



# Repeated Acts of Violence

## *Bulgaria's National Report*

# Content



- **Research results**
- **Main conclusions**



# Extract



The research included interviews with different target groups:

- **Children perpetrators of violence**, placed in residential care institutions, aged between 14 to 18 who have committed different violent acts, including interpersonal violence, violence against property and self-aggression
- **Parents of the children** mentioned above
- **Professionals** working in the field of youth and child care which included representatives of state institutions (the State Agency for Child Protection, the Child Protection Department, the Ministry of Education, the Central Commission for Combating Nuisance of Minors, the Local Commission for Combating Nuisance of Minors), representatives of Educational Boarding Schools and NGOs.



# Implementation period



- The research took place in period from **May to November 2013 in Bulgaria**, Austria and Spain under similar conditions and with the same target group and methodology.





# Research results

# Background



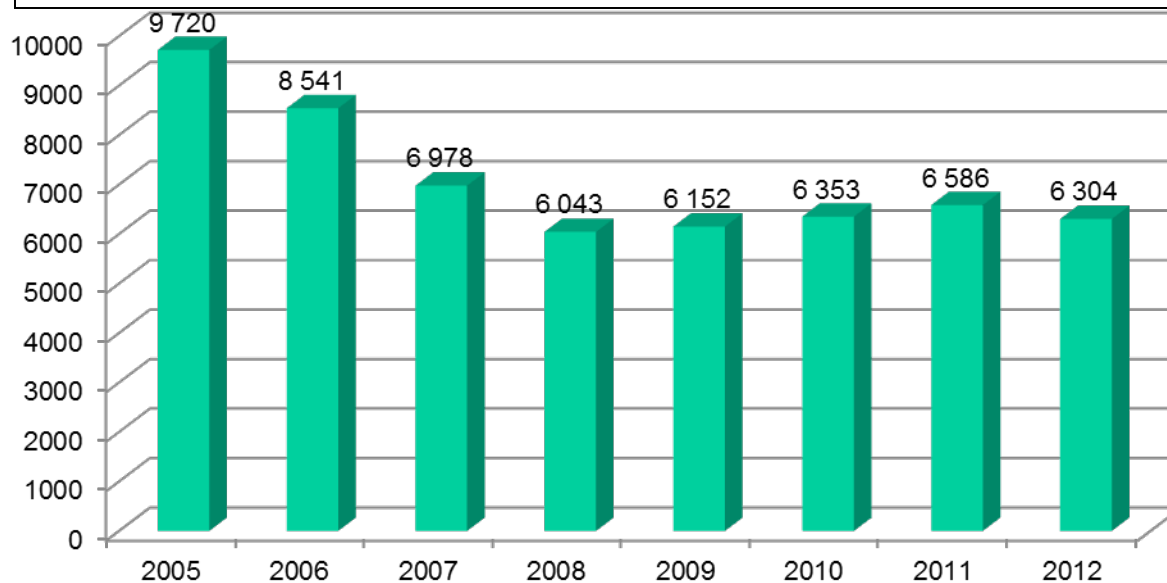
The national statistics **does not include** differentiation of types of violence. All of them are registered as **criminal acts**. **Self-aggression is not even** included in the statistics.



# Crimes, perpetrated by children



## Children perpetrators of crimes



## Profile of the children placed in Social Pedagogical Boarding Schools (SPBS) and Educational Boarding Schools (EBS)



- 67 % of the children placed in SPBS and EBS are coming from their family environment
- 28% are placed from other residential institutions (Data by the Ministry of Education, 2012)
- The most common reasons for their placement are thefts, breakaways, damaging of property, aggressive behavior (Data by the Ministry of Education)





## Factors, leading to repeated acts of violence

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Using the life stories of the children with recurrent acts of violence, the researchers outlined four main risk factors, which influence the phenomenon “youth violence”:

- 1.State of the family environment;**
- 2.Personality characteristics;**
- 3.Peer group;**
- 4.Macro social , related to the situation in the society.**



