unicef
for every child

Policy brief:
Ending violence against children in Europe and Central Asia

OCTOBER 2025

Introduction

unicef
for every child

Violence has a devastating effect on children. From its immediate threat to a child's life and well-being to its long-term – even lifelong – repercussions, it undermines a child's sense of self-worth and disrupts their emotional, cognitive and physical development.

Violence against children is often part of a wider cycle of inter-personal, family and community violence. It has strong gender dynamics, shaping the risks for boys and girls and how they are affected, and it may be passed from one generation to the next, with children who experience it more likely to see it as 'normal' and becoming adult victims – or perpetrators. This is why, in addition to the human and emotional cost, violence against children brings an economic cost: consequences such as increased public spending on welfare, psychological services for survivors, and even victims' reduced productivity mean that violence against children is estimated to cost US $7 trillion globally. This is equivalent to about 8 per cent of annual global GDP.[1]

Globally, two thirds of children experience sexual, physical or emotional abuse, sometimes with fatal consequences: a child is killed by an act of violence every four minutes. Violence against children can and does happen anywhere, including in spaces that are supposed to be safe – whether homes, schools, communities and online.

For half of all children in the Europe and Central Asia region, violence, abuse and neglect perpetrated by and between caregivers makes the home the most dangerous place of all.

The global community committed to end all forms of violence against children by 2030. But the Europe and Central Asia region – and the world as a whole – are not on track to keep this promise to children.

A new analysis of data by UNICEF finds that, despite efforts, violence against children across the Europe and Central Asia region remains high. At the same time, there is a growing recognition that violence against children is unacceptable, and most countries in Europe and Central Asia have prohibited all corporal punishment of children, including at home.

But to have the intended impact, legislation must be backed by investment in the systems and services that prevent and protect children from violence.

Cover image: © UNICEF/UN0214688/Babajanyan VII Photo
A psychologist does sand therapy with Zhanerke, 8, in the therapy room of a special school in Kyzylorda, Kazakhstan. Zhanerke's family is supported by UNICEF-trained patronage nurse Gulmira Sansyzbayeva, who convened a working group after learning that Zhanerke's father was abusive. March 2018.

Violence against children: a breach of core child rights

The Convention on the Rights of the Child makes clear that children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence. This includes "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse" (Article 19). Article 28(2) further prohibits disciplinary practices in schools that undermine children's dignity, while Article 37 requires that no child be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.[2]

Building on these provisions, the Committee on the Rights of the Child confirmed that "violence" must be understood as covering all of these forms of harm, whether physical, psychological, sexual, or through neglect and exploitation.[3]

Below: © UNICEF/UN0214471/Babajanyan VII Photo

Liza, 12, holds her hands together in her home in Moldova. After being sexually abused by her stepfather, Liza was helped by a UNICEF-supported shelter in Chisinau, where she received medical, social and psychological support. April 2018.

BOX 1

International Classification of Violence against Children

To help countries create standardized, internationally comparable violence against children statistics, the International Classification of Violence against Children (ICVAC) was developed and formally adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2023. The ICVAC provides standardized definitions and categorizations of violence against children for statistical purposes.

According to the statistical definition by ICVAC, violence against children refers to "any deliberate, unwanted and non-essential act, threatened or actual, against a child or against multiple children that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in death, injury or other forms of physical and psychological suffering."[4]

Where and why violence against children happens

Violence against children can occur at home, at school, in the community, in settings involving law enforcement and judiciary services (including custodial settings), and online. It is most often perpetrated by someone in the circle of trust of the child including family members and friends, and less commonly by professionals or strangers.[5]

Abuse of power is one root cause of violence against children. Because children are dependent on adults, still developing, and forming their understanding of how the world works through how they are treated themselves, they are uniquely vulnerable to such abuse.

