Violence in schools –
a challenge for the local community

Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society
VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS –
A CHALLENGE
FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Local partnerships for preventing
and combating violence in schools
Conference 2-4 December 2002
Council of Europe
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Integrated project “Responses to violence in everyday life
in a democratic society”

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INTEGRATED PROJECT “RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE IN EVERYDAY LIFE IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY”

All Europeans feel affected by violence and its repercussions. Personal security is threatened every day in a whole range of places and circumstances: at home, at school, at work, at sports events and on the streets. While violence and the fear of violence affect everyone’s quality of life, certain groups – such as women, children and the elderly as well as migrants, refugees and particular ethnic groups – may be seen as specific targets.

The integrated project “Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society” was launched by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe as a means of mobilising the Council’s resources over a period of three years (2002-04) to address the widely shared concerns that violence engenders. Its main aim is to help decision makers and others to implement consistent policies of awareness-raising, prevention and law enforcement to combat violence in everyday life. Significantly, these policies have to be formulated and applied in ways that respect human rights and the rule of law. That is an absolute prerequisite for achieving lasting improvement in the actual situation and in people’s feelings about security in Europe.

Violence in schools – a challenge for the local community is the sixth of a series of publications for a general readership containing recommendations or instruments used to launch Council of Europe activities and projects on violence prevention. The series also includes discussion and summary documents on the different topics covered by the integrated project.
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FOREWORD

Violence in schools – a challenge for the local community reviews the highlights of the Council of Europe conference “Local partnerships for preventing and combating violence at school”. The conference, held in Strasbourg from 2 to 4 December 2002, was a joint initiative of three Council of Europe sectors, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the Directorate of School, Out of School and Higher Education and the Directorate of Youth and Sport. To give the conference a wider scope and ensure a more vast distribution of its results, it was organised as part of the integrated project “Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society”, an umbrella project which brings together several Council of Europe departments on common issues. The 150 participants were mostly decision makers on school violence from civil society, ministries of education, the interior and youth, representatives of youth organisations and, particularly important, educational staff.

The context of violence and our perceptions of it have changed radically over the last few years, especially with the advent of globalisation and crime and terrorism without borders. The myriad of images with little or no analysis conveyed by the media has helped to feed a new kind of fear, the impression that violence lies in waiting everywhere, in the family, at the neighbourhood shop, at sports events and in schools. Violence in schools is a particularly sensitive issue; once idealised as havens for learning and of socialisation, schools now seem prone to outbursts of conflict beyond the control of education authorities.

The Strasbourg conference discarded repression altogether as a means of curbing violence in schools. Instead, discussion focused on “mediation”, “intercultural dialogue” “early warning systems” “citizenship curricula” “prevention programmes at primary school level” and above all on the “respect for human rights of both victim and offenders”. The clear message that emerged from this meeting (see the Final Declaration in the appendix) was that prevention should be “education-oriented”, and that schools should open up and engage in local partnership initiatives with community actors, including the police, which take into account the specific features and environmental factors of the community. But what kind of initiatives? What kind of partnerships? Youth violence can certainly not be attributed to neglect, as rarely has a societal problem had such an army of experts looking for solutions.

The keynote speaker, Manuel Eisner, has stressed in his paper “Towards more effective youth violence prevention” that in the face of this ever-growing garden
of action plans, activities, programmes and projects to combat violence in schools, we are bewildered as to what does and does not work. Only the development of high-quality assessment research on current initiatives will allow us to determine what to reject and what to keep in order to base future initiatives upon scientific evidence.

The rapporteur, Eric Debarbieux, reminds us that schools have always been linked to violence. Our perceptions of it are historically determined, thus today’s concern over school violence (as of yet there are no statistics to show it has increased) has grown out of the relatively new attitude that violence towards and by children is unacceptable. He has also taken the unusual step of letting us know where we now stand in relation to the past by analysing the significant changes that have come about in this field since the first conference was held by an international organisation, the European Commission conference in Utrecht in 1997. To begin with, a broad definition of violence has now been generally accepted, thus acknowledging that the issue is too complex to narrow down, particularly if we are to build up a body of objective knowledge on the subject. Second, more attention is being paid to victims. This includes victim surveys, taking into account their perception of crime and its effects, leading to better follow-up measures, such as victim counselling. Third, there is an increasing tendency, among the education-oriented, to see prevention in terms of local community partnerships and networks, and last, violence in schools has taken on a new political dimension across Europe over the last decade.

Both Debarbieux and Eisner put us on guard against the magic wand effect. Gathering scientific evidence, assessing programmes, setting up collaboration and dissemination at European level, and giving practical measures the means to work require time. And violence prevention schemes which avoid simplistic and quick targets such as video games, mono-parental families and immigrants, are slow processes that are not always political or media crowd-pleasers.

Eric Debarbieux, professor of educational science at the University of Bordeaux (France) since 1991, formally taught specialised classes, where he encountered alienated young people whose most common form of expression was violence. He founded the European Observatory on Violence in Schools, a scientific tool carrying out research in this field in Europe, North America and Latin America.

Manuel Eisner is a reader in sociological criminology and deputy director of the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cambridge (UK). His research interests include long-term social change and violence, urban structure and crime, as well as youth delinquency. He is currently directing the Zurich Violence Prevention Study.
I. OPENING ADDRESSES
THE IMPORTANCE OF CONCRETE STRATEGIES FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN SCHOOLS

Walter Schwimmer
Secretary General of the Council of Europe

This conference is the result of a joint initiative by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the Directorate of Education and Higher Education, and the Directorate of Youth and Sport. It is an example that I would like to see multiplied within our Organisation, especially as it entails making concrete action proposals that will contribute to solving problems, which as we all know, are extremely complex.

During recent years, the media has repeatedly echoed tragic events of extreme violence which have taken place in educational establishments. Particularly tragic events have hit the public consciousness – a few years ago in the United Kingdom, earlier this year in Erfurt, and more recently in Barcelona, the United States and Paris.

We have all witnessed other violent incidents but we are particularly sensitive about violence at school as it involves our children. In the European cultural context, we share the idea that school is a place to be protected from the conflicts and violence of society in general. This relative isolation of the school no longer exists and the violence which has emerged there in recent years can be considered as reflecting to a great extent the conflicts and difficulties present in the general social context.

The tragic events I referred to are expressions of failure. They have shocked us by their suddenness and by their extreme nature, and our first reaction to them was a sense of powerlessness and incomprehension.

The governments of member states are now seriously looking for solutions. Some of the latest proposals call for physically sealing off schools from their surroundings and the introduction of surveillance cameras so that violence can no longer enter from the outside. Such a reaction is quite understandable under the circumstances, but is it sufficient or does it move the centre of the debate unnecessarily to the side of surveillance, repression and physical separation at the cost of other solutions? Parents’ organisations have been quick to draw our attention to this.

