

# Protecting children from violence in South East Europe

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THIS PROJECT IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UNICEF

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**“I hate being a child. I hate being hit and I hate being taken for granted. I have feelings and emotions. I need love, care, protection and attention”.**

A Child's testimony to the United Nations Secretary-General's Global Study on Violence against Children

Every day, in every country in South Eastern Europe, girls and boys suffer and witness violence. It is a big hidden issue that cuts across boundaries of culture, class, education, income and ethnic origin.



For example, a recent UNICEF survey (MICS - Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey - a UNICEF-supported initiative to assist countries in collecting and analyzing data to monitor the situation of children and women) shows violent disciplinary practices are extremely common in the region. On average, three in four children have experienced some form of violent discipline.

To try to stop children from being affected by violence, the European Union and UNICEF have joined up to commence a project "Protecting Children from Violence in South East Europe". It will target four countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Turkey.

The project aims to make child protection systems and public services much stronger so that they can identify and respond to cases of violence against children. The project will also help strengthen independent monitoring mechanisms by civil society, as well as further developing the partnership between civil society and government child protection systems.

Getting a real picture of the extent and nature of violence is not easy. Data collection is difficult due to poor reporting processes and also issues of denial and stigma. Professionals and social services who are the first to come



into contact with victims of violence are usually not equipped to identify these cases, nor do they know where to report or refer cases of violence.

Too often violence against children remains a taboo issue, whose existence countries sometimes have a hard time acknowledging.

This is reflected in legislation that often fails to provide proper definitions of what constitutes violence.

The four countries participating in the project – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Turkey – have themselves identified the need to reform their social protection systems to ensure that children have stronger protection mechanisms. Specifically, the countries will prioritize reform to:

1. Carry out analyses that can help civil society and policy makers identify gaps in the accountability and responsiveness of service providers in order to inform the development and implementation of working protocols for professionals and the development of indicators for violence within management information systems.
2. Contribute to capacity building and technical assistance to civil society and other forms



of independent monitoring of child rights. This will be focussed on the collection, analysis and sharing of information on violations of child rights, in particular violence against children, in order to act as independent voices of children in their societies. This work will involve child rights observatories in Albania, the national network of NGOs monitoring the implementation

of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Bosnia and Herzegovina, NGO networks and the Office of the Ombudsman in Serbia and civil society platforms in Turkey.

3. Build capacities of civil society to better and more systematically contribute to policy dialogue aimed at improving social services to identify, refer and act upon cases of violence against children and those programmes working to reduce violence against children. This will involve parliaments, child rights observatories in Albania, working groups at municipal level in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republican Institute for Social Protection and the Health Institute in Serbia, and provincial coordination boards in Turkey.
4. Share lessons learnt between all the countries in South East Europe along with



NGO coalitions, independent monitoring bodies and state partners.

In all four countries these efforts will be undertaken within the context of on-going reforms of social protection systems and child protection services to become stronger in responding to violence against children.

The United Children's Fund (UNICEF) is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. A priority for UNICEF's work in Eastern Europe and Central Asia is to support reforms that contribute to strengthening child protection systems with clearer obligations and mandates in prevention, early identification, referral and response to violence.

A key aspect of that work is also to strengthen civil society and independent monitoring of the system and to challenge social norms that make violent practices acceptable.



The European Union (EU) is made up of 27 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms.

The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders. The European Commission is the EU's executive body.





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**For more information on the project  
and countries, please go to:**

<http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/>

<http://ec.europa.eu>

<http://www.coe.int>



**For more information on violence  
against children, please go to:**

[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/children/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/children/default_en.asp)

<http://www.unicef.org>

<http://www.crin.org/violence/>