Caregivers who experienced abuse or neglect as children may unintentionally reproduce these patterns with their own children, as unresolved trauma can affect their attachment, emotional regulation, and parenting practices. Without support, they may normalize harmful behaviors or struggle to provide consistent care, perpetuating the cycle of violence across generations.

Multiple and mutually reinforcing risk factors exist at the individual, family and societal levels. These include harmful gender and social norms, such as those that condone or justify corporal punishment, victim-blaming, child marriage, or justify violence against women and girls.[6] Other drivers of violence against children include structural and systemic factors such as weak legal frameworks, inadequate public policies and child protection systems, unemployment, poverty, social exclusion and social inequalities, poor law enforcement, armed conflict and humanitarian crises.[7]

Above: © UNICEF/UN0214613/Babajanyan VII Photo

Aliya, 13, walks with her classmates in Aktau, Kazakhstan. Aliya is a survivor of domestic violence and receives support from a UNICEF-backed crisis centre to help her and her siblings overcome their distress and trauma. March 2018.

Violence against children in Europe and Central Asia: What the data shows

Physical and psychological violence by caregivers

According to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, "corporal punishment and other forms of cruel and degrading punishment" include both physical and psychological violence.[14] Together, these types of violence are commonly referred to as **violent discipline**. They constitute the most common form of violence against children worldwide – violence at the hands of caregivers themselves. Physical and psychological violence against children at home often co-exist, compounding the risks for the children impacted.[15]

All children require safety, security, and nurturing relationships to thrive. When they experience a traumatic event, such as an act of violence, or when they feel that the people closest to them are not safe for them – either emotionally or physically – it wreaks havoc on their developing bodies and nervous systems. Physical punishment and psychological aggression can lead to children developing mental health disorders, experiencing developmental delays, and becoming aggressive themselves, among other consequences.[16]

While the risks to children of this kind of treatment are many, and can be severe, there are no upsides. Children who are physically and psychologically punished, for example, do not "behave better" than children who are not. In fact, research indicates the opposite – compared to children who are not physically and psychologically punished, they are more likely to become aggressive and to misbehave more over time.[17]

Despite this, and despite recent progress in the region – such as the passing of bans on corporal punishment by 38 of 55 countries in Europe and Central Asia – nearly **1 in 3 children in countries and territories with available data across the region experiences physical discipline at home**. The prevalence of **psychological aggression against children by caregivers is even higher, ranging from 40 to 69 per cent in 15 countries and territories with available data**.[18]

1 in 3

children in countries with available data across the region experiences physical discipline at home.

up to 69%

of children in countries with available data across the region experience psychological aggression by their caregivers

BOX 3

Violent discipline

Physical punishment can be severe or minor assault, and may or may not leave any marks or signs of injury. It can include "smacking", spanking, hitting, pinching or beating.

Psychological violence refers to "terrorizing a child, harassing, spurning and humiliating a child, exposure of a child to domestic violence or to other violent experiences resulting in or with a high likelihood of resulting in psychological, social, emotional and behavioural problems".

The effects can be long-term. Children who have experienced corporal punishment, for example, are more likely to 'approve' of violence being used in peer relationships, to bully their peers, to experience violence at the hands of their peers, to resort to violence to resolve conflicts, and to exhibit aggression towards their parents.[19]

While the prevalence of violent discipline remains high, most caregivers believe physical punishment and psychological aggression are not necessary to raising and educating children. On the one hand, this is a promising indication that cultural and societal beliefs are shifting, in no small part due to the discussions spurred by corporal punishment bans.

But it also speaks to another worrying trend: many caregivers are not parenting in the way that they would like. This finding requires investigation into the other variables that prevent parents from interacting with their children the way they want to – whether that is stress, a lack of awareness of alternative parenting strategies, or something else – and investment into offering parents the tools they need to emotionally self-regulate in difficult moments.

Why are so many families using psychological violence at home? One reason may be that – particularly because much of the societal discussion centres on the question of "smacking" or physical punishment – many parents may remain unaware that verbal or psychological assaults and other forms of degrading punishments, not just physical ones, can severely impact children.

