially vulnerable situations and in particular child victims of exploitation and sexual abuse, trafficked children and unaccompanied minors.

- The EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child (2011)

The Agenda for the Rights of the Child, adopted in 2011<sup>70</sup>, is structured around three general principles: making the rights of the child an integral part of the EU's fundamental rights policy; basing future policymaking on reliable data; cooperating with stakeholders through the European Forum on the Rights of the Child. The Agenda identifies four priority areas in which various actions are planned: child-friendly justice,

<sup>67</sup> [Strategic Objectives 2005-2009. Europe 2010: A Partnership for European Renewal. Prosperity, Solidarity and Security](#), COM(2005) 12 final, 26 January 2005, p. 9.

<sup>68</sup> [Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#), COM(2006) 367 final, 4 July 2006.

<sup>69</sup> Following publication of this Communication, the FRA was tasked with developing indicators to measure the protection, respect and promotion of the rights of the child in the EU. One of the key fields identified by the FRA was 'protection [of children] from exploitation and violence'. See: [Developing indicators for the protection, respect and promotion of the rights of the child in the EU](#), FRA, November 2010, pp. 62-90. Taking these indicators as its starting point, the FRA collated its data and published a [report](#) on child trafficking in the EU. It is now [conducting](#) research into violence suffered by children with disabilities, national child protection systems, and how children are treated in Member States' justice systems.

<sup>70</sup> [EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child](#), COM(2011) 60 final, 15 February 2011.

vulnerable children, children in the EU's external action, child participation and awareness raising.

Combating violence against children is considered from many angles. Children in conflict with the law, for instance, need to be protected, as do child victims and child witnesses, child victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation, disabled children, missing children, unaccompanied minors, Roma children, etc. Another example is the need to tackle the various dangers posed by modern technology (eg. cyber-bullying, child Internet grooming, exposure to harmful content).

The Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors<sup>71</sup>, the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children<sup>72</sup> and the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings<sup>73</sup> are just some of the important initiatives introduced by the EU in recent years to achieve its political commitment to child protection.

- Future EU guidelines on integrated child protection systems

The importance of producing these guidelines was clearly evident in the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings. The European Forum on the Rights of the Child looked into the role of integrated child protection systems in 2012 and 2013 in order to draw up guidelines on areas in which the EU could support the Member States and areas where the latter could contribute to EU actions. The Commission has also held a public consultation<sup>74</sup> to seek the views of interested parties on effective ways of combating violence against children and on the main difficulties national child protection systems come up against. The consultation should enable the EU guidelines for Member States to be finalised by the end of 2014.

#### 4.2.2. Key legislative measures

New EU legislation in the field of justice and home affairs has been the main achievement over the past few years. Some recent instruments which the European Parliament and the Council have adopted jointly reflect the EU's commitment to protecting children from violence.

- The Directive on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings<sup>75</sup> establishes minimum EU-wide rules on the definition of criminal offences and sanctions in the field of trafficking. It also provides for measures to better prevent trafficking and strengthen protection for its victims. The Directive considers that child victims are particularly vulnerable and need additional measures to help them, such as physical and psycho-social assistance, access to the education system and, where appropriate, the appointment of a guardian or representative;

<sup>71</sup> [COM \(2010\) 213 final](#), 6 May 2010.

<sup>72</sup> [COM \(2012\) 196 final](#), 2 May 2012.

<sup>73</sup> [COM \(2012\) 286 final](#), 19 June 2012.

<sup>74</sup> [Public consultation: EU Guidance on Integrated Child Protection Systems](#).

<sup>75</sup> [Directive 2011/36/EU](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims.

- The Directive on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children<sup>76</sup> introduces uniform definitions of the criminal offences of sexual abuse of children, sexual exploitation of children and child pornography. It also establishes minimum sanctions. The new rules include provisions to combat online child pornography and sex tourism. They also aim to stop convicted paedophiles being able to undertake professional activities involving regular contact with children;
- The Directive on the rights of victims of crime<sup>77</sup> establishes minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims, including children. It stresses that the latter have specific needs in regard to their protection on account of their vulnerability to repeated secondary victimisation, intimidation and retaliation.

Moreover, in 2013, the Commission proposed a directive on procedural safeguards for children suspected or accused in criminal proceedings<sup>78</sup>. This

aims to set common minimum standards throughout the European Union. Amongst other matters, it provides that children have the right to an individual assessment to identify their specific needs in terms of protection, education, training and re-integration into society.