After all, schools are an integral part of their communities. A pragmatic balance has to be found between safety and the access of community members, including parents, to school premises. If institutions are too isolated from their communities, new risks to safety on the inside are often triggered.
It is also widely known that without a comprehensive effort to tackle violence in a community, a preventive strategy focusing on one place alone, such as the school, will only displace violence elsewhere. Racketeering will continue outside the school walls.

We cannot expect our schools alone to find solutions to these problems. The aim of this conference is indeed to affirm that violence prevention in schools is everyone’s business, in particular the different actors at the local level.

I call on the governments and parliaments of member states to set up the legal framework for enabling all parties concerned to play their respective roles in the combat against violence at school and in the community they belong to.

We must also have the courage to say that schools will have to re-examine their working cultures and habits. They will have to open up their internal structures and accept dialogue with other actors of the community.

It is the responsibility of local authorities to include school violence prevention in their general violence prevention policy and follow up on this by establishing the necessary mechanisms for co-operation and communication between the parties involved. Youth movements, which have tended to move away from schools, need to re-establish close contact with them.

Civil society, whether organised or not, should not remain a spectator but should commit itself directly to solving problems at school and in the community. Families should rediscover their active role in education and contribute to shared efforts to prevent violence at school. The essential is therefore to learn and regain one’s ability to dialogue with others within the local community. This is what I mean by the word “partnership”.

The core message that I hope comes out of this conference should be addressed to all actors involved. It should assign roles and responsibilities in preventing school violence and in finding solutions to problems that have arisen from past violence. It is not enough to simply reaffirm the principle of partnership; you must go beyond this and with the help of successful case studies, define the modalities and objectives for building partnerships at local level.

The city of Oradea in Romania has understood perfectly the need for community-wide partnerships, as shown by their case study, which describes a tightly-knit partnership of schools with city authorities, the police, the child protection agency, public health authorities, NGOs and the church. With co-ordinated efforts to provide family counselling, social housing, night shelters and social integration centres, on the one hand, and programmes for preventing juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, dropping out of school along with creating youth associations, on the other, this local partnership has been able to redress violence throughout the city, including its root causes, so that violence only rarely affects schools in Oradea.
It is important for this conference to concentrate first on identifying the actors involved. In addition to the staff and pupils at schools, these should also include local authorities, state authorities working at the local level, and, of course, parents, whose role is crucial. Parents, too, often need help in their educational role and I was encouraged by a Maltese case study which described courses where parents learn anger-management techniques, appropriate ways to discipline their children and other skills to improve their own behaviour.

Furthermore, building partnerships requires us to define focused strategies for analysing concrete situations, for setting-up of appropriate structures and continuous evaluation. All partners should be involved at each level of planning, application and evaluation.

I would like to underline certain elements which should be taken into account in the elaboration of pragmatic strategies:

- priority should be given to prevention and early warning systems, enabling prompt responses to minor incidents and tense situations that might otherwise degenerate into serious conflicts;
- when violent incidents do occur, they should be redressed rapidly and in a measured way so that their causes are clarified and tackled as well;
- mediation is crucial in these efforts and it should be at the heart of every strategy for partnership;
- the idea of partnership implies that the different partners act together and mutually support each other. Different levels of partnership can naturally be envisaged depending on the specific task at hand.

The debates which will take place during these three days are not isolated. In fact, they will contribute to a three-year project “Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society”, which I launched earlier this year to assist member states in dealing with violence. This project is dealing not only with school violence, but also violence in towns, in the home and at sport events. Furthermore, it will propose solutions to problems related to social exclusion, cultural diversity, the role of the media and trafficking in human beings.

I considered that in view of the serious concerns about violence among the public and governments alike, it was the role of the Council of Europe to reaffirm the fundamental principles for work in this field and to provide the protagonists with effective tools for translating these principles into practice. I would also like to insist that the right to protection and safety does not compete with the principles of democracy and the respect of the fundamental rights of the person. On the contrary, they are one and the same thing.

On the basis of examples of concrete work, you will have to arrive at general principles for partnership strategies at local level and then go on as far as possible
in defining clearly the means to bring these about and evaluate such partnerships. I hope you understand the importance that I attach to your work today and in the months ahead. I thank you again for your active participation and personal efforts. I have great expectations as to the conclusions of your work and proposals for further action.
SCHOOLS AS MICROCOSMS OF SOCIETY

Jean-Marc Nollet
Minister for Children
French Community of Belgium

Violence at school is just downright unacceptable, whether instigated by pupils, teachers of parents, consisting of words or deeds, or originating in the relational, institutional, family, social, cultural or economic fields. However, in asserting this, it is insufficient to issue a blanket condemnation without a corresponding in-depth analysis, as François Dubet pointed out when opening the Council of Europe conference on violence at school in Brussels in 1998.

As a member of government, I am responsible for proposing various approaches and solutions, backed up by sound advice. That is the primary reason for my presence here today, namely to listen to your expert opinions, to learn from your experience and to hear first hand, descriptions of partnerships already in operation and the outcome of your projects and debates. I am thrilled by the huge variety of your fields of investigation.

I consider the school first and foremost as a living environment. It must be neither a fortress nor a sanctuary, but a place of emancipation in contact with real life. Schools in the French Community of Belgium were assigned the following tasks under legislation adopted in 1997:

– promoting the self-confidence and personal development of every pupil;
– encouraging all pupils to appropriate knowledge and acquire skills enabling them to engage in lifelong learning and play an active role in economic, social and cultural life;
– preparing all pupils to be responsible citizens who can contribute to the development of a democratic, caring, pluralist society open to other cultures.

This makes the school not only a place for transmitting/constructing/reconstructing knowledge, but also, and above all, a forum for socialisation and for opening up to the world. It must never turn into an educational no man’s land isolated from all the tensions of the outside world.

On entering a school pupils do not leave their identities in the cloakroom. They are there to build up their identities, not on fallow land, but on all their prior knowledge of their multiple belonging, to families, communities and cultures.

Violence outside school does not leave pupils unaffected, any more than it does their teachers or parents. The 9/11 attacks, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the belligerence in Iraq and the recent bloodbaths in Nigeria: this violence has a
disturbing effect on all of us. Schools are no exception. Nor are schools shielded from the influence of family disputes and social or economic pressures (exclusion, unemployment, etc). In Belgium, children spend an average of two hours thirty-seven minutes a day in front of their TV screens, which means that they inevitably witness serious violence.

A school is no “oasis of oblivion”. It is rather a place for appropriating skills (including relational capacities), an environment for discovery, “revelation” and encounters. It must enable young people to distance themselves sufficiently from their backgrounds to come to terms with their origins and get on with the task of constructing their multiple identities. The school’s role is to act as a microcosm of society. This is why the education system is duty-bound to encourage social heterogeneity both in the classroom and in and among the various schools.

In my view, any policy on violence at school must have two different strands: an upstream one aimed at developing preventive strategies, and a downstream component geared to developing responses which remain within the educational sphere.

