

# THESIS

## Violence Against Children & Youth Prevention:

Is the EU doing all it can?



**The Hague School of European Studies**

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## **Preface**

The 'UN Convention on the Rights of the Child' entered into force in 1989. This legally binding document would safeguard the rights of children on an international, global scale. The main finding of the UN study on violence against children that led to the convention was that all harm against children is preventable. (Pinheiro, 2006, p.3) If the correct laws exist, then justifying abuse against children is never an option. When these laws do not exist, this must be on the highest political agenda of that particular nation. When abuse does occur, the states are at fault for not implementing the convention and following-up on the law. The UN convention on the Rights of the Child wishes to achieve a global eradication of violence against children and youth. While states are responsible, the message must come across from them to their citizens, making sure it is well known that violence against children is not accepted. The EU has formed major partnerships with the UN in following up on the goals. Those relations are analysed in this thesis. The fact that violence against children is perceived as wrong is not as obvious as one might think. In many EU countries, there is a hierarchy between children or adolescents and adults. Adults may abuse, and children must obey. This is not the least bit unusual in many cultures. An important factor is education; for children and young people as well as for the adults. Abusive adults are not always aware of the consequences of the mistreatment of children. Social deficiencies, permanent physical damage, learning incapability and trauma are some of the horrific consequences children and adolescents will deal with the rest of their lives. Children and adolescents that are abused must be educated that they do not have to live with mistreatment for they have rights of their own. For them the most important information is what to do in a conflict situation and where they can find help. Again, this is easier said than done.

In lesser developed countries like in Sudan or Afghanistan and also even in many western countries there is often a lack of available help for children and adolescents who are in abusive situations. While this paper was being written, UNICEF and 'Defence for Children' have published a report on the child right activities and efforts of The Netherlands in the last year of 2007. ('UNICEF 'Jaarbericht Kinderrechten NL', 2008) These findings were unexpected. Our small, wealthy, civilized country with many laws and organisations fighting for children's rights has not been living up to its laws like one would expect. The Netherlands does not always help children and young people that are officially 'illegal'. The international law of child rights states that all children have the same rights between country borders, if

they are at that moment in fact illegal or not. Illegal children and youth in The Netherlands are often put behind bars, which goes against the international law for child rights. Furthermore, around 100.000 children here in the Netherlands are being victimized by abuse even as we speak. This is also the case mainly within child prostitution areas. The Dutch government does not have a strategy to eradicate this. This example of current Dutch news is relevant for this paper in the context of showing how difficult the challenge of protecting children and adolescents globally is to take on. This Paper will therefore elaborate on this important world wide issue to a deeper extent.

In addition to answering the main research question on EU efforts, this thesis has a main goal of providing the reader with a wide range of information on violence against children and adolescents. The main initiative on eradicating violence against children and youth has been by the United Nations. It is this that the UN cannot be ignored when analysing EU efforts. The UN is a main actor in EU policy on children's rights. The thesis therefore provides a vast amount of information on the United Nations in addition to the European Union. The goal of the thesis is to raise awareness on the issue of violence against children and adolescents. With this goal in mind it was important to highlight the definitions being used and the concrete scope of violence against children and adolescents on a worldwide scale. Therefore a separate complete paragraph has been dedicated to the diverse definitions and terms within the scope of the theme. When the earlier described goal of this thesis is reached only then will this thesis truly have meaning and purpose for a wide range audience.

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## Introduction

When looking at the European Union; a great political global power is seen. A somewhat positive 'example' for lesser developed countries. Perhaps a political power as such has the right resources to step in and help children and adolescents around the world in difficult situations. It is crucial to analyse what the European Union does to prevent abuse against children and if this is portrayed only within the European region or also beyond its borders.

- How is the European Union involved in capacity building and advocacy campaigning for preventing violence against children and adolescents within and also outside EU borders? Who is involved, what have been successes and what improvement can be made in the future?

To answer the above listed questions the following list of sub questions will be thoroughly analysed throughout this paper. The content has general information on advocacy, campaigning and children and adolescents rights and the violations worldwide. Eventually the questions will be answered within this paper.

- What is the concrete issue of violence against children & adolescents? What is the scope of the issue and what types and forms of violence is occurring?
- Which EU institutions are involved in what concrete programmes and activities for protecting children and adolescents from violence?
- Does the EU financially support human rights awareness projects for violence against children & adolescents specifically?
- How is the UN involved in the global issue of violence against children? Does the EU play a role in these UN initiatives?
- Does the EU keep close relations with other human rights activist organisations involved in protecting children and adolescents in addition to the UN?

To answer the above mentioned questions several research methods have been used. These research methods include specific literature research done at the 'International Child Development Initiatives' (ICDI) library based in Leiden, the World Wide Web which has a tremendous amount of information and additional sources were gathered from contacts from the field of the subject. These contacts were made during an internship at United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY) while advocating the international Violence Against Children & Adolescents Campaign. One of these contacts is Wieke Vink from Plan's Adolescents Board, who has been interviewed for this thesis.

## **Chapter 1: Context, Purpose & Objective**

To be able to reach a conclusion at the end of this thesis on the EU efforts with regard to eradicating violence against children and adolescents, it is of crucial importance that the context, purpose and objective of the thesis are outlined. The main areas of focus when highlighting these points are the historical perspective, the actual scope of the issue and a common understanding of the terms being used throughout the paper. This chapter will outline this information as a vital extension of the previous introduction.

### **1.1. Historical perspective**

When talking about advocacy for the issue of violence against children and adolescent, the context of creating a culture of peace within the EU member states is meant. The ‘culture of peace’ is the main millennium goal for millions of peacebuilding organisations within the EU in addition to other global organisations around the world. Brought to life by the ‘United Nations International Decade for a Culture of Peace’ initiative, the culture of peace has not only become a concrete plan in solving worldwide short and long term conflicts, but a new terminology for a way of life. A way of ‘living’ rather, which anyone can choose to live by. The culture of peace was initiated in order to build a non-violent environment with room for dialogue. (Global Adolescents Solidarity Fund and Programme, Culture of Peace, 2006, p.12) Violence against children and adolescents is not in place within this culture of peace terminology. There have been many studies on this issue in the past. The topic’s historical perspective plays a great part in trying to improve the future for banning all violence against children and adolescents through EU policymaking.

The United Nations took up the role of researching the issue and wrote a convention as a step forward in abolishing the violence. In the study, a high level of attention is given to the immensely inhuman ways of violence being used on children and adolescents through the ‘hands’ of adults. What has been shown is that children have been neglected and uninvolved in solving the issue. EU policymakers have been sitting around tables for centuries discussing children and adolescents without actually listening to them and having them be participants in finding a solution. This needs to change. When trying to solve something, the target group should always be involved. The UN study therefore works by highly influenced and inspirational input from children and adolescents. The main area of focus that was brought to the table by these children and adolescents was that they expect all EU and non-EU

governments to follow-up on the implementation of their rights. Not only do governments have a responsibility but also every adult and especially parents not using abuse on their children need to step up and make abolishment of violence their main obligation. When the core of the study is understood by these groups, only then will concrete measures become possible. Not only does the 'UN Convention for the Rights of the Child' carry the legislative obligation, the European Union itself also has a long history in fighting for the rights of children. Many treaties have been written and the issue has been analysed and researched to a very deep and detailed extent. The European Union and its activities will be thoroughly outlined in the third and fourth chapter of the thesis.

## 1.2. Scope

It is not an easy task to mention every form of violence against children and adolescents. The means in which violence and abuse is brought onto children and adolescents is very diverse and all have similar effects on the victims. All types have the same effect in terms of disrespecting human dignity and violating the rights of children and adolescents. Several specific forms of abuse are linked to certain regions of the world.