#### 4.2.3. The role of the European Parliament

The European Parliament's contribution to EU action to stop violence against children has been particularly significant. With the new powers conferred on it by the Lisbon Treaty, Parliament, as co-legislator, has played a leading role in the adoption of EU legislation to eradicate the various forms of violence to which children are subjected (see above).

Moreover Parliament has, over the years, sounded the alarm on numerous occasions in regard to the problem of violence against children and has insisted on the rights of the child being protected and promoted both within and outside the European Union<sup>79</sup>. One recent example of this is its resolution of 20 November 2012 on protecting children in the digital world. MEPs state in the resolution that children are in the habit of surfing on Internet and they need enhanced protection. Parliament stressed that irrespective of whether this issue is addressed legally or through cooperation and the exchange of best practice, Member States should make further efforts to combat illegal

#### The Daphne Programme

The Daphne Programme was launched in 1997 with the aim of preventing and eradicating violence against children, young people and women. Through this programme the EU funds action by NGOs, local public authorities, research centres, etc., to combat violence of this kind. The Daphne III Programme (2007-2013) had a budget of EUR 116.85 million. As from 2014 the Daphne Programme forms part of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship 2014-2020 Programme adopted by the European Parliament and the Council on 17 December 2013 with a budget of EUR 439.473 million for the period 2014-2020. The European Parliament resolution of 2 February 2012 on the Daphne Programme stressed that it should receive suitable funding and keep its high profile.

<sup>76</sup> [Directive 2011/92/EU](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography.

<sup>77</sup> [Directive 2012/29/EU](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support, and protection of victims of crime.

<sup>78</sup> [Proposal](#) for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on procedural safeguards for children suspected or accused in criminal proceedings.

<sup>79</sup> [EU Framework of Law for Children's Rights](#), Op.cit., pp. 15-16 and pp. 22-23.

and harmful content online and to ensure that using resources online is as safe as possible<sup>80</sup>.

### 4.3. National approaches

The EU Member States are combating violence against children through a variety of legislative and political measures or by improving the services provided<sup>81</sup>. They are gradually adjusting their national laws to bring them into line with international and EU standards in the field. All the Member States have, for instance, ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Widespread ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse constitutes further progress with 18 Member States having already ratified it<sup>82</sup>. On the other hand, only three Member States (Austria, Italy and Portugal) have ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence which will come into force on 1 August 2014<sup>83</sup>. What is more, the deadlines for transposition by Member States of the Directive on Trafficking in human beings and the Directive on Combating child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation expired in 2013.

As regards prevention and protection policies, making comparisons between countries is complicated. Various initiatives to prevent violence have been set up in Member States in the form of all-purpose programmes (covering prevention of sexual abuse, awareness raising through media campaigns, measures to reduce poverty, initiatives to prevent exposure to violence between couples, etc.) and targeted programmes (parental education initiatives, home visits, pre-school programmes with several components, support and self-help groups, etc.). Very few studies have been carried out however into the effectiveness of these prevention initiatives<sup>84</sup>.

The March 2014 report by the European Child Safety Alliance on intentional injury to children describes how national policies to prevent violence are adopted, deployed and enforced. It gives summary results for national actions and a policy profile for each country. The report shows that there are a great many policies in place but that there still remains a great deal to be done to ensure they are fully implemented and supported with sufficient resources<sup>85</sup>. Only a few countries have a global prevention strategy for all the kinds of intentional injury studied by the report (maltreatment, peer violence and self-directed injury)<sup>86</sup>. The report also points out that some countries do not have a national ombudsman specifically for children (Germany, Portugal, the Czech

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<sup>80</sup> [Resolution](#) of the European Parliament of 20 November 2012 on protecting children in the digital world.

<sup>81</sup> The FRA's annual reports on the state of fundamental rights in the EU give specific examples of actions taken in individual countries. For the latest developments, see: [Fundamental rights: challenges and achievements in 2013 - Annual report](#), FRA, 2013 ([Chapter 4](#), pp. 106-112).

<sup>82</sup> [Status of the signature and ratification](#) of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

<sup>83</sup> [Status of signature and ratification](#) of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

<sup>84</sup> [European Report on Preventing Child Maltreatment](#), Op. cit., pp. 61-77.