**Upstream**

The various potential issues have to be addressed dispassionately before they suddenly become urgent under the pressure of frustrations and fears. I would propose breaking our approach to this strand down into six main reference points.

*Acting at a very early age.* Most of the current measures target secondary schools. Prevention means acting upstream, at the pre-primary level. We must dialogue with pupils, calm their frustrations and fears and analyse their problems, all of which must begin at nursery school, at the pre-school level. Children must learn how to discuss all the potential ingredients of violence at a very early age.

*Constructing heterogeneity.* We must take account of cultural, linguistic, social and economic diversity among school children in order to facilitate multiple identities, rather than attempting to establish an identical threshold for all. We need educational approaches aimed at emancipating the pupils rather than forcing skill acquisition into a uniform mould. Recognising diversity enables us to prevent stigmatisation and feelings of belonging that are imposed rather than being freely chosen.

*Training and informing.* Teachers must be trained (in initial and further training courses) for class heterogeneity and teamwork. Parents and local associations must be kept informed. We should explore and develop partnerships between school staff and outside operators, including representative associations of teachers and, more broadly, the whole voluntary sector. We should also go into the practical arrangements for such co-operation. The school must be opened up to the world so that it can export peace rather than importing violence.
Improving the physical and human environment. This can be done by preventing the emergence of “ghetto schools”, diversifying interventions, and organising the school and out-of-school time interface with all those concerned. We must improve the school habitat and resist the pat response of turning the school into an “entrenched camp”. I also consider it important to improve working conditions for school staff by stabilising careers early on, particularly for teachers working in difficult areas.

Constructing school rules. By involving pupils in drawing-up the school rules we would legitimate the latter in that they become meaningful to the pupils during the formulation process. Institutional violence at school should be combated by improving the democratic functioning of the establishment by recognising that, as François Dubet puts it, pupils are subjects entitled to complain and be heard. This would make it all the easier to educate children in human rights and democratic values. In some primary schools, for instance, children and teachers have got together to draw up voluntary playground codes.

Tackling minor disturbances. We should not wait until the incidents become serious. For example, absenteeism should be tackled before it turns into dropping-out.

Downstream – developing responses which remain within the educational sphere

Downstream action must be planned in the medium or long term. Such action is required for acts of violence pending such time as the preventive and the information and training measures become effective. Appropriate steps must be taken to ensure a reaction to acts of violence. Nothing could be worse than an indifferent, laissez-faire attitude. Schools are sometimes tempted to engage in a conspiracy of silence in order to protect their reputations, but this can never be a real solution. Rather than the two extremes of hushing up and generalising on violence, I prefer approaches based on dialogue and mediation. This is why I feel that testimonies from local partnerships could prove extremely useful.

While violent acts, I repeat, deserve unreserved condemnation, I also consider it essential to react to them in a reasoned and appropriate manner. The penalty must match the gravity of the acts and must remain educational in nature. Pupils should be induced to mend their ways in order to avoid punishment. Mediation, remediation and reparation are the keys to success in downstream action.
CROSS-SECTORAL CO-OPERATION IN FINDING SOLUTIONS

Berend-Jan baron van Voorst tot Voorst
Chair of the Culture and Education Committee
of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe
Council of Europe

I am most honoured to address the opening of this conference as Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe. The Congress is delighted to have been able to prepare the conference in co-operation with the Council of Europe’s education and youth sectors. Having initially each decided to tackle this crucial issue ourselves, we very quickly chose to co-operate under the integrated project “Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society”, launched by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, an initiative on which we wish to congratulate him most warmly. In our view, this unprecedented cross-sectoral co-operation is a major asset for discussion of the issue we are going to focus on over the next three days: partnerships for combating violence at school.

The Congress represented here today by myself and several of my colleagues is a Council of Europe body that brings together local and regional elected representatives from the organisation’s forty-four member countries.1 As representatives of the authorities closest to individual citizens, these local political leaders are directly concerned by issues of security and the well-being of their fellow citizens. They also, of course, pay particular attention to young people in their areas, aiming to provide them with the conditions required for their personal fulfilment, as well as their education and training.

It is therefore only natural that the Congress has chosen to consider ways of combating violence at school, which, unfortunately, appears to be becoming more common all over Europe. As a social trend, whether real or exaggerated, the terrible individual incidents we are all aware of and the various acts, however trivial in themselves, that keep on being repeated in our towns and regions mean that we have a duty to take action. In any case, local elected representatives refuse to accept these developments as being inevitable and seek to co-operate with all the other partners needed in order to stop the trend and, as far as possible, nip violence at school in the bud.

1. Editor’s note: membership has now increased to forty-five, with the adhesion of Serbia and Montenegro.
Of course, local and regional authorities in the various countries of Europe do not all have direct responsibility for education. However, they are all concerned with the fight against urban crime and delinquency, the security of their fellow citizens, both young and old, and also the condition of the buildings and facilities for which they are responsible. They therefore wish to join in the efforts of all those who can help to prevent and combat violence at school.

Schools clearly are no longer closed environments that are cut off from the outside world. On the contrary, they are increasingly coming to reflect society as a whole, with its conflicts, constant questioning and divides. They can therefore no longer operate without the involvement, to varying degrees, of the main players in local communities. The partnerships in question must include pupils, teachers, parents and all the relevant local authority departments that can influence the climate in and around schools and help provide solutions to the problems that young people face in their everyday lives, both at school and elsewhere.

In this connection, the Congress recently published a handbook for local authorities on combating urban crime in general. Although the practical recommendations it contains concern towns as a whole, they will no doubt also be able to provide some inspiration for this conference.

Lastly, I should like to draw your attention to the need always to bear the promotion of democracy and human rights in mind when tackling these questions. Efforts to combat and, above all, prevent violence at school will be effective in the long-term only if due account is taken of these aspects.

Young people need to find their place in our society as responsible citizens who respect other people and show solidarity. In 1992, the Congress adopted the Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life. This sets out a whole series of measures designed to take better account of the needs and aspirations of young people at local level. Setting up local youth councils and consulting and involving young people in local democracy enables them to express their legitimate concerns and put forward solutions for dealing with them. Practical measures of this kind help to create an environment where violence is less likely. Although this is not the one and only miracle solution, it is a practical contribution by local authorities to help tackle the problems we are discussing today.

