



BALKAN EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY ON CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT (BECAN)

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CURRENT SITUATION CONCERNING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT (CAN) IN BULGARIA^{Aa}

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1. SUMMARY

Child abuse and neglect are complex phenomena that result from the complicated relations between political, social-economic, cultural and personal factors.

The review aims at summarizing the main pieces of legislation, strategies, action plans and practices on preventing child abuse and neglect in Bulgaria.

The Republic of Bulgaria ratified UN Child Rights Convention (CRC) in 1991. As a part of the Convention for Child Rights, Bulgaria bears responsibility for cooperation regarding prevention and promotion of child's main rights, as well as obligation to ensure prevention of children from violence, exploitation and abandonment. Ten years after the ratification of CRP, The Republic of Bulgaria has conceptualized the main approaches to the reform of he policy on children. *The Child Protection Act* has introduced a new philosophy concerning the state of the child, and it is the first one that specifically addresses the children's needs.

The overview of current practices and recent developments for improvement the services for children, victims of abuse and their families are presented. The services should be more structured and decentralized in order to meet the existing needs.

Over the past ten years there has been an encouraging progress in policies and efforts of the state, NGO's and society to act against all forms of child abuse, but there should still be done a lot of things.

Key words: abuse, neglect, children, legislation, child protection, coordination mechanism, prevention, research

2. CURRENT SITUATION CONCERNING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN BULGARIA

2.1. THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM

The last twenty years in Bulgaria are characterized by permanent social-economical changes and crises. The crises impacted deeply on children, and the risks for violence are more and more obvious.

The exact data on the magnitude of the violence against children in Bulgaria is not possible to be given.

The data from the existing sources (Annual reports of SACP, NSI, Reports of NGO's and other) show increased number of child abuse and neglect cases.

Since its establishment in 2001, the State Agency for Child Protection collect information on the number and profile of children victims of violence. This allows to monitor the CAN cases and indicate the tendencies for the type of CAN, as well approaches for the prevention (Annual Report of SACP, 2010).

In 2003 SACP developed an information card for the reporting registered CAN cases with following variables: number of cases of violence against children; type of violence; place of violence; age and family status of the child, victim of violence; profile of the sender; the undertaken protective measures. The card is fulfilled by each department of child protection. The SACP collects the information from the child protection departments in a regular three month period. The cases are reported officially on the web page of SACP biannually. The SACP collects and summarises the data from all institutions (police, health care, educational setting, social institutions, NGO's)

Usually every year SACP reported about 1700 case of CAN (the only cases that social workers are working with), based on the information, collected from all respected authorities.

The information about the cases, that are registered in the archive of SACP for the period of 2001-2009 are presented on the figure 1.



Figure 1. Total number of cases of CAN for the period 2001-2009 (Source SACP, 2010)

The table 1 presents the data by the type of violence for the period 2001-2009
 Table . 1. Types of abuse for the period 2001-2009 (Source: SACP, 2010)

	2003		2004		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009	
Total number	1995		2181		1429		1742		1593		1602		1539	
Type of violence	NC	%	NC	%	NC	%								
Mental	393	20	628	29	257	18	288	17	298	18,7	254	16	287	18,6
Physical	505	25	525	24	486	34	587	34	568	35,7	490	30	477	31
Sexual	108	5	149	7	100	7	147	8	145	9,1	190	12	176	11,4
Neglect	989	50	879	40	586	41	720	41	582	36,5	668	42	599	38,9

NC - Number of cases

According to SACP (2010) the predominant place, where violence is happen is the family, and in 2010 there is a tendenciy for the increase the violence in children, placed in the their relatives care, as well as the negect and physical abuse are increased.

The incrising the number of child abuse in schools is reported in many papers (G. Bogdanov,

According to N. Petrova, (2008) "...data from recorded cases of violence against children show that it is difficult to say there is only one or two predominant type of violence. Further more – there is diversity of committed violence against children. Violence, which is registered in more than 20% from cases is shown in table № 2. From the forth categories of violence against children *the most frequently registered* is severe physical violence (32,12%) and severe to moderate emotional/psychological violence (23,16%). The next place with high relative share takes "economic exploitation" of children".

In the study of forensic medicine archives in 15 regional centers in Bulgaria, R. Miteva aimed to find the identity of perpetrators. A total of 2227 cases of girls under the age of 18 years, victims of sexual abuse were documented. In 1426 (64.03%) of cases perpetrators were familiar to victims, in 5.88% - relatives and in 2.42% - the father were responsible. In 8.72% of cases the examination was performed to determine the presence virginity by request of victim's parents. In 1.40% of cases the perpetrators were multiple – relatives, familiar and unfamiliar persons. In 0.31% of cases, no data about the perpetrator were available (R.Miteva, 2008).

The incrising the number of child abuse in schools is reported in the last few years (Bogdanov, G.,2009, SACP, 2010). The biggest percentage of abused children in school are in the aged group 12-16 years (SACP, 2007).

2.2. Identified limitations/gaps

The system for identification and reporting of CAN cases is still in the process of developmet. The variables, included in the information card for identification and monitoring of CAN case must be more précised and detailed, in order to make it possible monitoring the risk case, and take appropriate measures in the framework of tertiary prevention of the violence. There still lots of unrecognised cases of CAN, which urges the improvement of system for identification of children at risk for

CAN, as well as for the professionals to be given additional training, in order to fulfil their duties in the broader field of CAN.

The established in 2010 Coordination mechanism for identification and actions with children at risk is a step ahead for improving the system for registration and agreed actions in the behalf of the child, victim of abuse.

3. NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK ABOUT CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

3.1. Ratified International Documents

The development of legislation on children's rights after 1989 in Bulgaria is linked to two events: the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the EU accession negotiations. Bulgaria ratified the UNCR in 1991 (V.Todorova, 2009).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified by the Bulgarian Parliament on 11 April 1991 without any reservations on the texts. It entered into force for the Republic of Bulgaria on 3 July 1991 and was promulgated in the State Gazette, No. 55 on 12 July 1991. According to Bulgarian Constitution Article 5, paragraph (4) the Convention became part of the legislation of the State and "shall have primacy over any conflicting provision of the domestic legislation".