Many nations in Africa deal with the issue of child soldiers and adolescents in armed conflict, whereas different countries in the Latin American region deal with children being forced to be involved in drug- and human trafficking. The gang violence in Latin America has been a main upcoming issue for children and adolescents in that particular region. (Mochary, 'Favela Rising', 2005) The finger pointing brought on to these different regions and their forms of child and adolescents abuse, are merely based on what we hear in the media. When this happens we tend to forget that there may also be other forms of violence against children occurring in those regions other than the obvious stated. The crucial point here is that violence against children and adolescents in any form is preventable and should under no circumstances be tolerated. However, it must be stated that eradicating types of violence against children and adolescents all call for different measures.

To be able to give a clear overview of the EU activities and to give the recommendations for taking on the issue to a deeper level, it is important to have knowledge of several different forms of violence. The second chapter of this thesis will therefore give an overview of the main areas of focus; to an extent according also to the UN study on violence against children and adolescents. (Pinheiro, 2006) Most cases of violence and abuse remain unreported. This is

particularly an issue with domestic violence. Children are often afraid of the consequences if they were to report abuse. The fear that children and adolescents can have is a tremendous burden. Not only is there fear among children and adolescents, adults can also deliberately ignore abuse taking place. Adults that are aware of violence brought upon their child by for instance a close relative, also often do not report out of fear. The term 'family honour' takes its stage here, which is often linked to the human rights violations of beating, harassing or neglecting children and adolescents. On the other hand are the children and adolescents that are not always aware that the abuse brought on to them is 'wrong'. They feel guilty for their actions because they were brought up with the message that 'bad behaviour' will be punished through physical or psychological abuse. Why is 'bad behaviour' here between quotation marks? Views of bad behaviour are so different that one cannot point out what is or isn't so-called bad behaviour for children. The analysis of what is bad behaviour and what is not is however irrelevant in this paper. The point here is that no form of punishment should ever be physically or psychologically abusive, no matter what the 'crime' was.

Another main reason that by far not all child abuse is out in the open, is a lack of ways to report. Social services or the police are the ones to report an issue to. In some countries these are in fact the perpetrators of violence against children, leaving the children alone and abandoned with no place to go. This is of course a huge core problem in many societies. The impact of this world wide issue is very wide and more worrisome than people are often aware of.

### 1.3. Definitions

Terminology and meanings can be interpreted in many different ways. Depending on one's culture, upbringing, linguistic capability or personality determines how one absorbs a text. This paper outlines several terms which are repeated quite often. To understand the true level of impact of the issue of violence against children and the context of this paper, it is important that writer and interpreter are on the same page with regards to the terminology. Therefore, to conclude this chapter there is a list below with important terminology and their interpretations used within the context of this paper and in the working field of children and youth themes. The descriptions of the definitions below stem from several diverse professional sources. These sources are listed in the bibliography.



### *Children & Adolescents:*

Although there is a fine line between the two groups ‘children’ and ‘adolescents’, a concrete distinction can be made. In different countries with different governments the two terms are interpreted in several ways. The ‘United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child’ describes children as all persons aged 14 and under. Adolescents are those from the ages 15 through 24. This paper has taken up on this interpretation from the United Nations General Assembly and is based on the idea that the fine line between children and adolescents is very significant and important when dealing with the issue of violence. Children and adolescents are two separate groups with different needs when it comes to protecting their rights. Not to be confused with article 1 of the ‘United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child’ which states that children are all persons merely aged 18 and under. When the convention was ratified the seriousness of the issue and the concrete laws had to be understood correctly and without any confusion. The article was therefore formulated this way intentionally to try and reach a group as large as possible. This thesis followed this terminology theory and interprets children being persons age 14 and under & adolescents being persons aged 15 through 24. (UNHCHR Convention Rights of the Child.1989)

### *Abuse & Violence:*

Violence is a broad term. Abuse is a category within the scope of violence and can be physical, psychological or verbal. Aggression and bullying within a conflict situation can turn into physical violence very rapidly. Children and adolescents mostly deal with these types of violence. The violence or abuse is brought on to children and adolescents by closely related adults being the family or guardians or by others such as teachers, the police or other social service workers. In addition violence against children and adolescents can be perpetrated by child and youth peers. Violence against children and adolescents occurs when physical or psychological harm is brought onto the child. Peer violence can happen accidentally or intentionally. Within this thesis the main forms of violence and abuse brought on to children or adolescents and their core areas of focus for improvement are outlined in the upcoming second chapter.

### *Lesser Developed Countries:*

Throughout this paper ‘lesser developed countries’ are described as all regions that deal with high poverty rates, lack of political and economic stability and social challenges. Many lesser developed countries are growing by the day and turning into wealthy and prosperous

societies. Formerly the term ‘third world’ would be used when describing lesser developed countries. (Calvert, 2007, p.13) In this 21st century that term is somewhat of a strange reasoning. Many countries within the ‘third world’ have faster growing economies than some western countries. But they are then never considered to have gone outside of this ‘third world’. There is one world, one planet, one globe; not three. The term is therefore seen as old fashioned and perceived as an incorrect, negative connotation and will therefore not be used.

#### *The European Union:*

When speaking of the European Union, the political centre of the European Union is meant. The European Commission, the Parliament and all other legislative and decision-making or advice institutions that make up the political centre of the European Union and its members. In addition to the above mentioned EU institutions the Council of Ministers is relevant. The Council of Ministers is the main EU decision making body. The Council consists of ministers from every member state who come together every six months for meetings about the specific field they are working in on concrete themes. Children and adolescents are important actors in the field of many of those concrete themes. Another important EU actor is the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe works on the legal framework for issues regarding mainly democracy, integration and protecting human rights. The main Directorate General of Human Rights, which works by the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, is the relevant part of the Council of Europe talked about in this thesis.

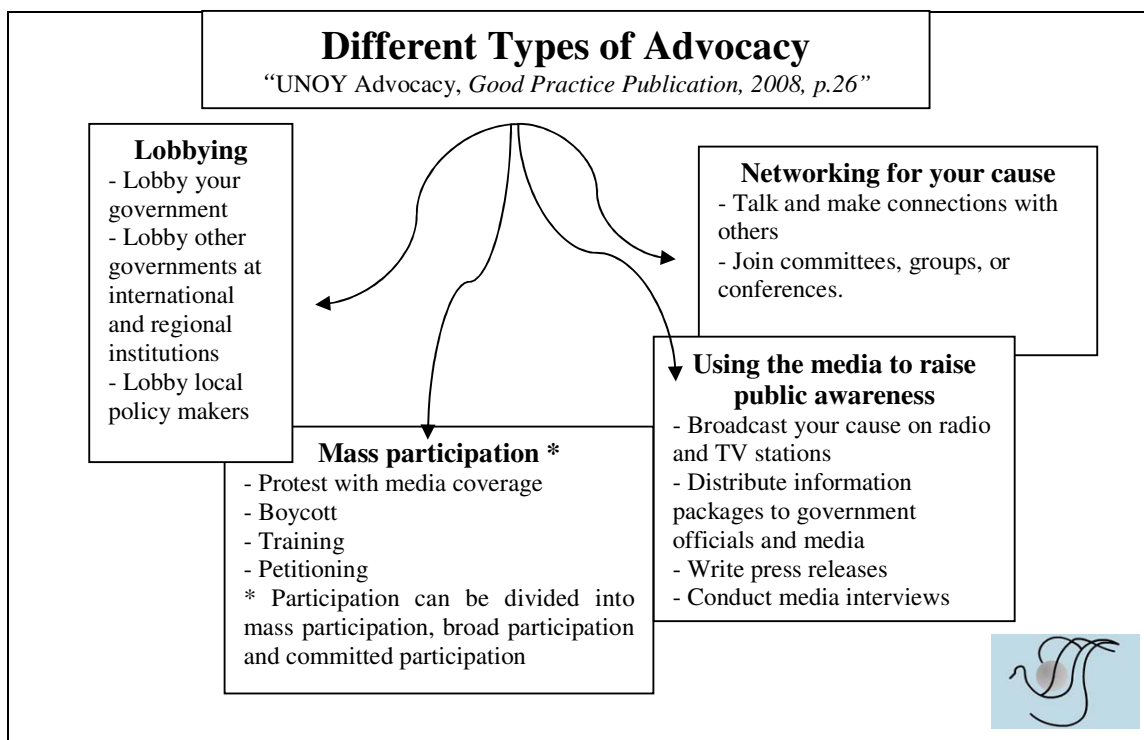
#### *The United Nations:*

Within this thesis references to the United Nations are either UNICEF or its ‘Convention for the Rights of the Child’. UNICEF is the United Nations institute for the ‘United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund’. This institute of the United Nations is the main global actor that deals with young people and their rights throughout all regions of the world. (UNICEF. State of the World’s Children 2008)