Furthermore, in many families, different types of violence co-occur. In families where intimate partner violence takes place, the use of physical punishment or psychological aggression against children is also more likely.[20]

Above: © UNICEF/UN0220698/Babajanyan VII Photo

Fabliona*, 4, plays in the apartment her mother Jeta* rents in Tirana, Albania. Jeta was physically and mentally abused by her husband, who started to become violent after finding out Jeta was pregnant with a girl. After Jeta gave birth to Fabliona, he continued the abuse, also towards his daughter. Jeta has lived alone with her daughter for two years, having a protection order against Fabliona's father. UNICEF-supported House of Colours NGO gave Jeta legal and psychological support, and assisted her with food and clothing. June 2018.

**Names have been changed*

Sexual violence against children

Sexual violence against children takes many forms – including acts committed in person and those facilitated by digital technologies – and can occur in any setting. Under international standards, any sexual activity with a child under the legal age of sexual consent constitutes sexual violence, irrespective of whether the child appears to have consented. This recognition is critical to ensure children's full protection in law and practice.

This protection extends to all children under the age of 18, meaning that sexual exploitation - encompassing abuse of trust or authority, trafficking, generation or sharing of sexual abuse materials, and commercial sexual exploitation - are prohibited, even where the child is above the domestic age of consent and appears to agree. International law distinguishes between consensual peer relationships from exploitative situations involving adults or power imbalances. Perpetrators may include trusted adults, such as caregivers, teachers, coaches or community leaders, as well as acquaintances, strangers or organized groups.[21]

Sexual violence includes sexual exploitation in exchange for money, food or favours; trafficking for sexual exploitation; sexual harassment (including online); and grooming and luring of children online or offline. Perpetrators include trusted adults, such as caregivers, teachers, coaches or community leaders, as well as acquaintances, strangers or organized groups.[22]

The consequences can be severe. Survivors are at risk of sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancy, physical injury, chronic illness, social isolation and psychological trauma.[23]

Sexual violence is notoriously difficult to quantify. Particularly when it comes to sexual acts, factors including societal stigma, victim-blaming and a lack of clear reporting, help-seeking or legal processes mean victims are afraid or unwilling to disclose. Gender and age, as well as other intersecting vulnerabilities, such as disabilities, being in alternative care, or being affected by migration and displacement, can mean that children face even higher risks of sexual abuse and are often less likely to be identified and supported.[24] Making the question of reporting more complicated, many perpetrators are known and trusted adults.

UNICEF's analysis highlights that, **across 19 EU countries, between 1 and 14 per cent of women reported having experienced sexual violence during childhood**.[25] However, the actual number is likely far higher. Of the perpetrators for the incidents reported, the vast majority were male. Most perpetrators were either a family member or another person known to the girl.

Help-seeking behaviours and incident reporting among women who experienced sexual violence as children also vary between countries and sub-regions. Of 22 EU countries with available data, Cyprus and Germany reported the highest levels, with 70 per cent of survivors reporting the incident or seeking help informally. The lowest levels were observed in Portugal with 27 per cent, Finland with 33 per cent and Croatia with 38 per cent. Across countries, however, when girls or women sought help, it usually was not from official bodies, such as social services or law enforcement: instead, they turned to people like friends or family members. Even in the country with the highest prevalence of reporting incidents and seeking help from official bodies – Netherlands – nearly four out of every five survivors did not disclose the incident or seek help.

Yet these numbers show more help-seeking behaviour than in other parts of the region (such as Central Asia), and, globally, where the literature shows that very few child victims of violence aged 15-19 ever disclose their experiences or seek help.[26]

The various barriers mean that many survivors do not come forward until well into adulthood. For this reason, it is essential that statutes of limitation for child sexual violence be removed, making justice available to all survivors, regardless of the time elapsed.

