

Office of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children

Response to questionnaire from the Ombudsman for Children in Finland

The Work against violence against Children and bullying in schools

Data

The National Institute for Health and Wellbeing (THL) does a research biannually concerning the well-being of pupils and students in basic education and upper secondary education. In 2017 Survey there were made some research about the non-straight respondents, respondents that were not living with their parents and respondents that have migrant background.

In General Upper secondary education boys, 6 % of boys and 14 % of girls identified as something else than straight. In Vocational training 7 % of boys and 15 % of girls identified as not straight. The Non-straight girls and boys faced more violence, bullying and sexual violence than students in general. For example in General Upper Secondary Education 1 % of straight boys, 7 % of non-straight boys, 1 % of straight girls and 2 % of non-straight girls were bullied at least once in a week. In Vocational training 3 % of straight boys, 16 % of non-straight boys, 2 % of straight girls and 4 % of non-straight girls were bullied at least once in a week.¹

The pupils from basic education grades 4-5 and 8-9 were asked if they lived with their parents or not. Of the pupils not living with their parents there were more pupils that were bullied, bullied others, faced physical threats, sexual violence as the children that lived with their parents. For example of pupils in grades 4-5 7 % of pupils living with parents and 16 % of pupils not living with parents reported bullying at least once in a week. of pupils in grades 8-9 the figures were 5 % for pupils living with parents and 15 % for pupils not living with parents.²

There is a research about pupils with migrant background in basic education grades 8-9. The pupils with migrant background, especially boys, are more often bullied than the pupils in average. The background of these pupils is very wide and there should be more research about which pupils especially are bullied. Of boys born outside Finland 24 % and of girls 13 % were bullied continually while pupils that were born in Finland the figure was 5 % for boys and 4 % for girls. During the latest year 1/3 of foreign born boys and 15 % of foreign born girls have been physically attacked, while Finnish-born 8 % of boys and 5 % of girls have been physically attacked.³

The Central Union for Child Welfare did a research about the attitudes towards discipline violence towards children. When asked if the physical discipline practices are accepted methods of disciplining, in 2017 13 somewhat or strongly agreed. The figure has dropped significantly. It was around 47 % in 1981, 34 % in 2004, 26 % in 2007 and 17 % in 2012. 95 % of Finns know that physical punishment of Children is illegal. There are some problems with understanding of what is physical punishment. In 2017 28 % of Finns somewhat or strongly agree with the statement 'Pulling a child's hair or flicking at his or her head is acceptable in exceptional circumstances.'⁴



Legislation

In Finland the providers of education are required to provide a safe learning environment to all pupils.⁵ In all schools there should be a pupil welfare plan that includes measures to protect pupils from bullying, violence and harassment.⁶ Gender harassment and sexual harassment are prohibited in Act on equality between Women and Men.⁷

The Government has made a bill about new Early Childhood Education and Care act. In the proposed legislation the provider of Early Childhood Education and Care should protect children from bullying, violence and other harassment.

More information about the legislation and schools are provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture, kirjaamo@minedu.fi

Kiva-School

KiVa (KiCa-koulu) is a research-based antibullying program that has been developed in the University of Turku, Finland, with funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture. In Finland, most of all comprehensive schools in the country are registered KiVa schools implementing the program. KiVa has spread to other countries and regions. You can find information in English about the effectiveness of the program in <http://www.kivaprogram.net/is-kiva-effective>

Women's Shelter

The funding for Women's Shelters was nationalized in 2014. Since then the State funding has increased. It was 11,55 million euros in 2016, 13,55 million euros in 2017 and is 17,55 million euros in 2018. CEDAW had in 2014 recommended that Finland puts more resources into Women's Shelters.⁸

The Ombudsman for Children opinion

The Ombudsman for Children has made many propositions to improve the rights of the child not to be bullied. The KiVa School program should be extended to early childhood education and care. The co-operation between schools and other professionals, such as youth workers and police, should be better. The school level results of the National Health Survey in schools should be discussed with the personnel and with the pupils. Arbitration should be more widely used in bullying cases.

In 2018 the Ombudsman for Children gave it's first Parliamentary report to the Finnish parliament. The Ombudsman reported that the current system of examining the criminal record of the employees that work or volunteer with children is insufficient. It is not required when the working period is less than three months. The examination should not take place only when recruiting but should be regular. The report also endorsed a project "lastenasiaintalo – LASTA" (The House for Children) that aims for a co-operation model for different authorities to work when it is suspected that a child has been a victim of violence or sexual exploitation. The authorities included are police, state prosecutor, Child Welfare and somatic and psychiatric Health Care. There is also need for better exchange of information between professionals and more child-friendly methods in criminal procedures.

Working group in the Ministry of Education and Culture

From 24th march 2016 until 13th march 2018 there was a Working group in the Ministry of Education that was tasked to find new ways to tackle school bullying. The representative of the Office of the Ombudsman for Children participated in the working group. The working group made many propositions. It proposed for example that a national assessment body be established in Finland, working on finding methods to reduce bullying and other disruptive behaviour and improving wellbeing. This body would act as a channel to distribute information about effective methods, also compiling reliable, comprehensive, topical and practical information for educators and also organisers of training and education about methods that are best for improving wellbeing and atmosphere.

It proposed also a research and development project in Early Childhood Education and Care to support children's social and emotional development and to prevent bullying. There should be also a research about teacher's methods to keep up and restore order in schools when it has been disrupted.⁹

Jyväskylä 30.4.2018

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- ¹ Luopa yms. 2017
² Ikonen yms. 2017
³ Halme yms. 2017
⁴ Central Union of Child Welfare 2017
⁵ Basic Education act
⁶ Pupil –and student welfare services act
⁷ Act on equality between men and women
⁸ CEDAW 2014
⁹ Ministry of Education and Culture 2018

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