#### *Advocacy & Campaigning:*

In accordance with the ‘United Network of Young Peacebuilders’, which is an organisation that is highly active in the field of adolescents and peace building, the term advocacy is described as: “*The act of pleading or arguing in favour of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy and is an ongoing dynamic process*”. (UNOY Advocacy, Good Practice Publication, 2008, p.25) There are several reasons behind the importance of advocacy for the EU when

dealing with the issue of violence against children and adolescents. The issue must be brought to the attention of a large target group. Lobbying and networking through means of advocacy are the ways to bring the issue under the attention of the additional EU and non EU decision makers. The issue cannot be solved overnight and advocacy therefore requires persistency in and commitment to achieve the long term goal of eradicating violence against children and adolescents. Campaigning is a way of doing advocacy through the implementation of concrete activities. The ‘United Network of Young Peacebuilders’ describes the term campaigning as: “Means of *raising awareness through gatherings, public activities and PR-campaigns amongst the general public on issues of concern to the members of the network.*” (UNOY Peacebuilders, The Hague, 2008) Advocacy and campaigning are two terms closely related to one another. In this paper those two terms will be outlined that are linked to the European Union and its activities for protecting children and adolescents from violence. Below is a table which shows the different means of effective advocating. It explains the importance of different types of advocacy. These types include lobbying, the participation of a massive target group, the media and their ability to assist in raising public awareness and the activity of networking. These terms are basic essentials for effective EU advocacy work. The following table, quoted directly from ‘UNOY’s Toolkit for Advocacy’, outlines the information on several concrete methods to use when working in the field of advocacy.



(UNOY Advocacy, *Good Practice Publication*, 2008, p.26)

## Chapter 2: Violence Against Children & Adolescents

To outline the impact of the world-wide problem, mentioned in chapter 1, this chapter will now continue with outlining the different forms of violence brought upon children and other young people within and outside EU borders. The different forms of violence call for a strong and solid EU policy that ensures protection for children and adolescents with EU member states in addition to regions outside EU borders.

### 2.1 Domestic Abuse

Violence against children and adolescents often occurs within a home. A 'home' is supposed to be a child's safe haven, an area where one can develop and be nurtured. However, the home is often the setting when abuse takes place within a family. *"Between 133 and 275 million children worldwide are estimated to witness domestic violence annually. The exposure of children to violence in their homes on a frequent basis, usually through fights between parents or between a mother and her partner, can severely affect a child's well-being, personal development and social interaction in childhood and adulthood."* (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 60/231, 2006, p.14) As seen from this statistical quote, even a form of abuse that is not brought onto children directly and is not in fact meant for them - like a fight between two spouses - can in fact still be seen as a very significant form of violence against children. Children are vulnerable and pick up on things very easily. When these violent events occur at this young age, this will have an effect on them possibly for the rest of their lives. It is an extremely difficult task to abolish all violence against children within families and within the child's home. It is the most difficult setting to break through abusive barriers. Nobody is around to see the abuse happening and as mentioned earlier there is a great lack of reporting. Domestic abuse is often not noted statistically, meaning that the known rate of violence and abuse against children is in fact a lot higher than what is now officially noted on paper.

It is a common form of abuse in the western world; the so-called 'baby shaking' syndrome. This form of domestic abuse against children is often the cause of a mother suffering from postpartum depression. (National Exchange Club Foundation, Preventing Child Abuse, 2007) Postpartum depression can occur after a mother gives birth. The disease shows some severe physical, psychological and emotional change in the behaviour of a mother. The mother often has difficulty bonding with the new born baby, leading to great depression and in some cases

to the awful act of 'baby shaking'. Depression can cause a frustrated mother to vigorously shake her baby to try and feel some form of emotional contact with the child. The perpetrator is often not aware of the internal bleeding or brain damage this shaking causes. Not only mothers with postpartum depression can be perpetrators of baby shaking. Shaking a baby has severe consequences and is at the top of the list of challenges that come with preventing abuse against children. Babies suffering from this form of abuse are often between zero and six months of age. The reason why the baby shaking syndrome is also such a widespread issue is because this form of abuse is not just a culturally or regionally bound form of violence. This syndrome occurs in every country in the world, through frustrated parents or due to the disease of postpartum depression.

Domestic abuse comes in many different forms. Children are sometimes neglected and ignored, leaving them with no child care whatsoever. The child is belittled, bullied, rejected as a family member and is sometimes threatened. Different forms of psychological abuse take away a child's confidence, concentration and the ability for a child's brain to further develop in a positive way. Abuse has severe consequences on a child's social behaviour and educational abilities. Abuse is a form of violence that is also wide-spread, occurring in western, industrialized countries as well as in lesser developed societies. Cultural practices in certain global regions entail severe violation of children's rights. Child marriage is often the cause or effect of forced sexual intercourse at a very young age. A child's body is not yet ready for the adult act of sexual intercourse, leaving the child in a highly dangerous physical state. Many girls in Africa and other regions of the world suffer from Obstetric Fistula, due mostly to the act of rape at very young age. (Plan. State of the Worlds Girls 2007. p.77)

The chronic condition where leakage of urine takes place is common among young girls at ages starting from 8 years of age. These girls are firstly cut, through female genital mutilation, after which they are often forced to perform sexual acts leaving them with this horrific disease. The disease causes girls to become outcasts within their society and they are seen as 'dirty' and 'weak'. Young women between ages from 15 to 25 also suffer from this disease as a consequence of forced sexual intercourse. (Plan. State of the Worlds Girls 2007. p.78) Girls are mostly victims of domestic sexual abuse through cultural practices, like Female Genital Mutilation also known as 'FGM', (UN World Health Organization, FGM fact sheet, 2007) yet we often tend to forget that the issue of sexual abuse is also performed on young boys. In many EU countries, boys are also forced to perform sexual practices by their

relatives. This can be a mother, father, uncle etc. Again creating the problem of unreported crimes, where these boys are left with no social protection against the sex crime being brought upon them.

## 2.2 Child Labour

*“State Parties recognise the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development”* (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art 32, 1989)

The UN’s International Labour Organisation, also referred to as ILO, which is an important advice organ for the EU, has shown that the highest rates of reported child labour are in Asia and the Pacific region. This region has over a hundred and twenty two million child workers and (ILO, IPEC, 2007) in addition over a hundred and twenty six children worldwide work under dangerous, inhuman conditions. So Asia has almost all of the one hundred and twenty six child workers in its region. (ILO, Background Report, 2007) The dangerous work takes place in factories with heavy machinery, children removing landmines in Cambodia and children working in gold mines or caves. It has also been stated that one in six children are part of some form of child labour worldwide. (ILO, World Movement Report, 2007) That is a tremendously high figure, if we consider the fact that all children have a right to education and mental and physical development before they should enter the workforce. There is some distinction between children who are forced to work in dangerous conditions that do get paid a little and children that work as maids for richer families who in exchange get a place to live and food. Both types are considered unacceptable forms of child labour. Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child quoted at the beginning of this subsection aims to protect children from dangerous forms of work and related economic exploitation.