Moreover, the many case studies that will be presented during the conference provide a very clear illustration of the wide range of pilot projects and initiatives being carried out throughout Europe. I am sure we will be able to identify here different types of actions that the various partners concerned can take so as to define the most comprehensive solutions possible. By the close of the conference, I therefore hope that we will be able to identify a range of recommendations and measures to put to all those who are willing to take action to make sure that our schools can operate in an environment that is peaceful enough for them to be able to carry out their crucial functions.
II. PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTH VIOLENCE
Towards More Effective Youth Violence Prevention – An Overview

Manuel Eisner
Institute of Criminology
Cambridge University (United Kingdom)

For at least fifteen years now, the issue of youth violence has been at the centre of political concern and academic interest in many European countries. More specifically, a large quantity of local and national initiatives aimed at combating youth violence was put into action during the 1990s. But pitifully little is known about what effects these programmes have and the degree to which they effectively reduce violence. As a result, some countries have recently seen a soaring political and academic interest in high quality evaluation research. But it is also obvious that we are presently far from any consolidated knowledge about what works and what does not work. This paper hence purveys to provide a brief overview of some of the basic ideas underlying the thrust towards evidence-based violence prevention.

The problem: some general macro-level patterns and changes

Youth violence obviously has many different manifestations and is associated with a variety of different correlates. It seems, however, that in all western European societies a confluence of some general patterns can be observed that in their totality may describe something like a crisis in youth violence. Here, I will address only three major macro-level patterns that appear to be associated with the current problem of youth violence.

In most western European countries, levels of police-recorded crime have remained relatively stable over the past twenty years. Surely there were movements, but they remained in much more narrow confines than the massive increase seen, for example, in the preceding decades of the 1960s and 1970s. In a similar vein, levels of overall youth delinquency do not appear to have changed much. A very different picture emerges, however, when we look at the development of police-recorded youth violence. Here data suggest a more or less continuous growth in various European countries with an onset around the late 1990s (Estrada 1998).

There is disagreement, however, about the degree to which the increase in police-recorded youth violence mirrors real trends. Actually, several factors may have contributed to inflating the police data. More specifically, a higher propensity to report violent acts among juveniles to the police, a sharpened awareness of the problem among school teachers, social workers and parents, as well as a more
A proactive approach combined with more complete recording by the police are likely to have contributed to the trends in police-recorded youth violence. Alternative data sources such as victimisation surveys or self-report studies suggest a much less dramatic development (Estrada, 2000; Junger-Tas, 1997; Wilmers, Enzmann, Schaeffer, Herbers, Grewe, and Wetzel 2002.)

**Figure 1. Trends in police-recorded youth violence**

![Graph showing trends in police-recorded youth violence](image)

*Note:* Data standardised to 1987 = 100.

*Sources:* Germany: Suspects at ages 17 and below, per 100,000 for violent crimes according to Polizeiliche Kriminalstatistik Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Bundeskriminalamt 1998). Switzerland: Police recorded offenders at ages 17 and below, per 100,000, for homicide, assault, robbery, and threat according to Polizeiliche Kriminalstatistik (Bundesamt für Polizeiwesen – Zentralpolizeibüro 1982ff). Netherlands: Police-recorded juvenile violent offenders per 100,000 according to Kruissink and Essers (Kruissink and Essers 2001); England and Wales: Persons suspected for violence against the person, ages 12 to 17, per 100,000, according to Criminal Statistics (Home Office 1998).

The second pattern concerns the distribution of youth violence along a continuum of urbanity. This, of course, is part of the wider phenomenon of higher crime rates in the large cities and comparatively low crime rates in the countryside. This pattern is most clearly seen in data on police-recorded crime where throughout Europe the big cities suffer from a much larger number of crimes committed per population than smaller settlements. We now know that a significant part of this pattern can be understood as resulting from the centre-functions of cities that bring large numbers of motivated offenders and potential victims into the geographic centres of modern societies. However, there also appears to be a tendency that an over-proportionate number of violent offenders grow up and live in urban settlements. Although lamenting about the morally corrosive effects of cities seems to be a universal trait of human societies, the empirical pattern in respect of violent crime is of relatively recent historical origin. Research on crime in 19th-century Europe widely demonstrates that violence was primarily a phenomenon found in the poor rural areas at the periphery of the modern nation-state (Eisner, 2001;
Johnson, 1995; Thome, 2002) And it is probably only since the past half century that violent crime has become a primarily urban phenomenon in western Europe.

The third pattern characterising the distribution of interpersonal violence throughout Europe is the unequal distribution within city areas. While ecological studies of crime and delinquency have a long tradition in the United States, stretching back to the seminal work of Shaw and McKay, most European research is of much more recent origin. It suggests, however, that violent offenders over-proportionally live in socially disadvantaged and culturally heterogeneous neighbourhoods, similar to what Shaw and McKay found in Chicago during the 1920s. Consider Figure 2, which compares statistics on police-recorded violent offenders in three European cities. They display offender rates in urban neighbourhoods broken down by the degree of social disadvantage. Although the precise way of measuring disadvantage differs slightly between the three cities, the data consistently suggest higher violent offender rates in the more disadvantaged areas. While these statistics refer to all violent offenders, specific analysis of youthful offenders generally tend to yield similar findings.

Figure 2. Violent offender rates by neighbourhood-level disadvantage, three European cities

Note: Police-recorded offenders, data based on offender residence. Measures of disadvantage differ slightly between cities due to availability of data.

Sources: Basle: (Eisner, 1997). Cologne: data kindly provided by Dietrich Oberwittler, Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law – Freiburg, see Oberwittler (2001). Sheffield: data kindly provided by Anthony B. Bottoms, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge.
Societal responses since the 1990s

On a descriptive level, we thus find that police-recorded juvenile violence has massively increased since about 1990, that violent crime is more prevalent in big cities than in more rural areas and that within cities violence is concentrated in the more disadvantaged neighbourhoods. These three patterns appear to apply quite widely to most western European societies. Some other macro-level patterns may be more specific in that they apply only to some countries. In many countries, for example, poorly integrated immigrant minorities are strongly over-represented among violent youthful offenders. In other countries juveniles, from immigrant minorities seem to be less involved in violent offences. Also, police statistics in some but not all countries appear to suggest a significant lowering of the age-of-onset of police-recorded crime, meaning that more offenders are below ages 15 or even 12.

However, the above-mentioned commonalities have led to some quite similar responses across Europe on various levels. In particular, there has been an increased concern in the mass media, the wider public and amongst political actors about youth violence starting in the early 1990s. During the early 1990s in particular, crime and its combat constituted a prime political issue among all political parties (although ideas about appropriate responses differed, of course). As a result, the last decade of the 20th century saw an unprecedented rise in political initiatives to combat youth violence. In countries with more centralised political systems such as Great Britain, these initiatives were mainly developed as encompassing national schemes. In other countries, actors within the cities initiated moves towards more efforts in preventing youth violence.

As a result – and as this conference has demonstrated – there now exists a bewildering variety of activities, programmes, initiatives and action plans that all aim at reducing youth violence. This multi-coloured garden has grown without any coherent plan. Many of these efforts and programmes require substantive financial and human investments. And given the public concern about the rise in youth violence, politicians have often been most willing to spend money on prevention and intervention programmes.