The key article, postulates the prevention of child abuse and neglect is the article 19. By ratifying the UN Child Rights Convention, Bulgaria committed to "...take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from **all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation**, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child"(Article 19(1). The provided protected measures should "...include effective procedures for the establishment of **social programmes** to provide necessary **support** for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of **prevention** and for **identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment** described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for **judicial involvement**" [Article 19(2)].

On the basis of **article 2(1)** the "States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of [...] race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status" and to "undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention" (Article 4).

According to **article 9(1)** the States Parties are allowed to separate a child from his or her parents, only "if such a separation is necessary for the best interests of the child" such as in case of "abuse or neglect of the child by the parents".

"For guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the Convention, States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall **ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children**"[Article 18(2)].

"A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State [Article 20 (1)].... care could include, inter alia, foster placement, kafalah of Islamic law, adoption or if necessary placement in suitable institutions for the care of children. When considering solutions, due regard shall be paid to the desirability of continuity in a child's upbringing and to the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background" [Article 20(3)].

The "States Parties shall take all appropriate [...] measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form" (Article 25).

The article 34 stress on the protection of the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.".... States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

(a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
(b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;
(c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials”. The States Parties “..shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare” (Article 36) and “....shall ensure that no child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” (Article 37a).....“....take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; [...] such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child” (Article 39).

The two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child exist. The Republic of Bulgaria ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC) on 2 November 2001, as well as Optional Protocol on the involvement of **children in armed conflict** .

According to the Initial report of Bulgaria due in 2004 (CRC/C/OPSC/BGR/1, 2006) “ Awareness-raising and dissemination of information about the measures envisaged by the OPSC and in the Convention constitute an inherent part of state policy in this field, and the activities are directed to parents and children, to all professionals working for and with children and towards the general public (for details, please refer to chapter V of the present document). The strict observance of the provisions of the Protocol is subject to monitoring and evaluation by the same mechanism established with regard to the respect of the rights of the child under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (OPSC, 2001)”

“....The measures provided for in the Optional Protocol are included as activities in several key national strategies and programmes, including the Action Plan against Sexual Exploitation of Children for Commercial Purposes (2003-2005); the National Programmes for Child Protection covering the years 2004, 2005 and 2006; the National Strategy for Child Protection (2004-2006); the National Programme for Prevention and Counteraction of the Trafficking in Persons and Protection of the Victims (2005), and the National Strategy and Action Plan for the Protection of the Rights of the Children in the Street.

The deficiencies identified in the existing system for child protection refer mainly to the lack of specialized courts for children and of specialized training for judges considering cases of children. The collection of data for the specified categories also needs improvement, and the establishment of a uniform information system becomes indispensable, since data are collected by various institutions. Thus, in 2006, the National Statistical Institute, with the assistance of UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund) Office in Bulgaria, launched a specialized data collection system, BULINFO, to gather information relevant to children’s welfare.”

In the last 20 years Bulgaria ratified or signed various conventions and other international documents in the broader field of prevention of CAN:

- The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1992);
- The European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1994);

- The ILO Convention No 182 Concerning Convention No. 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (2001);
- The Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (2002);
- The Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (2003)
- The European Convention on Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions Concerning Custody of Children and on Restoration of Custody of Children (2003)
- Convention on Cyber –Crime, no 85 (2005)
- The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2007) came into force on 1st of July, 2010
- the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect with Intercountry International Child Abduction (1980)
- The European Convention on recognition and enforcement of decisions concerning custody of children and on restoration of custody of children (1980)
- The Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable law, Recognition, Enforcement and Cooperation in respect of Parental responsibility and measures for the protection of children (1996).

3.2. National Legislation

In the last twenty years Bulgarian legislation has been constantly changing due to to allow guarantees for the rights and protection of children.

The rights of the child's are presented in different legislative documents.

The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, adopted in 2001 (subsequently amended in 2003) specifies that the family, motherhood and children are under the safeguard of the state and the society (Art.14); every citizen shall have the right to life and that infringement upon human life shall be punished as a most serious criminal offence (Art. 28). Nobody shall be subjected to torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or forced assimilation (Art. 29, para 1). According to art. 47 "The upbringing and education of children up to commencing of full age is the right and obligation of their parents and is supported by the state." (Paragraph 1), and Paragraph 4 "Children in the position of lack of parental care are under the particular care of the state and society."

The main principle, as proclaimed by the Constitution and further set out in specific laws and regulations, is the commitment of the state to safeguarding and guaranteeing the basic rights of the child in all spheres of social life by provision and implementation of measures to safeguard the rights of the child in family environment, as well as through arrangements for placement in a specialised institution.

The main objective of the **Family Code (FC)** is overall protection of children, their upbringing and safeguarding and the consolidation of the family (Article 2). The Family Code sets provisions for any relations based on marriage, kinship and adoption; guardianship and trusteeship. Articles 49 to 67 set the provisions regarding adoption; guardianship and trusteeship are provided for in Articles 109 through 128. According to the Family Code, the key bodies in the process of adoption are the Regional Directorates for Social Assistance (RDSA) and the Directorates for Social Assistance (DSA); the first maintaining registers of children eligible for full adoption (Article 53c, Paragraph 1), as well as registers of prospective adoptive parents, willing to undertake full adoption (Article 57b, Paragraph 1).

The Penal Code (PC) of the Republic of Bulgaria specifies that children (under the age of 14) are criminally irresponsible. Young persons (who have turned 14 years of age, but who are under 18) are criminally responsible, reduced periods being envisaged for the service of 'imprisonment', as a sentence to which they are subject, as well as possibilities for its substitution for suspended or less serious sentences.