The convention has another important article for protecting children against abuse through labour; article 34 sets out the restriction of sexual exploitation for children in the workforce. (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art 34, 1989). Prostitution and child trafficking is a very common child rights abuse seen in many regions of the world. Mostly in the lesser developed countries. Families living in poverty ‘lend’ their children for sexual performances in exchange for money for the family. Sometimes the children are sold to ‘pimps’. (Anker, Economic Incentives ILO, 2006) Often this is done without parents having knowledge about

what their children will be doing. These 'pimps' offer a young girl a wealthy life, a roof above her head, a job as a maid and a better future. Families are often trapped into thinking it is a positive thing to sell their child, boy or girl, to this often wealthy human-being standing before them. The family is given a false perception of the situation. These families who live in poverty that sell their children are sometimes not aware that selling a person for money is in any fact a severe violation of child rights no matter for what purposes. When children are able to report this form of violence they are often not taken seriously and perceived as criminals being guilty of the sin themselves.

Another situation which occurs in the line of child trafficking is where children are sold as slaves. Human trade is a form of traditional slavery which still occurs in many tribal villages throughout the world. The main problems causing child abuse within the workforce are deceit, financial desperation, lack of education and shifted morals and cultural values.

### 2.3 Children and adolescents in conflict with the law

Children have the right to be protected by the law. Like adults, they also have the right to a fair trial. In many countries this is seen as important and common. However, there are also many countries that either do not have legal protection for children, or when they do, often they fail in the follow-up of implemented laws. It is mostly boys and adolescent men that come into conflict with the law. (HRW, 'Adults Before Their Time', 2008) There are an uncountable amount of juvenile detention centres, youth behavioural reform facilities, children care homes and orphanages. Some of these institutions seem to be quite safe for children and adolescents. However, often in these institutions children are victims of violence perpetrated by the staff of these so-called safe havens. Many of these institutions, for example, have no rules against corporal punishment. This causes a great threat to children all over the world who live in care institutions. The type of violence that takes place within the institutions is difficult to trace. Much of it remains unreported and unknown to government officials. In these situations the government is often at fault due to a lack of control, follow-up and oversight of the situations taking place. This inadequate governmental activity is something that occurs worldwide in western societies and also in those of lesser developed countries. The outcome of the research done on types of violence in several institutions is shocking. Horrific acts of inhuman cruelty take place. For instance, children are sometimes left to sit in their excrement. This can go on sometimes for days or weeks, giving children awful infections and other epidemics. In some cases children are beaten with several items

like sticks or run down in the nude by ice cold water hose. And even sometimes children are forced to perform these inhuman acts onto their peers. (UN, 'Behind Bars', 2006) This human torture causes intense trauma and psychological damage.

A very common form of torture used in certain institutions to control children and their behaviour is through the use of 'Electroconvulsive Treatment' also known as 'ECT'. (UNICEF, 'Violence against Disabled Children, 2005') This form of medical torture causes children to be electrically shocked causing strokes and caesuras. This ECT method is also used on disabled children. The painful intervention is a common cure for depression, however prohibited in use for other purposes.

Furthermore, many juvenile detention institutions lack recreational space and facilities, educational resources and medical health supplies. In many cases, children with physical and psychological disabilities end up in care institutions. When these institutions lack the care they should be giving, then the children and adolescents are being strongly neglected. This puts a hold on their development. The general discussion of the death penalty by law has been a sensitive topic for decades. Is the death penalty inhuman and therefore a violation of human rights or are some criminal acts so horrific that death seems to be the only fair punishment? Some of the world's richest, most western and industrialized countries still maintain the death penalty. (CRIN, 'Death Penalty', 2005) This shows that the world population has yet to agree on this act of right or wrong. However, what we cannot disagree on is that the death penalty should never be performed on children. Children as young as the age of seven years old living in poverty that may steal a loaf of bread are sentenced to death in some regions. Sometimes this happens through horrific means like 'stoning'. (Save the Children, 'Flogging, Stoning and Amputation', 2005) If not sentenced to death they are sometimes scarred so intensely by physical abuse, by example amputating a limb, that normal living becomes impossible for the child.

When a child commits a petty crime, or even a severely larger crime, this is mostly caused by lack of up-bringing and raising by adults in a safe environment. It is permitted to punish a child for wrong-doing; however, it is the way in which this is preceded that is the key element in stating what is right and wrong. It is an appropriate moment in this chapter to mention once more that physical and mental violent punishment against all children and adolescents is inhuman, preventable and perhaps most importantly; never justifiable. The following article



37 sub (a) of the 'Convention on the Rights of the Child' quoted, states very clearly the disapproval of mistreatment of children and adolescents in juvenile detention institutions.

**UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Art. 37**

*(a) No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release shall be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age*

(UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art 37, 1989)

#### 2.4 Violence in the educational environment

Education is one of the basic rights of all young people. Not all countries have educational access for this group and if they do then, sometimes violence and abuse takes place within this educational setting. An educational setting is meant for children to be formed in a safe, healthy environment with peer interaction and responsible adult supervision and counselling. (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 60/231, 2006, p.15) When this environment is violated through abuse, then the educational setting becomes a place of threat and anxiety for a child. As a result, the child's mental and physical development is disrupted. This is a serious issue within many of the lesser developed countries as well as in several western societies. Children become victims of abuse and violence mostly due to incorrect methods of discipline. These incorrect methods of discipline include bullying by teachers, corporal punishments, psychological torture and humiliation. Children and adolescents within the education environment are sometimes attacked for their gender or sexuality. Biased ideas as such can lead to tremendous forms of abuse within schools and universities.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has also included several articles for the abandonment of violence in the educational setting. (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art 28, 1989) The members that have signed the convention are required to implement prevention methods of mistreatment in their schools and within other educational institutions and to ensure that those methods of discipline are on the same level as stated within the convention. (UNICEF, CRC, 2007) Violence within the educational setting is closely linked

to the next section where children as perpetrators themselves are analysed. This is also mostly the case within the educational environment.

## 2.5 Children and adolescents as perpetrators

While children and adolescents are primarily the victims within the scope of this paper, they are, on the other hand, sometimes perpetrators themselves. Not only adults but also children can be the perpetrators of violence occurring in all the earlier mentioned settings. Within homelike institutions like orphanages and residential care facilities, children and adolescents can be perpetrators of violence due to a lack of adult supervision. The media today massively exposes children and adolescents to violence. Many internet websites, television shows, cartoons, sitcoms and even the news contain images of violence. Violence is portrayed so frequently that sometimes children see this as normal and a part of everyday life. They take media as an example/role model and thus force violence onto their peers in everyday life. The EU is very committed to preventing violence on internet. In the following section the EU programme for preventing internet violence will be outlined.

Fighting during recess at school or bullying siblings are the main situations of violence perpetrated by children and adolescents. Within the older adolescents group often sexual harassment, racism and other forms of gender based biased ideas are seen by students or young adults brought onto their peers. Bullying is usually done by children and adolescents to others with a different nationality/ethnicity. Also differences in social class can cause bullying. Disabled children are also often seen as unworthy by peers or guardians and they therefore become victims of many forms of abuse. This is a serious issue because disabled children often have permanent handicaps and are incapable of speaking out or knowing they are terribly abused. (UN, Summary Report, 2005, p.7) It is very difficult to control and foresee this type of abuse due to a lack of reporting by the victims.