BOX 4

The Barnahus model in Georgia

When 12-year-old Anna* told her mother, Natia, that a neighbour had sexually abused her, Natia, angry and heartbroken, knew she had to report it. But she dreaded what might come next, and pictured her daughter having to face endless interviews, medical tests and forensic checks, and being forced to relive the trauma in unfriendly police stations and clinics.

But when Natia spoke with the police, they asked her to take Anna to the Center for Psychological and Social Services for Children, a new flagship centre in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi that has already helped more than 200 child survivors of sexual abuse. It deals with these victims in a way that minimizes the pain that investigations can cause and, crucially, provides a therapeutic environment and psychological services so that children can process, deal with and ultimately overcome their traumatic experience.

The centre is based on the 'Barnahus' ('Children's House') model, which is transforming work with child victims of sexual violence across the Nordic countries and much of Europe and is the first of its kind in Georgia. It brings together all the services, specialists and experts involved in cases of child sexual abuse, from investigators and doctors to psychologists and social workers, in a building that is as welcoming as possible, with warm rooms, comfortable armchairs, children's toys and books.

When Anna and her mum first came here, they were welcomed by a social worker and psychologist who showed them around, with the psychologist using this time to decide whether Anna was emotionally ready to discuss what had happened. She was, so a specialist investigator sat with her to talk through her experience – one trained professional who asked questions on behalf of all the relevant agencies in a way that gathered information without forcing Anna to relive events in a way that would cause harm. The interviews could be halted whenever Anna wanted to play a game, read a book or have something to eat.

> If a child does not get the right kind of treatment, they can be more traumatized by the investigatory process than by the event itself. Here, children get all the support they need under one roof and don't need to go from one agency to the next. The environment is warm, friendly and more welcoming, it serves their best interests.
>
> **Nona Tsikhelashvili**
> Child protection officer with UNICEF Georgia

For children, this approach minimizes the impact of the interview process and can be the first step towards recovery. For investigators, it can secure more reliable testimony from children who find it easier to talk in a more relaxed environment. All children are offered therapeutic services and qualified experts are on hand to provide follow-up support for as long as needed – support that is also offered to their families. A few months after coming to the Centre, Anna is better able to manage her anxiety, less likely to blame herself for the abuse and growing in self-confidence.

Run by the State Care Agency and launched in 2022 with the support of UNICEF and the Government of Estonia, the centre in Tbilisi works with children from the city and surrounding regions, but there are plans to extend this approach to Kutaisi, Western Georgia, in the near future.

**Anna and Natia are composite characters based on multiple testimonies and real cases from the centre.*

Key frameworks

By adopting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the global community has committed to ending all forms of violence against children by 2030 and established specific targets and indicators to track progress.[8]

In November 2024, government representatives and other delegates gathered in Bogotá in Colombia for the First Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children. In their Call to Action they reaffirmed their commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – including ending all violence, abuse, exploitation and trafficking of children – and pledged to invest in evidence-based approaches.

At the regional level, the European Union also prioritizes child protection through the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child – aligned with the Council of Europe's strategy – and complementary initiatives, including the EU Strategy to Combat Child Sexual Abuse and the 2024 Commission Recommendation on Integrated Child Protection Systems.[9] Meanwhile, the Council of Europe's Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2022-2027 has, as its first objective, "freedom from violence for all children".[10]

Nationally, governments across Europe and Central Asia are strengthening legislative and policy frameworks, as well as developing and improving prevention and response services.[11] Montenegro, for example, recently adopted a Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence 2025-2029.[12]

Members of Transformative Monitoring for Enhanced Equity (TransMonEE), a three-decade-old network which compiles and disseminates data on child rights and well-being in 55 countries and territories in Europe and Central Asia, agreed in March 2024 that the next TransMonEE analytical series report would focus on violence against children. The resulting report, *Where we live and learn: violence against children in Europe and Central Asia*, helps governments identify areas for data investment and improvement.[13]

UNICEF'S PLEDGE

UNICEF's global pledge to end violence against children

UNICEF also has made a commitment to ending violence against children, including:

Strengthening data and monitoring:

Support at least 50 countries to collect high-quality, internationally comparable prevalence data on violence against children.