# 1) Family environment



The family environment creates conditions for acts of violence by:

- **Emotional distress** - unstable environment, lack of care, attention, love, support, certainty and predictability
- **Behavioral models of parents** - conflict relationships, lack of tolerance towards other people's opinion, physical abuse



*Всички снимки са използвани с илюстративна цел и са взети от <http://www.gettyimages.com/>*



## 2) Personality Characteristics



On a personal and emotional basis frequent violent acts are a sign of sensibility and **irritability** as a result of a traumatic experience in the family, lack of communication skills, **problems with self-control, low frustration tolerance**, low criticism tolerance.

Violence is a complex emotional response to a negative experience of stigmatization and rejection by society, as well as bad-temperedness and irritability as specific personality features.

**Unstable self-assessment** and constant need of self-assertion and approval by peers.



### 3) Peer influence



The **negative influence of the peer group** happens in two typological cases:

- Being **accepted** to a peer group with aggressive and unlawful behavioral models  
or
- Being **rejected** by a peer group and react violently

## 4) Macro social factors



The macro social factors:

- Non-appreciation of child's personality
- Crisis of moral values
- Crisis in the functioning of institution
- High rate of poverty
- Violence in media







# System(s) of work with youths perpetrators of violence

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Youths perpetrators of violence are subject of the attention and care of several systems –

**Juvenile justice system**

**-Police, court of justice**

**-Municipality commissions for combating nuisance of minors**

**Social care system.**

There is not a clear legally-based mechanism for the common work of those systems.





# The evaluation of the experts



All the interviewed professionals defined the **current systems** as **ineffective** because of:

- The parallel work of the systems without the necessary coordination;
- The out-of-date legal framework;
- Formality in the work with youths;
- Lack of specialization of professionals;
- Shortage of staff;
- Lack of sufficient financial resources.

# Main problems of the system according to the experts

- Lack of variety of services for prevention and intervention for children with violent behavior;
- The work with the families is not a priority;
- Absence of specialized programs in schools





## Services and measures aimed at youths perpetrators of violence

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Services provided by the Child protection department



- Psychological consultations for the child and/or the family
- Services aiming to increase the parental capacity
- Centre for social support
- Complex for social services for children and families