<sup>85</sup> [What are European countries doing to prevent intentional injury to children?](#), Op.cit., p. 38.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 23.



Republic and Romania) while others (Bulgaria and Spain) only partially meet this criterion<sup>87</sup>.

Lastly, a project run under the Daphne III Programme took a more specific approach to comparing the national strategies of some Member States on combating child sexual abuse, from prevention to the treatment of victims. The final report, published in 2012, found there are considerable differences in the child protection systems of the countries which took part (Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Sweden and the Netherlands)<sup>88</sup>.

## 5. Outlook

Violence against children must continue to be the focus of critical and constant attention; merely punishing the perpetrators of violence is not enough to stop it happening. According to a UN study on violence against children<sup>89</sup>, we need to change the mindset of societies and the underlying economic and social conditions associated with this phenomenon.

A number of organisations involved have recently sounded the alarm about the negative impact of the economic crisis, which has resulted not only in cuts in social and public health services, but also in increased tension in human relations, both individually and collectively<sup>90</sup>. These are important risk factors which could jeopardise the progress made by EU Member States in protecting children from violence.

The Child Helpline International network warns that failing to protect children from violence would have a major impact on the economy of European societies, as the long-term effects of violence can prevent children from becoming productive citizens, while imposing significant financial burdens on the countries that need to support them in the years ahead<sup>91</sup>.

Various stakeholders have stressed that the EU should provide effective support for the child protection systems put in place by the Member States, facilitate the exchange of good practice and enhanced cooperation between actors and policy areas, invest more in prevention and put child protection at the heart of its legislative and policy initiatives<sup>92</sup>. A report by the European Parliament in 2012 drew up a series of recommendations for possible EU legislative and non-legislative measures for the protection and promotion of children's rights<sup>93</sup>.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>88</sup> [Prevent and combat child abuse: What works? An overview of regional approaches, exchange and research](#), Netherlands Youth Institute, 2012.

<sup>89</sup> [Report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children](#), op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> [Press release on the report on National Action to Address Child Intentional Injury](#), ECSA, March 2014, p. 2; [Voices of Young Europe](#), op.cit., p. 4 FWD; [L'impact de la crise économique et financière sur les enfants et les jeunes en Europe](#), Eurochild, 2011, p. 3;

<sup>91</sup> [Voices of Young Europe](#), op. cit., p. 4 FWD.

<sup>92</sup> [Moving Forward with the EU: Realising the Rights of Every Child Everywhere](#), Eurochild & UNICEF, 2014, 66 pp. 16-17; [The Role and the Impact of the EU in Advancing Children's Protection Rights](#), R. O'Donnell, Child Circle, May 2014, p. 4.

<sup>93</sup> [EU Framework of Law for Children's Rights](#), op. cit., pp. 33-35.

In future guidelines on integrated child protection systems the EU will have the opportunity to take stock of its various instruments likely to have an impact on the protection of children's rights, and to make suggestions as to how the Member States can make better use of those instruments in the context of their child protection systems. The guidelines should cover all the forms of violence referred to in Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.