Within the educational environment, especially in the high school arena, violence from the so-called 'gang culture' can occur. (UNICEF, Regional Consultation Latin America, 2005, p.11) Youngsters can become involved and engaged in a gang where they are forced to do violent acts. Breaking into stores, attacking other gangs and doing drugs are a few examples of violent gang situations. This behaviour within gang culture is present within the schools or universities as well as in the outside community. Unfortunately, there have been many cases of school shootings, as we all know this has especially been witnessed within the United

States. So what causes children to these horrific acts of violence? Frustration, desperation, insecurity and peer pressure are the main causes. The last mentioned cause is especially seen within the gang-culture. Gang members are forced to enforce acts of violence and if they do not obey the 'leader' of their gang, they will be punished again through violence. Once in a gang, it is impossible to just leave the gang whenever this person feels the need to get out and stop. (Peace Project, 'Gangs and Crime Eradication', 2007) When members try and leave or abandon a gang they are beaten and sometimes even shot. Youngsters within gangs often end up in prisons and therefore miss out on an education. Their childhoods are ruined and severe psychological damage has been done. It is up to governments to create a safe haven for gang members who wish to get out of that culture. Most societies lack this facility.

Overall violence in the educational environment is an issue which occurs on a daily basis on a very broad scale. One positive aspect is that violence in these educational settings can be controlled to a greater extent than violence occurring within the home or domestic setting. Schools and universities can be supervised by government authorities if the right measures for implementation are present.

## Chapter 3: EU Activities

With the information and thoughts from the previous chapter of this paper, it is now relevant to see what concrete initiatives the European Union has taken to create awareness and prevent or eradicate violence against children and adolescents on all levels. What these levels are and where they take place are the interesting questions that are being raised here. The different child rights organisations and NGO's within the EU member states will be described in addition to the main policies of the EU institutions.

### 3.1 Child Rights in the EU

Within the 27 EU member states there are many NGO's highly active in the field of protecting children and adolescents against violence. One very important NGO is the European Children's Network also referred to as EURONET. The organisation is specifically involved in raising awareness on the issue of violence against children at an EU level. EURONET forms a network for other organisations and is also part of broader networks of active organisations that create awareness about children and youth issues. The main goal is to stress the importance of this at a legislative level within the EU decision making institutions. (EURONET, Principles and Objectives, 2008) EURONET has been one of the main actors for encouraging the EU institutions to implement several child protection laws. EURONET is active for children which they describe as all persons under 18 years of age. EURONET was an important actor in the development of the EU document "towards an EU strategy on the rights of the child". (EP, Strategy Rights of the Child Report, 2008) This strategy initiated by the European Union institutions is also very much supported by UNICEF. The strategy aims to bring the issue of child rights on all international political agendas within and outside EU member states. Together with a wide range of child right NGOs, EURONET was the main advice and recommendation actor for the strategy. One of the main areas of focus of the document is violence and discrimination amongst children and adolescents. EURONET has also taken up an informative role. The latest document provided by EURONET, by the name of 'What about us?', is the most updated and detailed document within the EU memberstates that outlines all relevant information on the issue of violence against children and the European Union. The product proceeds to working on a coherent and united European policy for the protection of children and adolescents. All aims are written with a powerful link to the 'UN Convention on the Rights of the Child'.

Another strong player in the field of eradicating violence against children and adolescents is the organisation 'Eurochild'. (Eurochild, Promoting Welfare and Rights of Young People, Action Group 2008) The organisation Eurochild currently forms a network of 52 European organisations active in the field of children and youth rights. The EU region holds these active stakeholders involved in protecting the rights of children and adolescents and work together with the EU institutions at an intense level.

### 3.2 EU Policy

The last paragraph has shown that there are many NGO's and activists fighting violence within the EU. Many of them have their main focus on policy making for their cause at the EU institutions. The main EU institutions in Brussels, the Parliament and the Commission, are not specifically specialised in convicting perpetrators of violence against children and adolescents. This is where the European Court of Human Rights, also referred to as the 'ECHR', comes in. This body is a separate institution not directly linked to the Parliament or the Commission and is the main actor among the EU memberstates involved in eradicating violence against children and adolescents. The ECHR is strongly linked to the Council of Europe and is based in Strasbourg. (COE, Protocol No.14, 2004, Preamble) The court brings justice to those being victims of human rights abuses and prosecutes the perpetrators. Currently there are 47 members of the Council of Europe and therefore obliged to obey the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. (COE, Protocol No.11, Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, 2003)

The in 2007 initiated Lisbon Treaty is striving to implement children and youth rights in all EU policy; internally and also within foreign affairs, safeguarding them from violence and abuse. The Lisbon Treaty is an example of the growing recognized importance of protecting children and adolescents within the EU. Over the last few years EU member states and the EU institutions are becoming more and more involved in looking at the lives of children and adolescents. The main policies are linked to the specific themes of protection against violence, poverty, discrimination and also preventing social exclusion of children and adolescents. In addition to the Lisbon Treaty, the EU also works with the 'EU Charter of Fundamental Rights'. This charter has several important articles in relation to protecting children and adolescents. Article 24, stating specific reference to child rights, is a clear example of this. (EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Art. 24, 2000) These aspects are positive yet not enough.

The legal basis for children and adolescents and their rights within the EU are not sufficient and a lot is yet to be done. EURONET has, by the UNCRC, developed a report on the efforts of EU legislation within the issue. The outcome was that most EU member states have child right laws in their own national law at a national level. The problem is that they are not always equal. Laws do not necessarily have to be equal to one another however they do have to fit EU policy standards. Some member states value these rights more than others and have developed different programmes and initiatives to ensure these rights. It is important that the laws fit EU standards to ensure all children and adolescents to be protected equally. All young people should have the same rights no matter what country they are living in. It is important to gap indifferences between countries. The main point here is that the EU is such a big global power and yet they are not doing enough to create a united law follow-up framework in regards to child and youth rights.

### 3.3 Programmes & Initiatives

Looking critically at the EU efforts, the successes and positive aspects must also be fully analysed. The main EU institutions, the Parliament and the Commission, have been very much involved in different children and youth themed programmes and initiatives. In the next chapter the EU support regarding UNICEF outside the EU will be outlined. Furthermore the institutions have also been involved within the EU region. These efforts contain advocacy, campaigning, building capacity and giving financial aid and support.

The problem with children and adolescents being tricked and abused through the internet is a great concern of the EU. Therefore it has become concretely very involved in the 'safer internet plus' programme. (EUROPA Portal, Safer Internet Programme 2008) The programme was initiated by the European institutions three years ago and the programme at its current state will end this year. The budget put into this project has been tremendous. Over 45 million euros has been spent and the main target for this money has been for awareness-raising on the problem of harassment and violence which has evolved from internet sources. (EUROPA Portal, Safer Internet Programme 2008) The subject of internet is not the first thing one would think of when talking about violence against children and adolescents. The problem is not included in the second chapter regarding types of violence. Therefore the issue is indeed still mentioned in this paper, while it is an important and, unfortunately, an increasing form of violence against children and adolescents. The main issues described in chapter 2 such as


domestic violence and violence in the educational settings are also sometimes worsened through the unsafe use of internet. Children can be harassed by their school peers outside school hours through internet etc. The EU has taken up tackling the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century very seriously.

The European Commissions DAPHNE II programme is also one that is coming to an end this year in December 2008. (COE.EP, Decision No. 779-2007) This very intense and important programme strives to build capacity for European organisations active in the field of eradicating violence against children and adolescents. DAPHNE II has been run with funds over 50 million euros from the EU Commission and has set very high goals. (EU Freedom, Security, Justice, DAPHNE II, 2008) Organisations receive money for doing research on the issue, creating campaigns and awareness raising projects, developing educational lesson packages and working together with other organisations to share knowledge for better field practice. The EU Commission carries the tasks of advising and monitoring the project. The 3<sup>rd</sup> initiative, DAPHNE III, is now being put into practice. Organisations can apply for DAPHNE III funding by April this year. The programme will start when the 2<sup>nd</sup> initiative comes to its end and will go on until the year of 2013.

This chapter has proven that the EU has a lot of money and possibilities for financial aid. And in fact, this aid has been generously given. However, one can question if merely giving funds is truly enough to eradicate the issue of violence against the young and future generation. Perhaps there is also a need for a change within cultures and mindsets. Can a ‘culture of peace’ be created with millions of euros?