Services provided by the Local Commission for Combating Nuisance of Minors



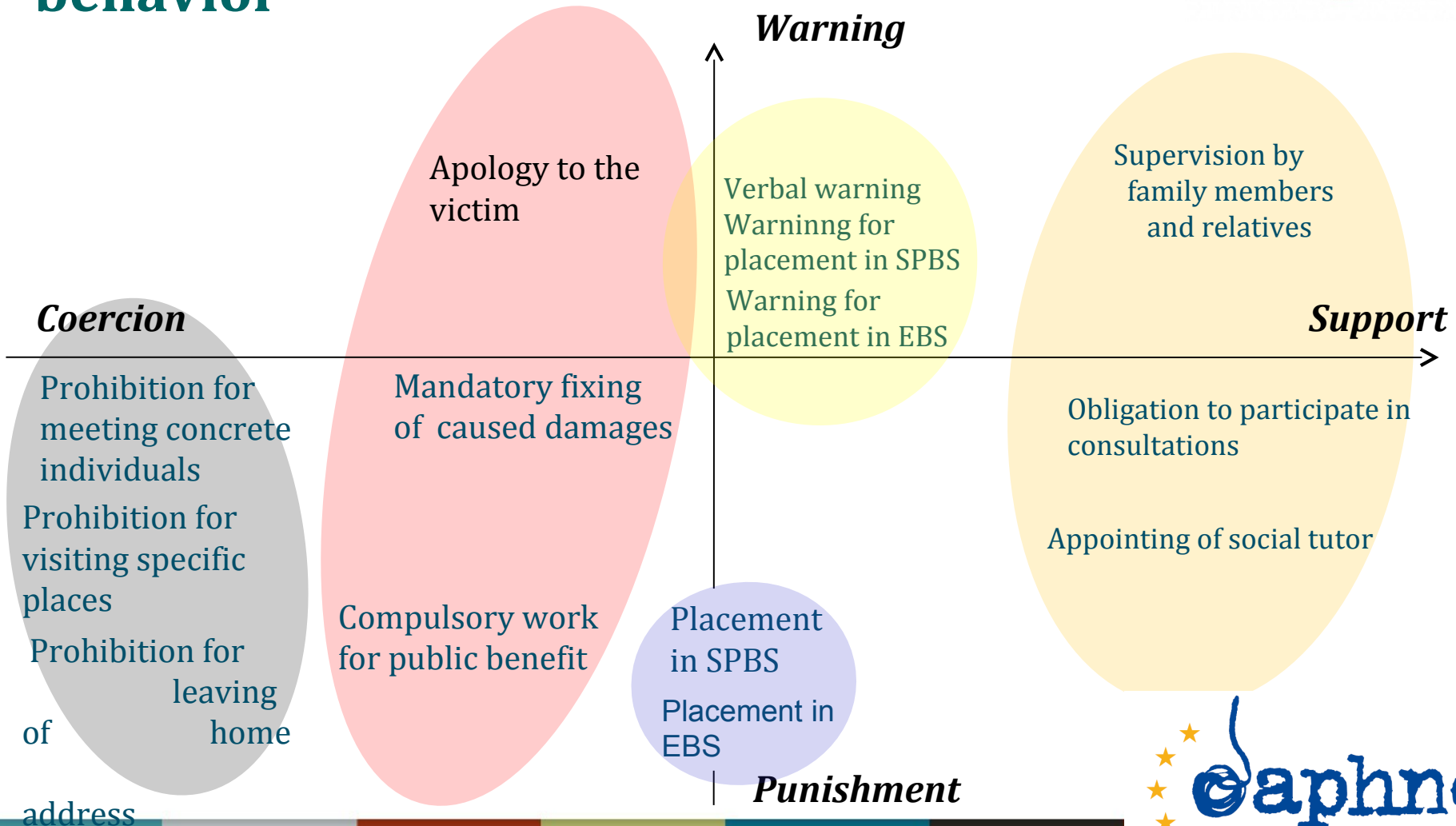
- Public tutor
- Psychological consultations
- Workshops, free time and sport activities for children with aggressive behavior
- Lectures in school

Services provided by the **police**



- Individual work with youths perpetrators of violence
- Support from special pedagogue

# Measures aimed at youth with violent behavior



# Residential services



**Residential services for children perpetrators of violence need to be changed accordingly to the specific needs of every case of a child.**

## Criticism

- Focus only on school education and not enough social work with the children;
- Too long stay in institutions;
- Lack of sufficient systematization of work of social competence of children and preparation for independent living;
- Lack of work with the family;
- Insufficient methodological support and trainings of the staff;
- Isolation of the location of the institutions
- Insufficient resources – financial, material, human





## Main conclusions

# Key elements for achieving effectiveness of prevention of violent behavior



Effective ways of combating repeated acts of violence require well-organized system which in order to be efficient should be:



## FLEXIBLE

To diagnose accurately  
To react properly  
To use detailed and updated database

## VARIETY OF MEASURES

To have many different services which should be used according to individual needs of every child

## COMPREHENSIVE

Work with the child  
Work with the family  
Work with school environment  
Work with peer environment





# Effectiveness of the residential services for suspension of violent behavior



**The research results are evident that the effectiveness of existing residential services is low because:**

- ➔ Lack of systematic work with the violent behavior problems of children
- ➔ Lack of specialized methods and techniques of work with the behavior of the youngsters
- ➔ Lack of focused work for development of social competence among youngsters
- ➔ Lack of psychological and psychiatric therapy
- ➔ Absence of work with the environment in which the youngsters are going to be reintegrated
- ➔ Lack of focused work with the careleavers for preparation for independent living.



**Thank you for your attention!**