By virtue of the latest amendments to PC from 2002 and 2003, aggrieved criminal liability and increased sentence periods have been envisaged with regard to the:

- murder of a child or person under 18 years of age, committed by their parents (Art. 116);
- murder of a newborn child (Art. 120);
- assistance for or incitement to the suicide of a child or young person (Art. 127);
- bodily injury of a child (Art. 131);
- communication of a sexually transmitted disease to a child or young person (Art. 135);
- abduction (Art. 142) and illegal deprivation of liberty (Art. 142a) of a child or young person;
- sexual assault of a child (Art. 149) and of a young person (Art. 150);
- intercourse with a child or young person, insofar the act committed does not qualify under Art. 152 as rape (Art. 151);
- rape of a female person under 18 years of age (Art. 152);

- incitement to prostitution, sexual assault or intercourse with a child or young person (Art. 155);
- abduction of a female person under 18 years of age, to the purpose of making her available for indecent activities (Art. 156);
- homosexual activities with a child and with a young person (Art. 157);
- the production, distribution and possession of material containing pornography, involving a child or a young person, or a person who has the appearance of a child or young person (Art. 159);
- trafficking of persons under 18 years of age (Art. 159a);
- leaving a person in parental care or legal guardianship without supervision or sufficient care, thereby placing at risk his or her physical, mental or moral development (Art. 182);
- torture of a child or young person remanded in the care of the perpetrator or whose upbringing has been assigned to the latter (Art. 187);
- forcing a child or young person to commit a criminal offence or prostitute (Art. 188);
- systemic use, by a parent or legal guardian, of a child as a beggar (Art. 189);
- parent who forces his or her own child under 16 years of age to live together with an adult person as his or her spouse (Art. 190);
- inciting or facilitating a young person under 16 years of age or of a child to live together with the perpetrator as his or her spouse (Art. 191);
- parent or another relative who receives ransom in order to allow his daughter or female relative who is under 16 years of age to live with another as his spouse (Art. 192);
- inebriation of or sale of alcoholic drinks to a person under 18 years of age (Art. 193);
- incitement to or assistance for the use of narcotic substances by a child or young person (Art. 354b).

The **Labour Code** was adopted and amended in view of institutionalising the reduction of the serious forms of child labour.

The Civil Procedure Code (CPC) envisages special judicial proceedings for the restoration of child custody and the exercise of the right to personal contact, proceeding at the implementation of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

In 2000 a **Child Protection Act (CPA)** was adopted in the Republic of Bulgaria. This piece of legislation is the first to specifically address the needs of the children. The Republic of Bulgaria ratified UN Child Rights Convention (CRC) in 1991. As a part of the Convention for Child Rights, Bulgaria take on a responsibility for cooperation for prevention and promotion of main rights of the child, as well as obligation to ensure prevention of children from violence, exploitation and abandonment. Ten years after ratification of CRP, The Republic of Bulgaria conceptualizes the main approaches for the reform in the policy for children.

CPA defines a child as any person under the age of 18. CPA specifies the need to ensure special protection by the state in respect of children at risk (Art. 5). Art. 11 regulates the right of every child to protection against violence. On the basis of CPA and a special **Ordinance on the Terms and Conditions for Affording Police Protection to Children** adopted in 2001, police authorities afford police protection to children who make the object of criminal offences, for the life and health of whom an imminent threat or the risk of being involved in the commission of criminal offences exist, or who are

lost or in a helpless condition or left without supervision. Police protection is afforded by police authorities in district police directorates for a period not to exceed 48 hours (as per an amendment to the Ordinance from 2003).

CPA also contains a provision introducing the obligation to provide assistance:

Art. 7 (1) A person who becomes aware that a child is in need of protection is obligated to immediately notify the Social Assistance Directorate, the Child Protection State Agency and the Ministry of Interior.

(2) The same obligation also applies to every person, who has become aware of the above, in relation to the exercise of his or her profession or occupation, even where such person might be bound by rules of professional secret.

(3) Central and local bodies of the executive branch of government and specialised child institutions are obligated to provide timely assistance and give information to the Child Protection State Agency and the Social Assistance Directorates in the discharge of their official obligations, following the terms and conditions of the Personal Data Protection Act.

Under CPA, one of the measures for protection of children is legal aid provided by the state.

Under CPC, a defendant young person is mandatorily appointed, within the context of criminal proceedings, a defence counsel who is a lawyer – Art. 70, para 1, item 1 CPC; s. also, for legal aid, Art. 15 Child Protection Act. Under Art. 76 CPC, pre-trial or trial judicial bodies appoint a special representatives, acting for a child or young person, victim of a crime, where his or her interests contradict those of a parent/legal guardian, e.g. where a parent or legal guardian has been indicted of a violent crime against the child.

Art. 76 CPC

Para (2) (*New, SG No 70/1999*) Where the interests of a child or young person, victims of crime, contradict those of their parent, custodian or guardian, the relevant body shall appoint a lawyer to act as their special representative who shall, on behalf of the child or young person, exercise the rights under Art. 52 and 60. A special representative shall take part in criminal proceedings as mandatarly.

Under the draft Domestic Violence Act a special procedure is envisaged, which will be carried out before the regional court, for the provision of injunctive relief, imposing measures for protection against violence, social protection and rehabilitation.

A Regulation on the Implementation of the Child Protection Act came in force in 2003. This regulation makes provisions on the conditions and procedure for implementing child protection measures, the licensing of the providers of social services for children, the granting of support, including financial support, to children, as well as for monitoring respect for children's rights.

1. "Abuse" of a child shall denote any act of physical, mental or sexual abuse, neglect, commercial or other exploitation resulting in actual or potential damage to the child's health, life, development or dignity, that may be performed in a family, school and social environment.
2. "Physical abuse" shall denote causing of bodily harm, including causing of pain or suffering without any damage to health.
3. "Mental abuse" shall denote any treatment that may have a harmful effect on the child's mental health and development, such as underestimation, mocking behaviour, threat, discrimination, rejection or other forms of negative treatment, as well as the inability of the parent, guardian and trustee or the person taking care of the child to provide a suitable supportive environment.
4. "Sexual abuse" shall denote the use of a child for the satisfaction of sexual needs.

5. "Neglect" shall denote failure on the part of the parent, guardian and trustee or the person taking care of the child to secure the development of the child in one of the following respects: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, provision of a home and safety, when he/she has the potential to do it.

Article 12. (1) In case the State Child Protection Agency has been alerted to an instance of children's rights violation, the chairperson of the agency shall immediately refer the statement to the child protection unit of the respective social assistance directorate specifying the child's current address.