The above mentioned programmes are all methods of the EU’s ‘Strategy on the rights of the child’ which is currently the EU’s main set goal regarding children and adolescents. All forms of violence mentioned in this thesis are areas of focus within this communication strategy. It shows very prosperous and positive targets set for the near future. The fact that children and adolescents are being placed higher on the political agendas of the EU institutions every day is proof of the need for addressing this serious issue.

The following table quotes several concrete challenges DAPHNE III takes on.

<div><div>DA</div><div>PHNE</div><div>III</div><div>2007-2013</div></div> <div></div> <p><i>“DAPHNE III will achieve its objectives by means of transnational actions (grant funding), the Commission's own-initiated actions (contracts) or operating grants to NGOs, which aims will be to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <i>“assisting and encouraging NGOs active in this field;</i></li><li>▪ <i>developing and implementing targeted awareness-raising actions;</i></li><li>▪ <i>actions contributing to positive treatment of people at risk;</i></li><li>▪ <i>setting up and supporting multidisciplinary networks;</i></li><li>▪ <i>expansion of the knowledge base and exchange, identification and dissemination of information and good practice;</i></li><li>▪ <i>designing and testing awareness-raising and educational materials;</i></li></ul>
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(COE.EP, Decision No. 779-2007)



## **Chapter 4: EU External Relations**

Being one of the world's greatest powers, the European Union runs a strong external relation policy programme. When looking at the main research question of this paper the external relations of the EU are vital to see what way the EU is involved in capacity building and advocacy campaigning for preventing violence against children and adolescents. The chapter will focus on the external relations of the European Union in regards to children and youth rights within United Nations initiatives. Several initiatives will be analysed. The chapter includes an informative overview of child and youth protection in the United Nations followed by an analysis of the EU and its relation to the UN.

### **4.1 Child Rights in the United Nations**

Reducing child mortality and achieving universal primary education for all children are two of the eight UN millennium goals. These goals are targeted to be reached by the year 2015. (UN, Millennium Summit, 2000) The list of set goals portrays the need for change in gaining a common high standard of living for children and adolescents on a worldwide basis. The UN has taken a leading role in achieving the goals. The fact that 1/4 of the millennium goal list regards children and adolescents directly says something about the UN's high focus on young people. One of the key elements to stopping violence against children and adolescents is to educate children. Letting them know what they can do in a violent situation and how to handle it afterwards. Education can, in the long run, help avoid violent situations. This can be the case when the culture of peace that the UN speaks of has been accomplished and children will teach their children. This positive cycle will become continuous. The long term process is set to set great future achievements in the field of peace building and managing conflict situations through debate and compromise instead of through violence.

The UN body for protecting the rights of children is the original 'United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund' more commonly known as UNICEF. While UNICEF concentrates on all fields of protecting children, adolescents and also in particular all mothers worldwide, the issue of violence against children and adolescents is among its highest priorities. UNICEF has existed now for over 60 years. The last six decades have shown that UNICEF is very capable of making change and has set some high goals for protecting the lives of children. Besides playing a main role in the millennium goals, UNICEF is currently involved in a UN initiative called the 'medium term strategic plan'. The strategic plan was

implemented in 2006 and will run until the year 2009. (UNICEF, Executive Board first regular Session 2008) The programme is aimed at young children and their survival in the developing world giving children a voice against violence. To achieve this UNICEF has collaborations with several different governments including worldwide non-profit organisations and organisations within the civil sector. In addition the UN has a special UN representative for the issue of violence against children and adolescents.

UNICEF works by the widely accepted UN Declaration of Human Rights and also by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, CRC. The CRC has currently been ratified by over 190 countries. (UNICEF, 'Why we do it', 'Children have Rights', CRC 1989) In terms of the history of endorsement of child rights, the CRC can be outlined as the most important document for protecting children ever implemented. The CRC has achieved many global successes in the abolishment of violence against children and adolescents. The main outcomes of these successes have been the acknowledgement by governments and civil society that safeguarding children is directly linked to motherhood. Mothers who are educated and who obtain a healthy standard of living are more likely to ensure a peaceful upbringing to their children. The children are therefore set with an example of a non-violent lifestyle and will therefore also raise their own children that way.

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the cycle of the culture of peace among children and adolescents will hopefully be achieved in the long run. The CRC aims to be a big part of this achievement. The awareness amongst the adult society had become widely expanded on a global level and this has all been due to the implementation of the CRC. UNICEF has run a tremendous amount of programmes. 'A World fit for Children' is a programme that came about in 2002 after the special session at the UN General Assembly on child protection. (UN Special Session General Assembly, 2000) The program, which is based on the protection of children and creating safe environment for them, played a large role in the UN publication the 'State of the world's children'. The publication enhances many time bound goals for children in development of the earlier mentioned standard of living. The main focus of this subchapter is to emphasise the mass amount of work that the UN does in regards to children and youth rights. Violence against these groups is widely spread and UNICEF has embraced this fact and has chosen not to look away.

#### 4.2 EU External Relations with the UN

Over the last decade the issue of violence against children and adolescents has taken a higher place on the EU political agenda. Within the EU countries there has been a list of child right implementation successes and also outside the EU borders the EU institutions have taken on several promising initiatives. The EU has therefore become more and more involved with UNICEF as well. The EU external relation with the UN has formed the most important EU efforts in preventing violence against children and adolescents. In 2005, the European Union developed a strategic objective plan to be reached by the year 2009 regarding external EU policy. (EU Commission, Annual Policy Strategy 2009, p.10) These objectives describe EU's involvement in relation to solidarity and prosperity in lesser developed countries. The EU is very supportive of the UN's millennium goals and strives to help reach these goals by the target year of 2015. The millennium goals concerning children and adolescents directly are amongst the EU's highest priorities. The millennium goals form a guideline for EU's external relationship with the UN.

Under the term of 'global solidarity' the EU is taking on many challenges together with the UN for peace and capacity building for those regions that lack facilities. In regards to violence against children and adolescents we can think of for instance policymaking and providing available help centres for victims of abuse. Furthermore the EU is mostly supportive in giving financial aid to UNICEF for their programmes. In 2008 the EU will continue to give a large amount of funding for the UN's 'State of the Worlds Children' initiative. (UNICEF, 'Voices of Youth', State of the Worlds Children 2008) Another interesting outcome has been made by the EU Commission about protecting children through providing internet safety. It is a problem of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that children and adolescents are manipulated, tricked and abused through internet. The need for protection in this field is tremendous and the EU Commission has given its support to take on this challenge together with UNICEF.

The European Parliament and the European Commission welcome youth delegates from the United Nations for debates and lectures on the issue of youth participation. The voices of those passionate adolescents are given a chance to be heard in Brussels. For instance last April 14<sup>th</sup> of 2008 Professor Pinheiro, the former representative of the UN on violence against children and young people, gave a lecture at the European Parliament on his UN study on violence against young people. The lecture was open for any participant. Young people were especially welcomed. Children in armed conflict who often work as soldiers is a form of

violence that cannot be placed in the same box as the forms of violence being described in this thesis. The horrific issue regards different guidelines and needs for eradication. An analysis of this subject would require a whole separate thesis. However it can be said that the EU is very much active in supporting the prevention and aftercare of victims through several guidelines.