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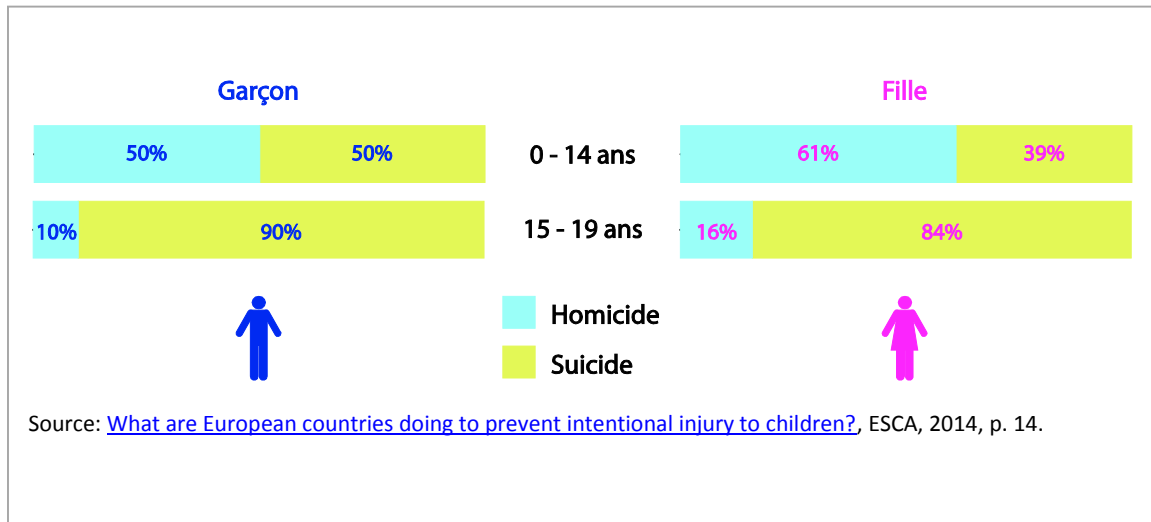
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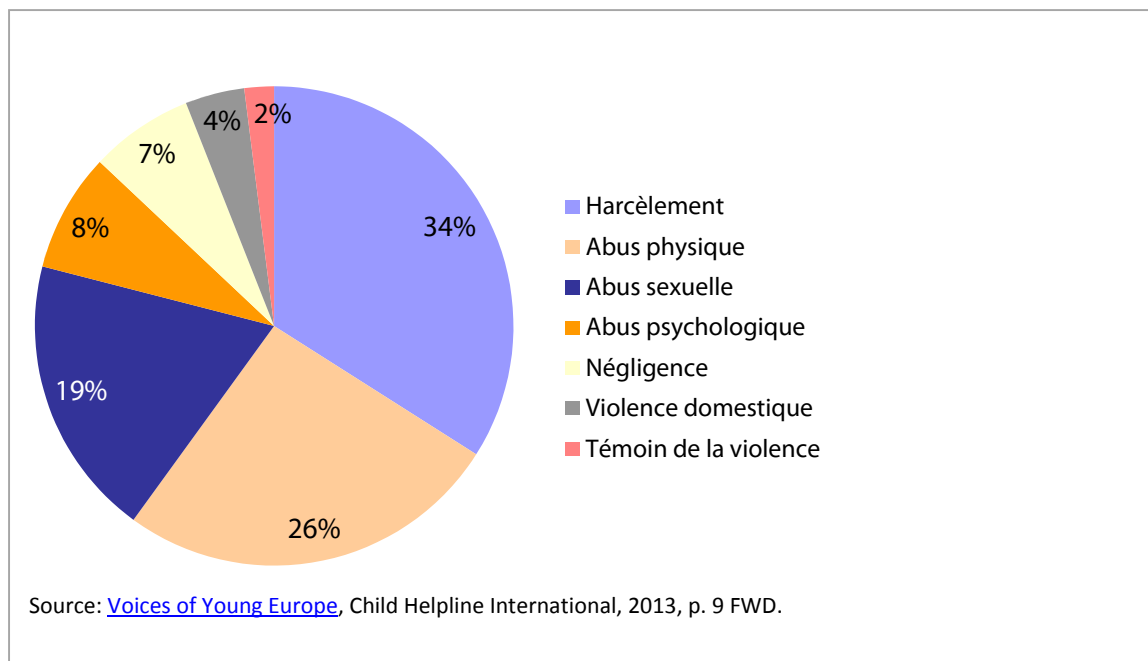
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## 7. Annexes

### Annex 1: Proportion of intentional injury deaths due to homicide and suicide for children 0-14 and 15-19 years by sex in the EU28



### Annex 2: Contacts on abuse and violence 2003-2012



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Violence against children takes diverse forms and occurs in various different contexts. It can have serious, harmful consequences in both the short and long term, and estimates of the scale of the problem are alarming. It results from a complex interaction of various risk factors, but can be avoided through effective prevention policies.

A number of international instruments have been adopted to safeguard and promote children's rights. The cornerstone in this framework of instruments is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19 of which lays down the right of a child to be protected from all forms of violence and the obligation on states to take all appropriate measures to protect children. With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, protection of children's rights has been explicitly recognised as an objective which the EU has an obligation to pursue. While child protection systems fall mainly within the responsibility of the Member States, the EU also plays an important role. Its actions have a direct impact on laws and policies implemented at national level. The aim of future EU guidelines on integrated child protection systems will be to set out areas in which the EU may be able to provide support to national systems and encourage the exchange of good practice.

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