(2) In case bodies of the Interior Ministry have been alerted to an instance of children's rights violation, the latter shall also alert the child protection unit of the respective social assistance directorate specifying the child's current address.

Article 13. The director of the social assistance directorate in conjunction with the head of the Regional Education Inspectorate and the head of the Regional Health Care Centre shall inform in writing all state, municipal and private schools, nurseries and creches, servicing units, specialized institutions, health care establishments and general practitioners about any contact information following the procedure of Article 7 of the Child Protection Act.

Article 14. (1) The social worker shall, where necessary, carry out an investigation and gather relevant information from the family, the child, the school, the creche and nursery, the specialized institution, relatives, friends, neighbours, another social assistance directorate, family doctor and other sources.

Article 15. (1) The social worker shall start keeping a personal record of the child adding to it all documentation, information and data gathered in the course of the investigation.

(2) Case history is given an account of in a form, as shown in Appendix 3.

Article 16. (1) Initial information shall be gathered and analyzed within 10 days of the date the child protection unit of the social assistance directorate has been alerted.

(2) A case shall be analyzed within 4 weeks of the date the child protection unit of the social assistance directorate has been alerted.

(3) On the basis of the gathered information the social worker shall:

1. suggest to the head of the child protection unit of the social assistance directorate that work on the case should be terminated in case no violation of the child's rights is established or
2. design a plan of action comprising short-term and long-term protection action and measures.

Article 17. (1) The plan of action shall be agreed with the child's parents, guardian, trustee or the person taking care of the child.

(2) The social worker shall reconsider the plan of action at least twice a year.

Article 18. (1) Measures for protection in a family environment aim to provide support to the child and the family depending on the potential for child raising and upbringing.

(2) The measures provided for in Article 23 of the Child Protection Act shall be implemented in line with the designed plan of action.

(3) Child protection measures may also be implemented through social services.

(4) In case the child's parents, guardian, trustee or any other person taking care of him/her refuse to cooperate, the head of the social assistance directorate shall prescribe relevant measures following a motion of the social worker investigating the case.

(5) The prescription of measures referred to in paragraph 4 may be appealed following the procedure of the Administrative Proceedings Act.

Article 19. (1) The child protection unit of the social assistance directorate shall provide the child, his/her parents, guardians and trustees or the people taking care of him/her with:

1. information about the social services for children and families provided on the territory of the respective district according to the child's needs and the designed plan of action;
2. a list of the providers of the respective social service;
3. a draft contract regulating the provision of the respective social service.

(2) The parents or the individuals taking care of the child, as well as the children shall be encouraged to actively participate in the choice of social services.

(3) The best interest of the child shall be the guiding principle in establishing the need for the provision of social services.

Article 20. (1) After the child protection unit of the social assistance directorate and the child's parents or guardians and trustees have agreed on the provision of social services and the provider of the respective social service, the parents or guardians and trustees shall file a request with the director of the social assistance directorate specifying the child's current address.

Since its acceptance Law for Child Protection and Regulations for implementation of CPA are renewed nearly every year in accordance with the current trends for full implementation of Child Rights Convention.

The following secondary pieces of legislation associated with CPA were also adopted in the same year: an Ordinance on Specialised Protection of Children in Public Areas, an Ordinance on Criteria and Standards for Child Social Services, an Ordinance on the Terms and Conditions for Implementation of Measures to Prevent the Abandonment of Children and Their Placement in Institutions, an Ordinance on the Terms and Conditions for the Applications, Selection and Approval of Foster Families and an Ordinance on the Protection of Children with Manifest Talents.

In accordance with the **Sentence Enforcement Act** (latest amendments from 2002), young persons currently serve sentences of 'imprisonment' separately from adults, under a less stringent regime. At the beginning of next year it has been envisaged that courts will start applying the sentence of 'probation' in respect of young persons who have committed criminal offences.

In 2003 the **Fight against Trafficking of Human Beings Act** was adopted, whereby measures for the protection of and assistance to victims of trafficking have been regulated, especially women and children. Secondary legislation thereto has also been adopted, i.e. a **Regulation on Hostels for Provisional Placement and on Protection and Assistance Centres for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings**, as well as a **Regulation on the Structure and Operations of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings**. A central body to combat trafficking in human beings, as well as local structures attached to it, have been set up by virtue of these legal provisions.

In 2004 amendments to the **Fight against Anti-Social Acts of Children and Young Persons Act** will be adopted. By virtue of this Act educational measures (Art. 13) in respect of children and young persons, authors of anti-social acts, are applied. Educational measures are applied with a view to prevent anti-social acts of children and young persons and ensure their normal development and education.

On 30 June 2004, at first reading, the National Assembly adopted the **Protection against Domestic Violence Act** and the **Protection of Persons under Threat in Relation to Criminal Proceedings Act**.

Legislation in the field of education also guarantees child protection against violence, at different levels and in respect of specific criteria.

In accordance with the **National Education Act**, art. 4, paragraph 1, citizens have the right to education. They may continually heighten their education and qualifications. Under paragraph 2, no restrictions or privileges are admitted, based on race, ethnicity, sex, ethnic or social origins, religion or social status.

In the **Regulation on the Implementation of the National Education Act** the roles and responsibilities of the various participants in the teaching and school education processes, including those of students, have been set out.

Art. 128 and Art. 129 provide that a teacher:

- must protect the life and health of students and children during the teaching and school education processes and other activities organised by him or her, the school or kindergarten;
- may not violate the rights of children and students, degrade their personal dignity, or apply any forms of physical or mental violence against them;
- has no right to remove a student from classes or any extra-curricular or out-of-school activities.

Art. 132 specifies the conditions for upbringing, training and education of children and students, which guarantee:

- equal opportunities for physical, mental and social development;
- their rights, freedom and security;
- respect for their dignity, deference and affection to children;
- training in a spirit of understanding, peace and tolerance;
- involvement with national traditions and cultural values.

Art. 133 and Art. 134 provide for the rights of students and their opportunity to take part, as partners, in school education, having an active role in the achievement of training and education process objectives.