Whatever the causes of youth violence may be, therefore, they can certainly not be attributed to a general lack of prevention and intervention programmes. If anything, the present generation of youth can be assumed to experience the highest load of state-organised prevention ever organised in the history of the modern state. Why, then, does violence not decline? There may be various reasons for this but I would like to highlight two specific factors that refer directly to the shortcomings of existing prevention programmes:

First, although many new initiatives have been developed over the past ten years, we have pitifully little knowledge about their effectiveness. Probably the most telling evidence in this direction comes from a major research project carried out
by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado. This project, called Blueprints for Violence Prevention, reviewed 600 American prevention programmes, to identify scientifically established signs that the programmes were generating their intended effects. Finally, only eleven of these could be established as model programmes in that they had been shown to be effective in reducing adolescent violent crime, aggression, delinquency, and substance abuse. This does not necessarily imply that all the other programmes were ineffective. But it does demonstrate that at present we are confronted with a massive lack of knowledge about what works and what doesn’t. And this situation is probably even more acute in Europe than in the United States, where there is a much longer tradition of methodologically sophisticated evaluation.

Secondly, there appears to be a lack of collaboration between local practice and academic research. In part, this may be due to divergent interests of practitioners and academics. Practitioners such as social workers or head teachers may primarily seek short-term solutions to pressing problems. Many academics, in contrast, have little immediate interest in the everyday running of practical activities. Also, European social-science research on individual-level violence, whether pertaining to youth or to adults, has traditionally been highly fragmented with a predominance of national research agendas and methodologies over a European-wide exchange of ideas and research findings.

Towards evidence-based prevention programmes: some underpinnings

As a result, we generally lack empirical information about what prevention programmes actually do, and where we do have well-founded evidence, it suggests that not many programmes actually do what they promised to do. There is hence a need for better approaches that will eventually help to improve the quality of violence prevention. In what follows I will briefly sketch out some elements of one possible approach to this goal. Its main conceptual basis is the combination of (a) a life-course perspective on juvenile problem behaviour (LeBlanc, 1997); (Catalano and Hawkins, 1996; Hoffmann and Cerbone, 1999; Sampson and Laub 1993) (Benson 2002) and (b) the idea of risk-focused prevention (Farrington, 2001a). The underpinning of risk-focused prevention is the (positivist) belief that a (potential) cause of some effect has been adequately identified if the artificial manipulation of the cause results in concomitant change in the effect. Effective prevention hence needs to correctly identify the causes of violent behaviour, manipulate these causes in the desired direction by means of targeted activities and observe whether the intended effects can actually be found. In respect of violence prevention this implies that problem behaviour can be reduced by effectively targeting individual, family, school and neighbourhood risk factors that have been shown to influence causally problem behaviour. In addition, risk-focused prevention aims at promoting or strengthening those protective factors that have been shown to decrease the probability of problem behaviour over the life-course. Risk-focused prevention models are thus rooted in research-based knowledge, in an
explicit model of the cause-effect mechanisms to be affected, and in a commitment to systematic evaluation of the achieved results. Most existing intervention or prevention programmes fail to satisfy these criteria.

The developmental or life-course perspective departs from the notion that manifestations of juvenile problem behaviour (for example violence, vandalism, alcohol abuse) may be understood as the result of various forces shaping the life-trajectory of an individual (Sampson and Laub, 1993). In this respect, the life-course perspective fundamentally differs from latent-trait approaches, which assume delinquent propensities to be relatively stable after the first formative years of life (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). However, different theoretical approaches can be distinguished within the life-course perspective. These include, for example, Catalano and Hawkin’s social development model (Catalano and Hawkins, 1996), LeBlanc’s multilayered control theory (LeBlanc, 1997), Thornberry’s interactional theory (Thornberry, 1997), or Sampson and Laub’s age-graded theory of informal social control (Sampson and Laub, 1993). While these theories differ in the precise causal mechanisms assumed to account for empirical regularities, they are based on a widely shared consensus about the most relevant correlates and risk-factors to be taken into consideration.

Research over the past two decades has made remarkable progress in identifying those factors that increase the risk of problem behaviour during adolescence. This is primarily due to a series of prospective longitudinal studies (Farrington, 1998) (Loeber and Dishion, 1983; Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986). Longitudinal studies are studies that observe respondents repeatedly over time. Hence, they allow for empirically examining the pivotal problem of time order and identifying cause-effect chains. There now exists a substantial volume of work that summarises the nature and predictive strength of risk variables associated with various types of externalising problem behaviour including violence (Lipsey and Derzon, 1998; Loeber and Dishion, 1983; Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986). It strongly suggests that a large number of factors combine to promote or inhibit youth problem behaviour. Reviewing all relevant factors is beyond the scope of this paper. We hence restrain the subsequent discussion to the most important factors identified in the major respective studies with a special view to possibilities for prevention and intervention (for an excellent review see Farrington, 2001a). These may be conveniently broken down into individual, family, peer, school, neighbourhood, and wider societal factors.

However, it may be important to first highlight three interrelated general findings of life-course research that have important implications for prevention and intervention. First, longitudinal studies suggest a relatively high degree of stability of externalising problem behaviour over time in the sense that a high level of problem behaviour at a younger age predicts problem behaviour at a later age (Tolan and Gorman-Smith, 1998). This appears to be especially true in respect of aggressive and violent behaviour. Reviewing several longitudinal studies, Olweus (1979), for example, found an average correlation of 0.63 between subsequent
age-groups. Later research has found somewhat lower, but still very high stability coefficients over the life-course (see, for example Moffitt, Caspi, Rutter and Silva, 2001). Second, longitudinal research now convincingly demonstrates a consistent link between the age of onset of delinquent behaviour and the likelihood of persistent serious offending (Moffitt, 1994). As a rule, an early start of delinquent and disruptive behaviour predicts a higher likelihood of serious offending during adolescence and adulthood. Farrington (1998), for example, found that about half of the men who had been convicted of a violent crime between ages 10 and 16, were again convicted for a violent offence between age 17 and 24. Among those without conviction during adolescence, however, only 8% were convicted at a later age. In the “Zurich youth survey” we retrospectively examined the start of a delinquent career. Results showed that offending prior to age 10 was a strong predictor of various types of delinquent behaviour at age 15/16 (Eisner, Manzoni and Ribeaud, 2000a). Also, Lipsey and Derzon (1998) meta-analysed thirty-four longitudinal studies and found that general problem behaviour (disruptive and aggressive behaviour, at ages 6-11) was the best predictor of violence and serious delinquency at ages 15-25. Third, different types of problem behaviour display a strong tendency to correlate in the sense that behaviours such as property crime, truancy, aggression and substance-use tend to co-occur within the same persons (Elliott, Huizinga and Ageton, 1985; Hawkins, Herrenkohl, Farrington, Brewer, Catalano and Harachi, 1998). Violent adolescents, for example, have a highly overproportionate risk for theft, burglary, or substance abuse (Eisner, Manzoni, and Ribeaud 2000a; Sosin, Koepsell, Rivara, and Mercy 1995).