Ensuring safe schools:

Support governments to provide 142 million children with safe and enabling school environments.

Expanding response services:

Help governments reach 30 million children at risk or experiencing violence with specialized social welfare and justice services.

Supporting families:

Reach 70 million families with evidence-based parent and caregiver support programmes.

Peer violence: Bullying online, offline and physical fights

Bullying can occur at school, in other community settings, and online, but available data suggest that bullying by schoolmates is the most common form.[27] It is a pattern of behaviour rather than an isolated incident. Cyberbullying includes the use of digital technologies, such as social media, messaging and gaming platforms, and mobile phones. Face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying can often happen alongside each other.[28]

All forms of bullying can impact children's development, participation, learning, relationships and inclusion. While sometimes dismissed as a 'part of school life', bullying can have severe consequences – with some children in the region dying by suicide after being bullied.[29]

Data show that on average around **7 per cent of 11-, 13- and 15-year-old children in the region have bullied others, around 11 per cent of children were bullied and around 10 per cent engaged in physical fights**. About 12 per cent reported cyberbullying others, and around 15 per cent were cyberbullied.[30]

These averages, however, in some cases, obscure a gender gap. Most types of this kind of violence – including bullying others at school, cyberbullying, and getting into physical fights – are more likely to be perpetrated by boys. For example, around 14 per cent of boys in the region engage in physical fights, compared to 6 per cent of girls. Around 8 per cent of boys bully others, compared to 5 per cent of girls. And around 14 per cent of boys cyberbully others, compared to 9 per cent of girls. Meanwhile, in many countries, girls are more likely to be cyberbullied than boys. However, on average in the region, both boys and girls are at roughly the same risk of being bullied.

As with all types of violence in this report, however, the reported prevalence varied hugely between countries – and is likely to be an undercount. For example, in Bulgaria, around 1 in 4 15-year-old boys reports bullying someone at least twice a month. In other countries, it is as low as 1 per cent.

BOX 5

Violence in times of crisis

Humanitarian crises driven by conflict, fragility, climate change, and forced displacement are becoming more frequent, complex, and prolonged, exposing children to significant risks of exploitation, abuse, and neglect, according to The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. One in five children worldwide lives in or is fleeing conflict, with millions more uprooted by climate disasters or forced to migrate through dangerous routes. Children affected by such crises face highly escalated risks of violence, including gender-based violence (GBV). Across Europe and Central Asia, the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions, lockdowns and school closures further increased risks of violence against children. Meanwhile, the escalation of war in Ukraine in February 2022 caused mass displacement, widespread distress, and fractured child protection systems. In Türkiye, hosting over 3 million refugees and recovering from the 2023 earthquakes have created a protracted emergency with shifting risks for vulnerable children. In Italy, continued arrivals of refugees and migrants through the Central Mediterranean and Balkan routes have raised protection concerns, particularly for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). Across contexts, the breakdown of protective environments and reduced access to services heighten children's exposure to multiple, intersecting forms of violence.[31]

What governments and other stakeholders must do

Banning all types of violence against children, including corporal punishment, is a critical step. Other national, regional and local commitments to protect children also are key. UNICEF welcomes progress on both of these fronts in both Europe and Central Asia, and worldwide.

At the same time, the evidence is clear: unless ending violence against children is prioritized across sectors, services and budgets, even the most well-intentioned policies and promises will fall far short of protecting children. The following recommendations are based on a large – and growing – evidence base regarding violence prevention and response including strategies that account for the age, gender, and other intersecting vulnerabilities children may face. Many of these are already being implemented by governments in the region, and around the world. Yet, all too often, implementation is too slow to help the children who need protection now. To make an impact, they must be scaled quickly.