A student has the right to:

- receive information from teachers on issues of relevance to his or her training;
- receive consultations from teachers in organising the way he or she independently prepares his or her lessons;
- receive individual support from teachers, in accordance with his or her specific pedagogical needs;
- be guided, encouraged or assisted to receive support for the development of his or her talents, mental or physical abilities;
- receive protection from the school, service unit or regional education inspectorate attached to the Ministry of Education and Science, in the event his or her personal dignity has been degraded or his or her human rights have been infringed upon;
- submit opinions and proposals to the school headmaster, concerning the organisation and overall conduct of school operations;
- take part in deliberations of the Pedagogical Council concerning student training results, awards or sanctions.

Art. 139 specifies the procedures for the service of sanctions on students in the event of failure to perform their obligations set out in the Regulation on the Implementation of the National Education Act and the Regulation on School Operations. It expressly indicates that:

- prior to serving a sanction, the class master must inform the parent or legal guardian of the student concerned, as well as the Social Assistance Directorate at

his or her place of residence, of the offence committed, in view of undertaking measures to address the problematic behaviour in question;

- before a sanction is served, a student has the right to be informed and consulted by a representative of the Social Assistance Directorate, at his or her place of residence, in view of protecting his or her interests;
- before a sanction is served the headmaster must hear the student, check the facts and circumstances associated with the offence, hear a teacher or another student, as indicated by the student concerned, who will take the role of defence;
- the parent or legal guardian of the student may attend the session of the Pedagogical Council at which a decision will be made about the service of a sanction.

Instruction for specialized protection of children on public places

This instruction regulates conditions and order for implementation of measures/activities for prevention of the children in public places (10). The aim of this instruction is to provide special protection for children in public places through:

- Protection of children from the risks for their physical, mental and moral development
- Encouragement preparedness and ability of the children to take responsibilities for themselves

For solving the problems connected with the worst forms of child labor (prostitution, begging, involvement children in thefts, etc) and in connection with the engagement of the Republic of Bulgaria to the Convention № 182 of International Labor Organization, in 2002 the Republic of Bulgaria accepted *National Plan for action against the worse forms of child labor*.

National Action Plan against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

After the ratification of *The Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography in 2001*, following Recommendations of the Committee of the Ministries of the member states of the Council of Europe for Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation The Republic of Bulgaria-SACP-developed a National Action Plan against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children(6) , adopted by the Government on 5 September 2003.

With the aim of coordination of implementation activities of National Action Plan against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, the interdepartmental working group, added to the National Council for prevention of the Child, was created. Later in 2004 this group was developed into coordinated council of experts. The council consists from the representatives from all the ministries, as well as NGO's connected with the problem.

The aim of the Action plan is to delineate commitments of state institutions and NGO's; to create a framework for prevention, protection, recovery and rehabilitation of child victims. The role of the national coordinator on the National Plan is shared by the Minister of Interior and the Chairperson of the SACP. The main objectives of the plan are:

Prevention

- Raising the awareness of children about “sexual exploitation” and creation of mechanisms for prevention through the education of human rights and special modules for aged group of children about sexual exploitation, trafficking, gender education, provision of written materials about above mentioned problems; creating opportunities for active inclusion of children in creative out of schools activities, etc.
- Improvement of the qualification of professionals, worked with children: teachers, policemen, medical doctors, pedagogical advisors, judges and prosecutors

- Media policy of institutions for raising the public awareness on sexual exploitation of children and developing “zero tolerance” towards violence and exploitation of children

Protection

- Harmonization of domestic legislation with the international standards, improvement of the rights protection of children-victims.
- Development of system of measures, concerning perpetrators
- Opening hot lines with the aim to encourage citizens to report about cases

Rehabilitation and reintegration

- Rehabilitation and reintegration of the victims of sexual exploitation
- Establishment of National hot line for psychological help and support

Children’s participation

Informational insurance and international cooperation

With the support from UNICEF, the specialized web page was created (“commercial sexual exploitation of children”, [The](#) web page is currently adapted and added. There are two sections-for professionals and for children

National telephone line for children

In September 2004 the meeting for settle up the National Help line for children was held. There were key experts from Bulgarian Ministries, representatives of OAK Switzerland , NGO’s, Bulgarian telecommunication companies, representatives of World Network for(1). I the country, there are about 6 well developed regional help lines for children, in Sofia(Triaditza region, Blagoevgrad etc.)

National program for prevention of the Child (2004) and National Strategy for Child (2004-2006).

In these documents are mentioned future directions for improvement of effectiveness of the prevention of child abuse and neglect. On the basis of developed structure for child protection at national and local levels the National Strategy for Children -outlines the framework for the activities in connection with the Child Protection Act and regulations(10). The strategy outlines the national priorities in the field of child protection(e.g.abuse). One of the main objectives is enhancement the effectiveness of the activities for protection of children from violence, maltreatment and other forms of exploitation:

- Increase of notification of children and their families about the problem of violence and stimulation for their active participation against abuse
- Improvement of qualification of the professionals, worked with children about problem of abuse in its all forms
- Development system of activities directed towards perpetrator
- Improvement of legislation with the aim-elimination of the most severe forms of child labor and abuse in all its forms
- Treatment and reintegration of victims of abuse and exploitation.
- Extension of public awareness and engagement with the problems of security of the children in INTERNET.

Ethical Code of Professional groups worked with children is essential part of work characteristics of every professional, worked with children in the state, as well in the NGO’s sector. The special attention is made on the obligations of the professionals, worked with children to have skills for identification symptoms of violence, to know and follow the procedures for prevention of child abuse and neglect ; to inform state and regional bodies for prevention and to cooperate for effective actions for prevention (8).

3.3. Identified limitations/gaps in National Legislation

In the last twenty years there are tremendous changes in the legislation for child protection (incl. prevention of CAN), but it is still not exist a harmonized acting system for the effective child protection.