These consistent findings have various implications for effective prevention programmes. They suggest, first, that interventions at an early age are more likely to be effective since they intervene in the life-course before or during the onset of serious delinquent behaviour. In this vein, the home visitation programme described by Olds et al. (Olds, Henderson, Chamberlin and Tatelbaum, 1986) has become famous since it showed important long-lasting and positive effects of interventions that occurred during the first year after a child’s birth. Also, the generality of problem behaviour may explain why effective prevention programmes have positive effects across a wide range of behavioural manifestations.

The high biographic continuity of different manifestations of antisocial behaviour has contributed to a strong interest, within life-course research, in relatively stable personality factors associated with delinquency. Several of those are now generally accepted. These include hyperactivity, restlessness, attention deficits, impulsivity, risk-taking, low empathy, and poor delay of gratification (Loeber and Dishion, 1983; Nagin and Tramblay, 1999). These factors, measured at early phases of the life-course, have now been shown to predict a variety of behavioural outcomes during adolescence, such as disruptive behaviour, delinquency, violence, truancy, drug and alcohol consumption, and teenage pregnancy (Caspí, Moffitt, Silva, Loeber, Krueger and Schmutte, 1994; Klinteberg, Andersson, Magnusson and Statin, 1993; Moffitt, Caspi, Rutter and Silva, 2001).
Identification of these individual-level risk factors has led to the development of prevention techniques that target impulsiveness and low empathy (Ross and Fabiano, 1985). These cognitive or social-skills training programmes are devised to improve creative problem-solving abilities, teach skills for solving interpersonal problems and promote recognition and understanding of other people’s feelings. Several of these programmes have been tested and shown to be effective in reducing problem behaviour.

Longitudinal research also generally finds that family factors are important in predicting various types of problem behaviour. In a recent review, Farrington (Farrington, 2001a: 670) distinguishes five groups of factors found to be associated with offending, namely criminal and antisocial parents; large family size; poor child-rearing methods; parental abuse or neglect; and parental conflict or disrupted families. Poor child rearing is a multidimensional concept and includes, amongst others, lack of support, inconsistent rewards and punishments, harsh discipline and lack of parental control and supervision. All of these appear to be relatively consistently correlated with an increased risk for problem behaviour (Hawkins et al., 1998).

Several types of prevention programmes specifically target family risk factors. Among those, parent-training programmes appear to be the most promising approaches. These programmes generally aim at improving child-rearing skills among parents. Several experimental studies now show that such programmes can be effective in reducing childhood antisocial behaviour (Patterson, Reid and Dishion, 1992; Scott, Spender, Doolan and Jacobs, 2001).

Not least because children spend a large part of their time at school, school factors have long been one of the main areas of interest to researchers in developmental criminology. Gottfredson (2001) provides an excellent recent review of the relevant research. There is no doubt that a series of school factors are correlated with youth problem behaviour. Among these, poor academic record, low motivation, low trust in teachers, frequent truancy, and low occupational aspirations appear to correlate regularly with an increased risk of antisocial behaviour. Also, in school systems with different schooling levels, the lowest levels tend to have over-proportionate shares of violent and delinquent behaviour. However, causal directions have remained rather unclear despite the efforts of longitudinal research (Huizinga and Jakob-Chien, 1998). While latent-trait approaches argue that these findings suggest a common underlying personality, interactional life-course approaches argue that poor academic achievement and delinquency may mutually reinforce each other (Thornberry, 1997). Other research has focused on school characteristics rather than academic achievements of individuals. Results here suggest that a poor school climate, negative teacher-pupil relations and unclear and inconsistent enforcement of rules constitute factors associated with an increased risk of youth delinquency offending. Hence many intervention and prevention programmes intervene at the school level. Some programmes have also been evaluated by means of experimental research designs and been found to be effective. These
include, for example, the multiple component programme developed by Hawkins et al. (Hawkins, Cleve and Catalano, 1991) that involves parent-training, teacher-training and child-skills training elements. Also, the anti-bullying programme developed by Olweus (1995) in Norway has been found by several studies to be effective in reducing school violence.

Finally, recent life-course research has returned to examining effects of neighbourhood characteristics originally postulated by Shaw and McKay in the 1920s and 1930s (Shaw and McKay, 1969). It has long been known that levels of delinquent behaviour tend to be higher in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (for a review see Wikström, 1998). Yet much remained unclear as to why and how this statistical association should be interpreted. Recently, however, Samson et al. (Sampson, Morenoff and Earls, 1999; Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls, 1997) have closely investigated the effects of social context on delinquent careers of children and juveniles in an encompassing study of Chicago neighbourhoods. First results suggest that low “collective efficacy” – a low sense of community, little trust among residents and a lack of readiness to engage in common goals – contribute to predicting levels of serious violent crime. They interpret these findings as evidence showing differences in informal social control at neighbourhood level, which then has an impact on child and adolescent socialisation.

Several prevention and intervention programmes include community level approaches. Among these, the Communities that Care Programme, originally developed by Hawkins, has recently attracted much attention (Communities that Care, 1997). Outside of the United States, it is currently being implemented in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Australia. Rather than being a substantively coherent programme, Communities that Care involves a process of community mobilisation, problem identification and specialist-supported development of measures based on a menu of evaluated strategies.

Despite the remarkable progress in identifying factors that contribute to explaining problem behaviour over the life-course, many unanswered questions still remain. More particularly, the precise ways in which personality, family, school and neighbourhood level factors – as well as other layers not discussed here such as youth subcultures, mass media or national legal frameworks – intertwine, has remained largely uncovered ground. Some research suggests that the likelihood of problem behaviour simply increases with the number of risk factors, suggesting a simple additive model (Farrington, 2001b). Others, however, have found that effects of one risk factor are contingent on the presence of another risk factor, thus suggesting interactive models (Wikström, 2002; Wikström and Loeber, 1999). However, many longitudinal studies have primarily examined individual, family and peer-group level variables while neglecting explicit measurement of the more distant contextual variables.

Also, most longitudinal studies have primarily focused on the development of models that explain the rise of delinquent dispositions in the sense of relatively
stable propensities within an individual. However, much research now suggests that situational factors (for example temptation, opportunities, group dynamics) play an important role in understanding various types of problem behaviour (Bottoms, 1994; Cornish and Clarke, 1986; Felson, 1994; McCarthy and Hagan, 1992). Those situational factors are embedded in routine activities and life-styles. Wikström (Wikström 2002), for example, finds adolescent delinquency to be strongly associated with distinct patterns of more general everyday leisure-time activities. It hence seems desirable to more examine closely how different styles of everyday behaviour emerge during the transition from childhood to adolescence and in what ways these influence manifestations of problem behaviour.

Furthermore, as Reiss (Reiss, 1994) already stated almost ten years ago, there is a lack of cross-nationally comparative longitudinal studies. Increasing comparability across macro-level social contexts is important because it may enhance our understanding of macro-level differences in problem behaviour between countries. Eisner (Eisner, 2002), for example, found that, despite similarity in individual-level predictors, various types of adolescent problem behaviour show very different patterns at the cross-national level.

