FACTSHEET for BULGARIA

Context
It is believed that in Bulgaria in practice corporal punishment is prohibited to all citizens. Although the term “corporal punishment” does not exist in the legislation, it is believed that the usage of the concepts “violence”, “harm”, “damage” exhaust the possibilities for its admission.
There is no special policy on corporal punishment. In Bulgaria, rather it is a part of the larger efforts to prevent and combat violence.

Does the ban work?

39% of parents support slapping as an educative approach. These parents would use some form of corporal punishment in cases where they cannot cope with their child’s behavior.

Only 6% of them firmly claim that they have no alternative in a difficult situation.

50% of the respondents reported that they have witnessed slapping of children and have heard about it from other people.

16% of young people without children and 12% of parents say they have seen visibly beaten children with injuries.

Between 10% – 12% of the respondents say they had intervened in cases where an adult was beating a child.

85% of the youth without children and 80% of the parents state their readiness to report.

Over 80% believe that the attempts to interfere with family disputes only bring negatives.

Society assessment on the changes in distribution of negative models of parental behaviour, observed in Bulgaria in the last 10 years:

- 17% I cannot assess
- 36% Observed more frequently
- 23% Observed more rarely
- 2% Remains the same
- 17% Observed less frequently

Attitudes towards corporal punishment against children

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1 http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/
2 Survey conducted by NNC and ESTAT in 2013
3 Omnibus survey, SAPI, 2010
What is the problem?

• The lack of adopted legal definition and therefore a lack of legal ban on corporal punishment leads to the possibility of subjectivity in determining whether one or other acts of corporal punishment are physical or other punishable violence.

• In practice, only inflicting severe physical harm or torture is considered as a crime; in other cases a penalty could be imposed only by a complaint of the victim, which in the case of children is not guaranteed in the country.

• Bulgarian society still has a high tolerance for punishment as an educational tool, including „light“ forms of corporal punishment. There is a positive trend toward rejection of beating, especially beating with the use of means as a method of upbringing. Among the young parents, especially in the big cities and among those with higher education the approaches of positive parenting are increasingly striving for approval and implementation.

• More and more programmes on good parenting are provided by NGOs and in social services.

• The academic curricular do not contain enough information on CP and positive parenting.

• There is a lack of state-led campaigns addressing corporal punishment. Most of the campaigns are initiated by the NGOs.

• Lack of official data on corporal punishment.

Recommendations

• Introducing of a definition of corporal punishment in the legislation.

• More and better quality academic researches, introduction of scientific approaches in the development and validation of new programs, practices, guides, etc.

• Introduction to positive parenting and positive discipline in the academic programs of universities for subjects such as pedagogy, social work, etc.

• Implementation of regular parental support programmes for all parents, organized by the state.

• National campaign for elimination of corporal punishment.

• National programs for professionals working with families to understand the importance of facing corporal punishment and understanding their role in helping parents.

• Including the ban on corporal punishment in the curriculum and as part of civic education in school.