The Republic of Bulgaria is criticised by NGO's, professional bodies and CRC in the not compelled reform in the system for child protection and care. As already pointed out, the outside pressure was influential both for the commencement and the concept of Bulgarian child policy reform. It was focused exactly on the care of children but neither on the child welfare nor on the rights of the child. (V.Todorova, 2009)

In the Concluding observation of CRC (CRC/GC/2006/8) for the second periodical Report of the Republic of Bulgaria, CRC concludes and recommends: ...”While the Committee appreciates the steps taken by the State party to harmonize legislation in order to ensure greater consistency with the Convention, it is concerned that some aspects of domestic legislation are not consistent with the principles and provisions of the Convention such as in the areas of family life and fair trial. In particular the Committee is concerned that the Child Protection Act does not cover all areas of the Convention. Furthermore, the Committee expresses concern that existing legislation is not effectively implemented in all areas of the rights of the child.

The Committee recommends that the State party continue harmonizing its legislation with the principles and provisions of the Convention, incorporate the Convention fully into the Child Protection Act and ensure the effective implementation of domestic legislation pertaining to the rights of the child.

According to the UN Committee's concluding observations (CRC, 2008) “...the Committee is concerned that plans, programmes and strategies are not followed by clear and efficient mechanisms for implementation. The Committee is also concerned that the State party lacks a mechanism for regular reviews and evaluations of such plans, programmes and strategies.

According Corporal Punishment the Committee urges the State party, to take into account its General Comment No. 8 on the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment (CRC/GC/2006/8), to enforce the ban of corporal punishment by:

- (a) Undertaking public and professional awareness raising;
- (b) Promoting non-violent, positive, participatory methods of childrearing and education and reinforcing knowledge among children of their right to protection from all forms of corporal punishment; and
- (c) Bringing offenders before the competent administrative and judicial authorities.

Regarding Abuse and neglect the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for the prevention and reduction of child abuse and neglect by, inter alia, undertaking awareness raising campaigns and providing adequate support to children and families at risk;
- (b) Develop and implement an effective system for reporting of cases of child abuse and neglect, by inter alia, providing training for all professionals working with and for children;
- (c) Strengthen the psychological and legal support for children victims of child abuse and neglect;

- (d) Prosecute and sentence perpetrators of these crimes; and
- (e) Ensure the access to and sustainability of the toll-free, 24-hour national helpline for children, and grant it a 3-digit number.

A range of problems arose from the implementation of the CPA. Firstly, there was insufficient competence of the social workers in the Child Protection Departments to identify and manage the cases. Second, a system of services did not exist to support the legal mechanisms for child protection. Third, due to the peculiarities of the Bulgarian law making procedure, the child protection legislation was developed faster than both the substantive family law and the civil procedural legislation. For example, the Family Code does not offer an opportunity for exercising parental rights and duties by third parties; the regulation on conflict resolution and on contacts between parents and children is outdated etc. Another example is the missing link between the common civil procedure and the procedural norms of the CPA. The Civil Procedure Code, for instance, does not contain provisions, which: (i) would guarantee the proper conditions for hearing the child, (ii) would account of the child's opinion in the judgement, (iii) would introduce the function of a "special representative" in some types of cases, in order to express the child's point of view, especially for younger children, (iv) would set up a specialised family court, and (v) would define the status of the social worker in the proceedings etc. (Tzankova, 1980; Todorova, 2000).

The legal situation described above demonstrates that a series of changes are still needed in order to provide full guarantees for the legal protection of the children's rights.

3.4. National/ Regional Programs, Strategies, Action Plans

The state policy for the Child is based on accepted by Parliament National Strategy, built on the principles of the Child Protection Act . For the implementation of National strategy, Council of Ministers adopt/accept National program for Child Protection. These documents are based on the principle for the best interest of the child and to respect the rights for all children in Bulgaria, by pooling the efforts of all institutions involved in the planning and implementation of activities

In 2002 a **National Programme for the Children of Bulgaria** was adopted, which regulates interagency efforts for protection of the rights, life and health of children, as well as cooperation of state institutions with non-governmental organisations.

In 2003 a National Strategy for the Protection of Street Children, a National Action Plan against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and the 2003 – 2005 Plan for Reduction of the Number of Children Raised in Specialised Institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria were adopted and are currently implemented.

A Plan for Work with Child Beggars, envisaging measures for the protection of children used for begging and for the reduction of begging in larger populated areas was also adopted in 2004.

In accordance of CPA, National Cometeet for Protection of the Child is created. The National Integrated Plan for Implementation of Child Convention for the period is accepted and implemented (2006-2009).

Since 2001 three National Strategy for the Child were developed. The analysis of their implementation, show that they played a crucial role in the reform for the development of child protection system.

The National Plan for Prevention of Violence against Children is develoted with the leading role of SACP for the period 2010-2013.

4. CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

The regulation of child protection system is guided by the Child Protection Act (CPA) and Social Assistance Act (SAA) and related secondary legislation.

The Child Protection Act introduces a new philosophy concerning the state of the child, and it is the first one specifically address the needs of the children. The Act regulates development of infrastructure, with the focus on the care for children at risk and gifted children. It created a new state body - the National Agency for Child Protection and its local structures, the Departments for Child Protection (under the Child Protection Act with an Ordinance of the Council of Ministers No.226 from 30 October 2000) and started its activity on 1st of January, 2001 (3). The Chairperson of the Agency with the cooperation of ministries, implementing childcare activities, develops the state policy for child protection, develops and controls national and regional child protection programs implementation, licenses natural persons and legal entities, supplying child care services, controls child rights protection.

Specialized body for the conduct of policy on child protection in the municipality is the Directorates for "Social Assistance" which establishes a Department for Child Protection. The leading part for implementation of the policy for child protection, as well as prevention on child abuse is delegated to local bodies. The State agency provides training and support, as well as supervision of the activities of the departments.

The functions of Departments are connected with implementation the regulations for prevention and develop a registers for children at risk.

At a regional levels a commission for child protection with consultative functions is set up to the Social Assistance Directorate and comprise representatives of the municipal administration, Social Assistance Directorate, regional units of the national service "Police", regional educational inspectorates under the Ministry of education and Science, regional centres of health, local commissions for tackling antisocial behaviour of children as well as non-for-profit legal entities, whose purpose of activity is child protection (9).