Underpinning all of these recommendations, of course, is data. Without effective processes for collecting, monitoring and analyzing data, it is all but impossible to know where countries stand in terms of their progress against violence against children. More worryingly, it also makes it profoundly difficult to know where to allocate budget, services and other resources to make the biggest impact. This is why investment in data isn't just an additional recommendation, it is a recommendation that underlies all of the others.

Above all, every level of society, from the professionals who regularly come into contact with children to the caregivers who raise them, must be aware of not just what constitutes violence against children, but of its short- and long-term impacts – and of how to spot it when it happens, and prevent it before it occurs.

1. Ensure a protective environment for all children

- Ban all forms of corporal punishment in all settings and promote non-violent discipline and positive parenting methods.
- Invest in quality parenting and family support interventions and services and ensure that they are readily available for all parents and caregivers, and promote gender equality.
- Ensure schools are safe and inclusive spaces where children feel safe to learn and express themselves, free from violence by peers and teachers, by implementing whole-school approaches to prevent peer violence and bullying, build socio-emotional skills, and provide effective referral and response mechanisms.
- Integrate online risks into violence prevention strategies, and ensure that children's rights are placed at the forefront of digital governance. This includes updating legislation, regulating tech companies and online platforms, and reforming child protection systems for the digital age.
- Support schools to build teacher and staff capacity through training so they can address sensitive issues, challenge harmful gender and social norms, and guide children to services.
- Provide specialized support for children who show harmful behaviours, including tailored psychosocial interventions, restorative justice approaches, and age-appropriate, trauma-informed therapeutic support for children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours.

2. Respond and prevent recurrence:

- Invest in hiring and training an adequate number of social workers who can respond to the needs of children and families – including in sudden onset emergencies and in the context of migration and displacement – and equip the wider social-service workforce with the skills, tools, attitudes and resources to prevent and respond to violence against children.
- Reform justice systems and services to ensure that they are child-sensitive, restorative, and trauma-informed.
- Establish and strengthen multidisciplinary and interagency services (such as Barnahus-type models) to prevent re-traumatization and ensure coordinated support to child victims and witnesses.
- Establish clear, structured mechanisms for collaboration and coordination among child protection services, law enforcement, the judiciary, and health services to ensure efficient case management and safeguard the child's best interests while balancing confidentiality and inter-agency collaboration and also promoting coordination with violence against women response mechanisms.

3. Leave no child behind

- Accelerate childcare reform to prevent family separation, end institutionalization, and ensure every child grows up in a safe and nurturing family environment – including in emergency responses.
- Prioritize investments in early intervention and family support services, expand quality family- and community-based care alternatives, and set clear time-bound targets for deinstitutionalization.
- Consider the gender dynamic of violence against children and safeguard the needs of children with disabilities, infants and young children, and those in migration and displacement contexts.

4. Improve violence against children data collection and monitoring

- Invest in violence against children data improvement and bridge the violence against children data gap.
- Support and fund country-specific and (sub)regional initiatives to strengthen data and information-management systems on violence against children.
- Adopt ICVAC and existing guidance on violence against children statistics, and apply lessons from prior and ongoing data-improvement projects.
- Conduct a systematic review and assessment of the violence against children data landscape and ecosystem to identify what exists, what is missing, what works (or not), and where targeted improvements are needed to build a comprehensive cross-sectoral national violence against children data collection and monitoring system.
- Stay engaged with UNICEF's ICVAC implementation and the Steering Group on Statistics on Children under the Conference of European Statisticians; participate in expert consultations, technical working groups and knowledge-sharing forums to align practice and mobilize technical support.
- Integrate violence against children modules in regular national household survey programmes to facilitate collection of trend data and reporting against violence-related SDGs.

References

[1] Overseas Development Institute, The costs and economic impact of violence against children, London, 2014.