The EU works together with the UN on different programmes for this non-EU region issue. Also the EU has its own special guidelines on children in armed conflict adopted by the Council in the year of 2003. (COE, EU Guidelines on Children in Armed Conflict, 2003) These guidelines formulate several important ways in which the EU is involved in eradication of this issue. The guidelines describe four main ‘tools of action’ which the EU implements. These four tools include the importance of political dialogue, crisis management, multilateral cooperation and demarches. The four tools are focused on third world countries in which children are in armed conflict situations. With the four tools the EU supports and strengthens initiatives already taken by local institutions and NGO’s in the conflict regions. Through political dialogue the EU wishes to communicate with the conflict regions about the importance of the three stages a child in conflict deals with. The three stages include ‘before, during and after’. The EU wishes to underline the importance of all three of these states in which a child desires different care and needs. In addition the other three tools mentioned all have a goal of protecting the rights of children and that all their needs are thought of during a decision making process. The EU has taken up this very difficult task and wishes to move forward and improve situations. The main emphasis here lies on a total prevention of children to be in armed conflict situations. The EU guidelines strive to prevent children becoming involved in armed conflict by early held non-violent negotiation with the particular country at stake. For children already in an armed conflict situation the EU strives to bring justice to the legal system where perpetrators are convicted and eradication of the disease of AIDS spread by sexual crimes brought upon children.

Furthermore the EU ensures programmes of rehabilitation and post-conflict trauma care. To be able to ensure a successful implementation of the EU Guidelines on Children in Armed Conflict, there are several methods the EU works by. These implementation methods include the use of the four ‘action tools’, a continuance of good relations and collaboration with the United Nations, overlooking other EU policies and ensuring them to also be child friendly, a frequent evaluation of the guidelines to the Council and financing NGO’s to raise awareness

on the issue of violence against children through advocacy and campaigning. (Consilium, EU Guidelines on Children in Armed Conflict, 2003)

#### 4.3 Lisbon Treaty

With the many challenges the world is facing like sustainable development, globalisation, human rights violations, terrorism, etc, the EU signed a new treaty in 2007 which is now referred to as the Treaty of Lisbon or the Reform Treaty. (EUROPA Portal, 'Taking Europe into the 21<sup>st</sup> century', Lisbon Treaty, 2007) The treaty can be seen as a major step forward for EU policy in regards to ensuring child friendly EU Policies and laws in internal and external relations of the European Union. The treaty will ensure all EU policies to be child friendly starting from the year 2009, when the Lisbon treaty is targeted for ratification when all member states have fully approved. With this Treaty the relation of the EU and the UN has also naturally taken up a stronger stand.

In the following table are some quoted articles of the Lisbon Treaty as an example of the content in relation to the protection of children and adolescents.

Relevant Lisbon Treaty Articles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <i>'The European Union shall promote protection of the rights of the child. In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote the eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child.'</i> ( Article 3 )</li><li>▪ <i>"The EU will accede to the European Convention on Human Rights, which again strengthens the footing of fundamental rights in EU policy making, as does a sentence which notes that fundamental rights shall constitute general principles of EU law. ( Article 6.2 )</i></li><li>▪ <i>"With a million signatures children can ask the Commission to initiate a legal act (Article 8b)"</i></li></ul>



(EUROPA Portal, 'Taking Europe into the 21<sup>st</sup> century', Lisbon Treaty, 2007)

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

With all the collected data for this thesis, many words can be said on the outcomes. Some crucial conclusive points have come out of the analysis of the subject of violence against children and adolescents. With all the sub questions having been answered throughout the different chapters, the main research questions can now additionally be summarized and answered. How is the European Union involved in capacity building and advocacy campaigning for preventing violence against children and adolescents within and also outside EU borders? Who is involved, what have been successes and what improvement can be made in the future?

### **5.1 Summary & Outcomes**

The European Union is home to a little less than over 90 million children and adolescents. (Schoorman, EURONET, Children in the EU Treaty, 2007) This is only counting the group of young people till the age of 18. Meaning the group being dealt with in this thesis, aged 0 to 24, is even rigorously higher. The vast amount of young people within EU borders proves the importance of protecting them. They are vulnerable and in need of a safe living environment. The impact of violence on young people leaves a permanent psychological mark on their lives. When children and adolescents are not educated about violence and when they know no better than being victimized, the pattern will not break. Victims of violence will grow up to most likely handle their own children with the same violence they know.

Many lives of young EU citizens are in the hands of states and EU policy. EU legislation must protect all young people within the EU member states on an equal level, meaning national legislation must be adjusted to fit EU standards. The new and applying EU member states will need even more guidance than ever. There are so many forms of violence it is a global challenge to concretely take them all on. There are many organisations who are passionately working to achieve eradication of violence. Many are inside EU borders and also a tremendous amount is based outside the European Union. The UN has taken up a leading role in protecting human rights and the UN delegation UNICEF holds the leading role in the issue of violence against children and adolescents.

The EU, being a major global power, needs to take on a leading role in addition to other global players. The EU has the money and the capacity to do so much, and in the future even so much more. It has shown to be unfair to fully criticize EU efforts in regards to children and

adolescents for it is now proven that the EU is in fact very much involved throughout many programmes. These programmes are mostly within EU member states although the issue has also been taken into account within foreign affairs and EU's external relations. These have all been positive findings. Many NGO's working for child rights lack the funding they need. The EU is very active in providing financial support to these actors. Money is indeed important and essential for implementing programmes and campaigns. These advocacy methods are necessary for creating a culture of peace where on the long run violence against children will be reduced to a high extent.

If the issue will ever be eradicated to its full extent; most likely not. Violence has been in human nature throughout time and will always occur. One cannot overlook this while that would portray a lack of realistic thinking. However the importance of the issue remains high and will always be fought for. There are certainly many ways and methods for reducing violence against children and adolescents and the EU needs to step up and take a more leading role.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The EU carries the responsibility of using its power correctly and to its highest capability. While many initiatives are being made for children and adolescents on an EU regional and international level, several recommendations for the European Commission and other EU institutions can be made to conclude this thesis. The recommendations are widespread and discussed amongst the former UN Special Representative on Children and young people Prof P. Pinheiro's study, many European based NGO's involved in youth work and the EU citizens.

- Regarding the EU region, all the member states must have laws and agreements on the protection of children and adolescents that have the same goals in regards to eradication of violence. EU legislation must follow up on national policies. When all member states are on the same page, information and capabilities can be shared amongst the states. A common awareness on the seriousness of the issue will be raised and a zero-tolerance mind set for violence will be created to a coherent level of understanding.

- In regards to the previous recommendation, laws and legal texts should have simplified versions for all target groups to read and understand. With ‘simplified’ obviously this is not meaning a less correct content. Laws and legal texts should be formulated clear and straight forward. They are currently not accessible to all target groups, especially to adolescents. Also the gap between the EU and its citizens remains too big. This creates a lack of understanding from both sides and increasing indifference.
- ‘Bureaucracy’ is a term with a very negative intonation and has been the main issue gapping the EU institutions with its memberstate citizens. Young victims of abuse are not left with many options when wanting to report abuse. A list of forms and information is often needed from the victim before receiving sufficient long term help for getting out of violent situations. This ‘fear’ for young people is often the cause that violence remains unreported and behind closed doors.
- The ‘culture of peace’, mentioned several times throughout this thesis, is mainly a UN mindset. This strategy needs more EU attention and needs to be recognized as a possible reform on the long-term. The EU being a melting pot of a vast amount of cultures cannot be responsible for creating such a ‘culture’. However, peace, justice and solidarity can be promoted and should not be left undermined. The EU holds a responsibility to portray this into the European identity every member states holds in their own way. EU Regional policy should include a ‘culture of peace’ methodology in the integration programmes.
- To be able to solve an issue, the target group the issue resolves around must be involved. Youth participation is crucial in fighting against violence. Youth participation can be created by developing toolkits and guidelines for them to read and use. Events, campaigns and awareness raising events within the EU should more often be organised by young people *for* young people.
- When talking about human rights and violence, often it is only children that are being mentioned. Adolescents are often overlooked and unspoken of in regards to protecting their rights. However violence brought upon these two groups are in fact equally an issue. The adolescent youth group the same amount of attention as the younger group.



This is understandably difficult while the age for being a fully grown-up adult is different in many countries. While on paper young adults are portrayed as being able to take care of themselves, they often remain vulnerable and in need of education and guidance. The EU must not overlook adolescents in regards to protecting them from violence.