The Child Welfare Reform Project (2001-2004) designed by the Bulgarian National Government and supported by the World Bank, UNDP, EU, the British, Japanese and Swiss Governments and other international bodies supported the implementation of Child Protection Act. Beneficiaries of this project were SACP and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. One of the main tasks of the projects were:

- Institutional building of the State Agency for Child Protection
- Institutional Building of the local structures;
- Development of services for children and families.

The project provided opportunity for training of social workers in the Department of Child Protection, as well as for other specialists, worked with children.

The revised Social Assistant Act (of 2002 and 2006) further developed the regulation of the sector of services through introducing standards for social services for children, a licensing regime for the service providers, outsourcing the provision of social services and unified standards for the budgetary allocations for delegated social services (V.Todorova, 2009)

The services and programs, provided to children, victims of abuse are: social and psychological counseling for children and their parents; therapeutic interventions; counseling and provision of information; interagency co-operation and mediation; legal advice. In some of the services there are crisis centers for children, victims of abuse

The UNICEF supported a study for of the system for Sensitivity of the system for identification, recording and reporting of child violence cases in Bulgaria, 2005. The study was conducted by SAPI.

The key findings from this study are:

The study data show that private sector is a relatively less prepared to recognize child violence than the state sector (Table No 5) – **51,2% of the studied private service providers have answered that they have not passed through** or been given any instructions or training for recognition of child violence. It is important to note that this high percentage includes providers of both type A and type B, i.e. of services generally for the child population and specifically for children at risk.

The lowest level of preparedness for identification of child violence cases is present among the service providers within the healthcare (39,1%) and the **education** sectors (42%) of the respondents have answered that they have passed through training or have received instructions on how to recognize child violence

The specialists working in the sectors of police/judiciary and social welfare have passed through specialized training or have received instructions on how to recognize cases of child violence to a greater extent. For the police and judiciary sector the data show 84,9%, for the social sector – 65,6% (Table No 6). These data about the practice mean that if we have 10 cases of child violence in the sectors of healthcare and education, only 4 of them will be identified as such and the remaining 6 cases will not be recognized. This is different for the police and judiciary sector where only 1-2 out of 10 cases will not be recognize.

Analysis of the results indicates that the different sectors demonstrate different level of sensitivity in respect of identifying child violence. Most often are identified cases within the education and healthcare sectors and the greatest number of cases are identified in the police and judiciary where almost all (93,5%) studied providers of services for children have encountered a case of child violence in the last 12 months

4.2. PREVENTION OF CAN

Since 2003 prevention of violence against children has been among the priorities of state policy for the protection of children. The realisation of this priority is within the competence of various central and local authorities, the main coordinating role being given to the Child Protection State Agency and the Ministry of Interior.

The NGO's have also a fundamental role in initiatives addressing violence against children. There are approximately 130 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Bulgaria, actively working on child issues, some of which are specialised in various aspects of violence against children. Their main activities are focused on the prevention of violence, information campaigning, and some also provide recovery and reintegration services for children victims of violence. The leading role have Animus Association

The main achievement in the coordination of activities and share responsibilities in the child abuse and neglect prevention is the initiated by *SACP Agreement for cooperation and coordination of the work of regional structures for child protection with children, victims or at risk of abuse and for crisis intervention (2010)*

There clear delineation of the Actions of the teams at work in cases with children, victims or at risk of abuse

One month after signing the Agreement in every municipality have been established interdepartmental teams to take prompt, adequate and coordinated measures in cases of children, victims or at risk of abuse. The teams organise their common activities to guide the entire process of working on a particular case.

The responsibility for setting up the teams is assumed by the Child Protection Department at the Social Assistance Directorate at the current address of the child with the support of municipal mayors. Their work is governed by the Law of Child Protection

and the Law on Domestic Violence while respecting the principle of best interest of the child and ensuring an effective system to prevent and control the observance of his/her rights.

One of the main activities of the teams is to identify potential hazards to life and health of the child, designate ways of working and share tasks among other institutions.

The Mechanism is developed together with a scheme for the actions of the teams during an **alert** for a child at risk or threatened by an act of violence. The signal can be sent out at the Social Assistance Directorate, the State Agency for Child Protection or the Ministry of Interior. If the signal is received by any of the above agencies, the State Agency for Child Protection and the Ministry of Interior are required to transfer it to the Social Assistance Directorate.

One of the most important requirements is the time limits within those responsible for the departments should respond to a signal. Within an hour after receiving the signal, the Department of Child Protection should assign responsible in the case. Furthermore, within the next 24 hours the signal is checked. If there is a risk, then they open a case and report the results of the inspection. Copies of this report are sent on to the other involved institutions and soon a team meeting is organised to solve the case. The meeting establishes a joint action plan according the commitments of the relevant authorities. Mandatory participants in the meeting are social workers from the Child Protection Department at the Social Assistance Directorate, representatives of the mayor and the Regional Management of Ministry of Interior. If the situation in which the fall child so requires, the team will work together with general practitioners, doctors reported an act of violence or threat of violence, the Regional Education Inspectorate, the Director of the school or kindergarten, class teachers or educators, school psychologists, a local commission to combat delinquency of minors, and District Attorney.

In discussing the cases, associations and external consultants working on the problems of children are attracted. They determine the appropriate measures to prevent risk factors for the child, to assess the need for removal of the child from his/her family and to be placed in another location when all the possibilities have been exhausted. If there is a court order to remove the child from family, the teams co-operate with directors of social institutions, transitional homes, etc. The experts shall together determine the abilities and needs of the child, and where he/she will be accommodated at a suitable place. They develop plans to work with the child, with his/her own family or with the family, which he/she lives temporarily, as the case continues to be monitored.

The teams coordinate and determine actions, when there is harm to the child of a mixed marriage and/or Bulgarian origin abroad, or when violations of a child has a foreign character.

In cases when the signal concerns a child serving a sentence of imprisonment, the signal is sent to the Ministry of Justice.