[2] United Nations General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of the Child, G.A. Res. 44/25, 20 November 1989, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577

[3] United Nations Children's Fund, International Classification of Violence against Children, UNICEF, New York, 2023, p. 13.

[4] Committee on the Rights of the Child, General comment No. 13 (2011): The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, UN Doc. CRC/C/GC/13, 18 April 2011.

[5] United Nations Children's Fund, 'In Focus: Ending violence against children. Violence is one of the greatest threats to children worldwide – including in Europe and Central Asia', Policy brief, United Nations Children's Fund Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, Geneva, October 2024.

[6] European Institute for Gender Equality, 'Forms of violence', European Institute for Gender Equality, 2025, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/what-is-gender-based-violence/forms-of-violence>, accessed 24 July 2025; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence against Women: An EU-wide Survey*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015.

[7] Maternowska, M. Catherine, and Deborah Fry, 'The Multi-Country Study on the Drivers of Violence Affecting Children: An overview', Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies, vol. 13, no. S1, 2018, pp. 12-25.

[8] United Nations Statistics Division, 'Home - SDG Indicators', United Nations Statistics Division website, New York, 2025, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>, accessed 24 July 2025.

[9] European Commission, *EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child*, Communication COM/2021/142 final, Brussels, 24 March 2021; Council of Europe, *Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022–2027): Children's Rights in Action*, Strasbourg, March 2022; European Commission, *EU Strategy for a More Effective Fight against Child Sexual Abuse*, COM/2020/607 final, Brussels, 24 July 2020; European Commission, *Commission Recommendation on Integrated Child Protection Systems*, Legislative Train 06.2025, Brussels, Q1 2024.

[10] Council of Europe, *Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022–2027): Children's Rights in Action: from continuous implementation to joint innovation*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, March 2022.

[11] United Nations Children's Fund, 'In Focus: Ending violence against children'.

[12] Government of Montenegro, *Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence, 2025–2029*, Podgorica: Government of Montenegro, 2024.

[13] United Nations Children's Fund, *Where we live and learn: violence against children in Europe and Central Asia*, TransMonEE Analytical Series, United Nations Children's Fund Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, Geneva 2025.

[14] Committee on the Rights of the Child, General comment No. 8: The Right of the Child to Protection from Corporal Punishment and Other Cruel or Degrading Forms of Punishment (Arts. 19; 28, para. 2; and 37, inter alia), U.N. Doc. CRC/C/GC/8 (2006), para. 12.

[15] United Nations Children's Fund, *International Classification of Violence against Children*, UNICEF, New York, 2023.

[16] World Health Organization, *Corporal punishment of children: the public health impact*, Geneva, 2025.

[17] Heilmann, A.; Mehay, A.; Watt, R.; Kelly, Y.; Durrant, J.; Van Turnhout, J.; Gershoff, E., 'Physical punishment and child outcomes: a narrative review of prospective studies', *The Lancet*, 2021; 398: 355–364.

[18] United Nations Children's Fund, *Where we live and learn: violence against children in Europe and Central Asia*.

[19] World Health Organization, *Corporal punishment of children: the public health impact*.

[20] Chiesa, A.; Kallechey, L.; Harlaar, N.; Ford, R.; Garrido, E.; Betts, W.; Maguire, S., 'Intimate partner violence victimization and parenting: a systematic review', *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 2018; 80: 285–300.

[21] Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 34, General Assembly resolution 44/25, 20 November 1989, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, p. 3; Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, General Assembly resolution A/RES/54/263, 25 May 2000; Council of Europe, Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention), CETS No. 201, 25 October 2007; International Labour Organization, Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (No. 182), adopted 17 June 1999.

[22] UNICEF, International Classification of Violence against Children.

[23] Vera-Gray, F. (2023), *Key Messages from Research on the Impacts of Child Sexual Abuse*, Barkingside: Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse.