Finally, there still is a considerable gap in studies that combine a longitudinal design with the goal of evaluating intervention outcomes. Most existing well-designed evaluation research has been done in the United States. In Europe, though, many programmes that aim at targeting violence and delinquency are widely disseminated without pilot testing. Careful studies that test the effects of interventions after they are implemented are rarely done. Furthermore, if evaluations are done, they rarely include attempts at effectively assessing the outcome, including randomised experimental or semi-experimental designs. In fact, we are not aware of any Swiss programme in the field of violence and delinquency prevention whose outcome has been evaluated in a systematic way. However, failure to evaluate is now known to have a series of potentially adverse effects. Ineffective programmes divert money and attention away from more successful interventions. But even worse, some well-meaning programmes may cause more harm than good (Petrosino, Petrosino and Finckenauer, 2000).

**The city of Zurich prevention project**

In part as a reaction to the situation sketched out above, various institutions in Switzerland are presently co-financing a major research effort with a view to improving the present situation. It aims to contribute to scientific knowledge about the early development of problem behaviour during the transition from childhood to early adolescence. It also aims to promote practical knowledge about effective intervention and prevention programmes. To achieve these goals, the project combines a longitudinal study with a co-ordinated evidence-based multilevel intervention programme targeting primary school children. In part modelled on the “communities that care” approach developed by Hawkins and Catalano in the
United States (Communities that Care, 1997) the project distinguishes a problem-identification phase from a programme development and implementation phase.

**Problem identification**

The project that corresponds to the problem identification phase has recently been completed (project 1). It aims at providing background information for a risk-focused, multi-level intervention programme. This includes a systematic review of evidence on social conditions and problem behaviour among children and juveniles in urban neighbourhoods, a review of the existing intervention and prevention structures in the city, and a report on scientific knowledge about effective intervention and prevention programmes. The first part of the project examined the present problem situation as regards the extent and the correlates of violence and delinquency in the City of Zurich. Police data suggest a strong increase in youth violence over the past ten years in the metropolitan area. Although absolute figures remain small, the strongest increase in police-recorded violence was found amongst the youngest age group (that is below age 12). Analysis of recent self-report and victimisation data suggest higher levels of violence in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Furthermore, we systematically examined individual, family, school and neighbourhood risk factors known to be associated with youth violence in international research. This analysis was based on the Zurich youth survey carried out in 1999 (Eisner, Manzoni and Ribeaud, 2000b). Not surprisingly, most risk factors known from other studies could also be found in the Zurich survey. A separate analysis also suggests that risk factors are highly similar for male and female adolescents. However, male immigrant minority youth emerge as a high-risk group. According to police statistics, immigrants commit almost 80% of youth violent offences in the Canton of Zurich. Self-report data also support the notion of a considerable overrepresentation of immigrants in violent behaviour. This finding is highly relevant for developing an effective prevention and intervention programme since it highlights the importance of considering language and cross-cultural communication issues in developing such a programme.

The second element of the project examined existing structures of prevention and intervention in the City of Zurich by means of twenty semi-structured interviews with experts working in different areas (such as social work, school, police). Results here show that the City of Zurich possesses a relatively dense net of respective activities targeting different age-groups. We identified over sixty programmes and institutions that can be considered as part of violence prevention and intervention activities. However, we also identify several gaps and weaknesses. Firstly, none of the existing programmes has been evaluated and hence nothing is known at present about their effectiveness. Secondly, many programmes appear to rely on punctual one-off interventions after an event has occurred rather than continuous activities embedded, for example, in the regular school curriculum. Thirdly, our impression was that family and parenting programmes are given comparatively little weight in comparison to, for example, school-based programmes.
Finally, no existing programme is explicitly based on a setting approach that integrates individual, family and community level activities in a comprehensive way.

The third element of the present research involves a standardised survey among a random sample of 503 school teachers that teach classes from age 5 (kindergarten) through 15 (end of compulsory schooling). The survey included, amongst others, questions on perceived levels of problem behaviour and perceived need for prevention measures. Analyses on perceived levels of problem behaviour showed some interesting results. It appears, for example, that the proportion of pupils considered to display overly aggressive behaviour is approximately the same in all age-groups, namely about 12% to 15%. About 2% to 5% of children and juveniles at any age appear to belong to the high-risk group as regards externalising problem behaviour. The results also show that levels of violent problem behaviour are correlated with a low socio-economic status of the neighbourhood, a poor school climate, poor motivation of parents to participate in school-related activities, and high levels of other types of problem behaviour. We also found that the existing prevention programmes work at least in the sense that teachers in classes with high levels of problem behaviour also make greater use of the programmes and advice structures offered to them. However, many teachers expressed a need for more and more effective prevention and intervention programmes, particularly those working in classes with high levels of problem-behaviour.

The fourth element of the project consists of a thorough review of existing academic knowledge about effective prevention and intervention programmes. In addition to summarising existing reviews of American research (for example the above-mentioned Blueprints Project), we also tried to include findings from evaluations done in Europe. However, it seems that extremely little research has as yet been carried out in Europe that might qualify as high-quality, randomised outcome evaluation of prevention and intervention programmes.

Programme development and implementation

Based on these elements of the projects, the final report initially recommended that nine model programmes be considered for implementation. The programmes have four qualities in common:

– they have been effective in high-quality evaluation research elsewhere;
– they target risk factors that are relevant in the context of the city of Zurich;
– they fill gaps not yet covered by ongoing prevention and intervention programmes;
– they can be evaluated by means of the proposed longitudinal study.

On the basis of this study, the city authorities are in the process of considering the implementation of two major programmes, with three general characteristics (project 2). Firstly, the programmes primarily target primary school children, before most overt manifestations of juvenile problem behaviour start. Secondly, they
primarily focus on risk groups in structurally disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the City of Zurich. Thirdly, they adapt scientific knowledge on effective intervention programmes to the specific needs and pre-existing structures in the City of Zurich. The programmes will be delivered on a randomised basis in order to facilitate an empirical assessment of their effectiveness.

Although no final decisions have been made, it seems that the city authorities may implement two programmes, one family-based and the other school-based. Triple P, the family-based programme, will be proposed to the parents of a 50% randomised sub-sample of all children included in the study during the first year. Originally developed in Australia, this programme has been translated into German and is run by the Centre for Family Counselling and Research at the University of Freiberg. Triple P has been evaluated by several studies and shown to be effective in improving family-management techniques, parental confidence in effective child-rearing and improving behavioural outcomes, including health behaviour and aggression. During the second year, a school-based programme will be introduced. We are currently in the process of deciding between different alternatives. However, each of the programmes considered includes an extensive curricula aimed at improving social and cognitive skills among primary school children.