Team actions in crisis situation

The actions in crisis situations in which children are involved are clearly defined in the Mechanism. The procedure is applied in the occurrence of a critical event or situation, characterized by high death rate, a great number of injured or perished people, severe traumas, acts of violence or terrorism, natural disaster, serious road accidents etc. In these cases, there is a high public interest, which adds to the effect on children's mental health. They are confused, feel anxiety, depression, fear, grief and close themselves off. That is why, it is extremely important to make contact with these children as fast as possible, to decrease the impact of the traumatic stress, to accelerate the recovery of their normal pace of life and to continue working with those of them who need follow-up help.

In such heavy situations the head of the Child Protection Department at the Social Assistance Directorate must within an hour inform the State Agency for Child Protection of any tragic circumstances and organize a group for crisis intervention. It includes a duty police officer, a duty judge, a duty municipal official, a headmaster or the head teacher of the child. The first goal of the team is to find a suitable place to accommodate the child.

During a crisis, the local team develops a plan with tasks and deadlines, and sets short-term goals and simplified actions. One of the most important actions is enabling the child to contact with relatives, friends, or classmates, that is, people whom they trust and in front of whom they would reveal their thoughts and feelings.

The State Agency for Child protection provides a group of psychologists, whose aim is to prevent the effect from the experience and to allow the children to free themselves from the emotional stress and the negative memories as quickly as possible.

According to the Agreement for "hot cases", the work of the team continues after the working hours, in non-working days and on holidays. Then, a social worker from the Child Protection Department will be available, as well as a duty municipal official, a duty doctor etc.

4.3. ROLE OF NGO's

The old system for social protection and care didn't respond for adequate fulfillment of the needs of marginalized children in the new context. The development of civil society organizations was perceived as having great potential to promote changes in this field. With the international support and funding, the good initiatives for fulfillment the needs of children and families were developed.

The leading non profit organizations in the field of child abuse and neglect were Foundation Association Animus, Centre Nadia, Bulgarian Gender Studies, Save the children, European Children Trust, Gavroche, Big Brother/big sister, etc.

With the external support Foundation Association Animus has developed a range of services, both supporting victims of violence and attempting to develop some measures of prevention. Their work "has earned the respect of other organizations both in Bulgaria and abroad, which has lead to increasing requests and pressure to participate in their activities such as training of other NGO's, participation in conferences and seminars and further develop certain services.

Centre Nadia started its activities nearly at the same time as Foundation Association Animus did. The preventive consultancy centre and help line for children were developed.

The SAPI play very active role in the different areas of CAN: identification, intervention and prevention. The team of the SAPI participated in various national and international projects in the aboved mentioned fileds and make a great contributon to the development of effective policies and practices .

The other strong actor in the supporting and developing an effective system for child protection in Bulgaria is The National Network for Children.

4.4. HOT LINES

During the last 15 years the numerous help lines for children were developed

In 2005 in the framework of the project co-funded by the European Commission (Programme Safer Internet) the Bulgarian Safer Internet Hotline was created .

Through the filling an online form on the website of the hotline reports for illegal and harmful content and conduct in Internet are accepting and processing:

, The internet Hotline

- Child sexual abuse images.
- Soliciting and grooming of minors through online channels for involvement in virtual sex or with the purpose of sexual abuse.
- Trafficking of children.
- Violence against children.
- Submission of pornographic material to minors.
- Pornography, easily accessible to minors.
- Extreme violence and brutality.
- Racism, xenophobia, fueling ethnic and racial enmity.
- Propaganda or sale of drugs.
- Propaganda of harmful behavior - suicide, self-harm, anorexia, bulimia.

After receiving the report an operator verifies the reported content, makes an initial assessment whether it is illegal or harmful for minors and takes appropriate actions, which include notifying the hosting company or organisation and / or competent authorities.

The hotline acts also as a source of information for Internet users and especially carers, teachers and children by providing links to information and advice on the Safer Internet Centre portal site about prevention of online risks for children, possible technical tools (for filtering and monitoring online content) and measures to combat illegal and harmful content on the Internet undertaken by national authorities, the EC, other countries, international governmental and non-governmental organisations. The Internet hotline – abbreviated as SAFE-NET BG – became member of the International Association of Internet Hotline Operators INHOPE supported by the European Commission.

One year after its creation, the Bulgarian Hotline is a member of the International Association of Internet Hotlines INHOPE.

The biggest achievement in the recent years is the National telephone line for childrens

The creation of National Hot Line for Children is accepted as a great public necessity (UNICEF, 2008) and expectancy for its effectiveness are great.

In March 2010 the web page of the National Hot Line was created (www.116111.bg), and it operated with harmonised European number 116 111. The Line provide free of charge 24 hours 7 days of week services for the whole country: counseling, information and help for children and adults .

According to SACP in the year of 2010 , 66 366calls were accepted by the operators of National Hot Line, the 11645 consultations were provided to children. Most of the calls (79 %) were from children aged over 12 years.

5. CONCLUSION

6.

In the past ten years there are increased efforts of the state, NGO's and society in the Republic of Bulgaria to act against all forms of child abuse, but there are still many things should be done in that field. There were accepted various legislative statements, strategies, action plans etc., a good basis for realization of the activities for primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of child abuse and neglect in all its forms. Now it is a time for concentration of efforts in development and implementation of mechanisms for effective implementation of already developed legislation.

It is necessary sustainability and dissemination of good practices addressing problems of all kinds of child abuse, as well as integration of multidisciplinary approach in the current practices for child protection and intervention for children, victims of all kind of abuse. The development of national register for children at risk for all kind of abuse, based on appropriate information system between all ministries, national and local authorities in the field of child protection will support efforts of specialists and will optimize the system of care.

On the other side there is a need for additional training of the specialists from helping professions for effective work with children at risk and victims of abuse, and their families. The following is recommended as an effective way for fulfillment the gaps in the training of professionals: development of special modules about child abuse and neglect in the curriculums of helping professions-doctors (especially pediatricians, psychiatrists, general practitioners, obstetricians), nurses, social workers, psychologists, teachers, lawyers; development of interdisciplinary and continuing education for practitioners worked with children and families.

To be successful all mentioned above activities should be evidence based, responded with the specific needs of children and their families, and to be carried out from well trained specialists.

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