[24] Jones, L.; et al., 'Prevalence and risk of violence against children with disabilities: a systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies', The Lancet, 2012; 380(9845): 899–907. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(12)60692-8; Mailhot Amborski, A.; et al., 'Sexual violence against persons with disabilities: a meta-analysis', Trauma, Violence & Abuse, 2021; 23(4): 1330–1343. doi:10.1177/1524838021995975; Sherr, L.; Roberts, K. J.; Gandhi, N., 'Child violence experiences in institutionalised/orphanage care', Psychology, Health & Medicine, 2017; 22(suppl. 1): 31–57. doi:10.1080/13548506.2016.1271951; de Oliveira Araujo, J.; et al., 'Prevalence of sexual violence among refugees: a systematic review', Revista de Saúde Pública, 2019; 53: art. 78. doi:10.11606/S1518-8787.2019053001081.

[25] Eurostat: Database, Women who have experienced sexual violence during childhood, by age group, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/gbv_ch_age/default/table?lang=en&category=livcon.gbv.gbv_ch>, accessed November 2024.

[26] Pereira, A., et al., 'Disclosure, reporting and help seeking among child survivors of violence: a cross-country analysis', BMC Public Health (2020) 20:1051.

[27] United Nations Children's Fund, 'Bullying', UNICEF Data: Monitoring the situation of children and women, <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/violence/bullying/>, accessed 11 September 2025.

[28] Estévez, E.; Cañas, E.; Estévez, J. F.; Povedano, A., 'Continuity and Overlap of Roles in Victims and Aggressors of Bullying and Cyberbullying in Adolescence: A Systematic Review', International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, vol. 17, no. 20, 13 October 2020, art. no. 7452, doi:10.3390/ijerph17207452.

[29] Barzilay, S.; Brunstein Klomek, A.; Apter, A.; Carli, V.; Wasserman, C.; Hadlaczky, G.; Hoven, C. W.; Sarchiapone, M.; Balazs, J.; Kereszteny, A.; Brunner, R.; Kaess, M.; Bobes, J.; Saiz, P.; Cosman, D.; Haring, C.; Banzer, R.; Corcoran, P.; Kahn, J. P.; Postuvan, V.; Podlogar, T.; Sisask, M.; Varnik, A.; Wasserman, D., 'Bullying Victimization and Suicide Ideation and Behavior Among

Adolescents in Europe: A 10-Country Study', Journal of Adolescent Health, vol. 61, no. 2, August 2017, pp. 179–186, doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2017.02.002. See also: Le Monde, 'France looks to tackle school bullying after teen takes his own life', Le Monde (English edition), 7 September 2023, <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2023/09/07/france-looks-to-tackle-school-bullying-after-teen-takes-his-own-life_6127256_7.html>, accessed 22 September 2025. The Guardian, 'Charley-Ann Patterson: bullied 12-year-old struggled to get mental-health support before suicide, inquest hears', The Guardian, 12 October 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/oct/12/charley-ann-patterson-bullied-12-year-old-struggled-to-get-mental-health-support-before-suicide-inquest-hears>, accessed 22 September 2025. BBC New, 'Mia Janin took own life after bullying - inquest', BBC, 26 January 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn0nd1gnj4lo>, accessed 22 September 2025.

[30] Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study, 2021/2022 HBSC survey of 11-, 13- and 15-year-olds, HBSC International Study, WHO Collaborating Centre, University of St Andrews & WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2021/2022.

[31] Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, *A Defining Moment: Bringing children living in humanitarian contexts into the global fold*, EVAC Ministerial Conference statement, October 2024, <https://alliancecpha.org/en/statement-defining-moment-children-living-humanitarian-contexts>, accessed 8 September 2025; United Nations Children's Fund, *Violence against Children in Humanitarian Settings in Europe and Central Asia: A Brief,* United Nations Children's Fund Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, forthcoming November 2025.

UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office
October 2025

4 Route des Morillons
Geneva 1202
Switzerland

Telephone: +41 22 909 5509

ecaro@unicef.org

www.unicef.org/eca

unicef

for every child