- Finally the external relations of the EU can become stronger. Within the financial sector of import, export etc, the EU is already a wealthy and strong power. This 'power' needs to be used for human rights purposes as well. Together with the UN the EU can do so much for children and adolescents on a major global level. Providing shelters for victims of abuse, creating more sufficient justice systems for perpetrators, creating educational packages to be implemented into all schools and universities, educating parents and talking to children and adolescents to get them involved in decision making are very important. In addition all forms of violence must be addressed individually for they all require own needs for eradication. These points are vital for reducing all forms violence against children and adolescents.

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## Appendices

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### Appendix I.

**Interview: 'Violence Against Children & Youth Prevention'**

**March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

**By: E. Myrthe Struiksma, 4th year student European Studies (Age 21)**

**Interviewed: Wieke Vink, Plan Youth Board, The Netherlands (Age: 17)**



**1. As a youth board member of Plan, how would you formulate a statement on the issue of violence against children and adolescents?**

*"No form of violence against children is ever justifiable; all violence against children is preventable." is the first sentence of the introduction of the report on violence against children by Professor Paulo Pinheiro and I completely agree.*

*I think it's hard to formulate a statement on the issue of violence against children and adolescents. There are so much different forms of violence - domestic violence and gang violence for example - which all need a different approach. Also, there are so many different risk factors - poverty being one of them and presumably the most important - who all deserve different 'treatment'. How to formulate a statement? I don't know, but what I do know is that it's important to involve the people whom it concerns. No resolution or paper will change anything, if the people who we are talking about are not being involved. That's why I consider child- and youth participation as highly important, especially in regards to the issue of violence. Children need to know what their rights are and need to be able to speak out and let their voices count, so that they also protect themselves."*

## **2. What are the main activities of Plan currently taking place?**

*“In the Netherlands Plan is trying to make (young) people aware of what is happening all around the world in regards to violence against children and adolescents, including the Netherlands itself. In 2008, Plan will be focussing on gender equality. The 'Because I am a Girl campaign' is a result of that. From the activities in the rest of the 'Plan-world', I only know much about the situation in El Salvador. In august 2007 I went to El Salvador, together with 7 other Dutch 'youth leaders' to examine the issue of violence against children. We met a lot of children and adolescents, who were all participating in Plan-projects in one way or another. There are child-right groups, who are 'just' there to talk to each other and help each other to solve problems and stay out of trouble. There are also child-right groups who are providing education for other children about the rights of the child. Peer-to-peer-education, I love it! A good way of peer-to-peer-education is also theatre and we therefore met a theatre group as well. Furthermore, we also met a lot of youth reporters, who were involved in producing youth media - for example short documentaries - or were having their own radio programme on El Salvadorian radio. I think youth media is a very strong, powerful tool for adolescents to talk about what's important for them and to share their thoughts, hopes and dreams, with other young people and with adults.”*

## **3. Do you believe The Netherlands is a good example of protecting children and abolishing violence against children and adolescents?**

*“Yes and no. Personally, I'm very glad that I was born in the Netherlands. I can go to school on my bike without being shot, I don't know anyone who is carrying a knife around and we haven't got any gangs in my village. That's all very good, but it depends. I am so lucky to have parents who offer me so much love and care, but if you're being abused by a relative or even your parents, you wouldn't consider the Netherlands as a good example of protecting children against violence. A lot happens behind closed doors that we don't know about. Child abuse and domestic violence is in the Netherlands a big problem, as well as it is in the rest of the world.”*

## **4. What do you think about the efforts of the Dutch Minister of Development Mr. Koenders?**

*“I don't know enough about the work of Minister Koenders to judge, but of what I do know: I'm very happy that Koenders is focussing on the rights of women, but I would like him to*



*focus some more on the rights of the child as well. Also, I think he should be paying more attention to the issue of violence against children and adolescents all around the world.”*

**5. Do you feel adolescents are the most important target group in trying to abolish violence against children and adolescents? In what way are they important and in what way are adults crucial for finding a solution?**

*“A difficult question. Actually, I think the most important target group should be young children, because the first years of your life are the most important. But yes, adolescents should be another target group. In general, in a lot of countries adolescents (and children) are a huge percentage of the population. That's already one reason why it is so important to focus on adolescents, especially regarding the issue of violence. Furthermore clichés as 'our adolescents are the future' and 'adolescents will be our future leaders' do in fact make a point. Of course adults are crucial in finding a solution, but I don't think 'a solution' will ever be found. There are so many solutions needed. Adults should be trying harder to protect children and adolescents from violence and to provide opportunities. But the problem isn't only for the adults; adolescents should be participating as well. I consider that as very important. Adults need to give adolescents the opportunity to come up with their own solutions. They know what's going on.”*

**6. What actions do you think children and adolescents should take in avoiding and overcoming violent situations?**

*“That strongly depends on their situation, but in general I feel children and youngsters should stand up for their rights and if they don't know how, they should try to learn. Be involved and be heard. Furthermore, children and adolescents should also try to be nice to each other and to avoid violent situations, just like adults should be doing. But hey, that seems to be hard, according to all the wars and fights all around the world.”*

**7. Where do you feel the main problems of the issue lie within the Netherlands?**

*“I think the main problems of the issue in the Netherlands are child abuse and domestic violence. Also the forms of domestic violence in which the child isn't directly affected are important. If a child sees his father hit his mother (or the other way around), that does affect the child enormously, although he or she himself at that moment is not the one being physically abused. Children may grow up with the idea of violence being a normal part of family life and that has to be avoided.*

*I think in the Netherlands, we've got a huge problem with how to react on violence against children and adolescents. 'De Jeugdzorg' can't handle all of that: there is just too much paperwork and too few ways of possibilities for action. I think it also has to do with the way we think. One of the most important things that I experienced is that the rights of the parents are considered as more important than the rights of the child. That needs to change. Also, we need to learn that neglect is also a form of violence, which deserves much more attention than it gets right now and requires action."*

**8. What do you know about the European Union and its activities on the issue?**

*"I don't know much about the European Union and its activities on the issue, although I do know that the ambassador of the EU is working in El Salvador with local NGO's on this issue and I assume this will be the case in a whole lot of other countries in- and outside the EU."*

**9. Do you feel the relations between the European Union and the United Nations is strong?**

*"I think so, but I'm not sure. I don't know much about the way the European Union and the United Nations are cooperating in relation to the issue of violence against children and adolescents. I hope that the EU and the UN implement the recommendations of professor Pinheiro in their way of acting and in their cooperation".*

**10. If you feel comfortable enough, could you tell me a personal story of your experience in regards to violence against children and adolescents?**

*"My family used to be a foster family for Dutch children who were abused or neglected by their parents. They would come and stay with us for 2 weeks or 6 months, directly after their 'uithuisplaatsing'. I heard some of their stories and was shocked. I knew that not every child was as lucky as I was, but to be told by a four-year-old how his mother had locked him up for more than 2 days without any food is just shocking, especially when it's someone you care for. At that time, I was only twelve years old and it was all very impressive. A few years later I wrote a school report on child abuse and I'm still interested in that subject. I'm a member of the Youth Board of Plan Netherlands for 2 years now and when I got the opportunity to specialise myself on the subject of violence against children and adolescents, I was enthused immediately. Violence against children and adolescents is a universal theme and that's what makes it so interesting for me, plus of course my personal experiences with these foster children."*

*Last year I had the opportunity to go to El Salvador, to examine the issue of violence against children and adolescents there and to visit projects of Plan El Salvador who deal with this theme. This trip was all very impressive, not only because of all the sad things, but also because all of the positive things. There are so much children and youngsters in El Salvador who fight for what they believe in: a world in which violence against children and adolescents doesn't exist.”*

**11. In terms of advocacy, are there any last words you would like to say in regards to the issue of violence against children and adolescents?**

*“Only three words: child- and youth participation!!”*

**- End**