**Evaluating the outcome**

The third study consists of a longitudinal study of 1 thousand children in the city of Zurich, includes three waves and starts at age 7. We are currently in the process of fine tuning the details of this study and can describe only general features in this paper. The first wave of the longitudinal study will start before the implementation of the prevention programmes. Three waves of interviews will be conducted every twelve months. During each wave, interviews will be conducted with the children themselves, one parent, and the teacher of the respective class. Both the family- and the school-based prevention programmes will be randomly allocated to the participants. Surveys at years two and three will help to determine whether and to what degree the prevention programme can be shown to have had the desired effects. During each wave, the questionnaires will include broadly based measurements of problem behaviour such as easily provoked brawls and arguments, bullying, foul language, disruption of school lessons, and destroying the belongings of others. Also, care will be taken to include measurements of various risk factors that we expect to be positively affected by the prevention programmes.

**Conclusions**

The project that I have just sketched is a deliberate attempt at progressing beyond the current state of knowledge about programmes that intend to reduce youth violence. There may be many other possible approaches. But given the current public concern about violence there appears to exist an important demand for more knowledge about the types of programmes that produce the intended effects,
programmes that are useless and programmes that may actually cause more harm than good. In this respect, there are several issues that in my view should be considered in further research. First, it is important to encourage and promote actively collaboration between policy makers, local actors, and researchers. Sometimes, such collaboration can be organised at a national or even cross-national level. I believe, however, that many of those activities need to be locally based in that they are in a better position to take into account the specific circumstances of a given region and create an exchange of ideas between different stakeholders. This, it should be said, is by no means a simple process and academic researchers often find themselves poorly equipped for dealing with issues at the interface between research and practice. In particular, when doing this kind of research, it is important to have a basic understanding of the very different cognitive frames of political and mass-media actors that sometimes lead to misunderstandings about what research can and what it cannot do. Secondly, there is a considerable need for better and more high-quality evaluation of both prevention and intervention programmes if one wants to make violence prevention an activity based on a gradual accumulation of knowledge. It should be borne in mind, however, that high-quality evaluation in natural settings (as compared to experimental studies) will always remain a cost-intensive activity that requires committed funding bodies.

The perspective I have outlined in this paper implies that we often want to learn about possible effects over periods of years rather than weeks or months, let alone that high-quality evaluation projects require lengthy preparation phases. This brings me to my third and final point: since the kind of research needed to promote practically relevant knowledge is costly in terms of money and time, and because much research will necessarily be local, there is a strong need to further collaboration across Europe. This could take the form of some kind of clearing institution to promote relevant research, and one that would actively disseminate practical and relevant information and encourage an exchange of information, all on an on-going basis.

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Violence in schools – a challenge for the local community


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Violence in schools – a challenge for the local community
SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN EUROPE – DISCUSSION, KNOWLEDGE AND UNCERTAINTY

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In 1998 (26-28 November) the Council of Europe organised a symposium in Brussels on the theme “Violence in schools: awareness-raising, prevention, penalties” (Council of Europe, 1999). Just over four years later, in December 2002, a further meeting in Strasbourg offered an opportunity to assess the progress made in Europe on this subject, as well as the continuing uncertainties and contradictions. This paper is intended to summarise the relevant changes and discussions with reference to a range of initiatives in various areas, though it makes no claim to exhaustiveness.

The varied nature of these initiatives calls for a form of presentation that rejects a fuzzy consensus that excludes certain lines of argument and thus, in turn, potential changes. As that great European Max Weber (Weber, 1919) noted, the scholar’s ethic is the ethic of discussion. An academic who is asked to produce a survey on school violence must bring the relevant discussions and disagreements into the open. To take an example, there was a short and lively debate at the Strasbourg meeting on the role of religion in preventing violence. For certain participants, particularly French ones, simply referring to religion amounted to an obscurantist attack on liberty. Yet for former Eastern bloc countries religion was a symbol of rediscovered freedom after years of spiritual repression or restrictions. This paper will therefore attempt to highlight areas of agreement and disagreement, with constant reference to the current state of research into violence, in Europe and throughout the world.

School violence in Europe: ancient history, recent and growing concern

Punishment and reform: childhood as threat

Those who think of school violence as a recent phenomenon need to be reminded that historically the period of schooling has always been equated with violence. This has been confirmed by a number of writers (for example, Crubellier, 1979; Giolitto, 1986; Debarbieux, 1996). In both ancient and modern Europe, and indeed in the world of Antiquity, staff brutality and pupil revolts form a constant backdrop to the history of education. Historians1 largely concur that brutality was once

1. See, for example, the works included in Becchi and Julia (eds.) (1996), Storia dell’infanzia.
a recurrent aspect of school life, and that it was only gradually called into question with the development of the “civilising standards” referred to by Norbert Elias (Elias, 1936). One of the basic underpinnings of western thought has been the conviction that childhood was an age of savagery, unreason and sin, which education was designed to correct. This despite certain philosophical protests from such as Montaigne or certain more gentle eras, such as possibly the early Roman Empire (Néraudeau, 1984) or later the emergence of a more optimistic school of thought based on the cult of the infant Jesus (Morel, 1997).

Ancient and less ancient cultures always mistrusted childhood because they mistrusted the new. This was quite the opposite of any theory of progress that viewed children as a hope for the future. Popular sentiment, like many literary and philosophical works, was imbued with the belief in the superiority and greater strength of the men of the past. The ideal was to resemble them as closely as possible. Any abnormality in children, as in nature, was seen as a sign of impending doom. As with the angry earth, it was evidence of a decline into bestiality. Evil births were those of children who did not resemble their parents (Hesiod, Works, 243), who did not, in other words, conform to their type and were unable to stand upright, which is humanity’s natural state (Galen, De Usu Partium, III, 2). Education was seen primarily as a form of breaking in and of turning the human being into a man, as a corrective to the natural and animal-like excesses of childhood. This was the basis of the pedagogical theory of reform that was to dominate western education until the 19th century. As Vernant (1986) observed, during their period of growth before crossing the threshold of adulthood, young persons occupied a liminal, uncertain and equivocal position. Moreover the notion of natural childhood violence forming part of an innate aggressiveness may also have been rooted in the western definition of man and his relations with his forebears. The well-established notion of the age of reason, which forms a clear dividing line between children and the rest of humanity, plays a major part in this formulation (Joly, 1982).

By defining man as a “reasonable animal”, western philosophy establishes the initial human fault-line between reason and its counterpart, an innate irrationality that bestialises children, who have not yet achieved reason. As the Bible says, “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Proverbs, 22, 15). And in contrast to the Gospel message “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew, 18, 3), St Augustine, who had a profound influence on the reforming school of education (Giolitto, 1986), thought that given full rein to their instincts, children would certainly become major criminals.

Slowly these representations of childhood changed and the importance of cruelty as an element of their upbringing began to lose sway. Even so, children in the west...
have been beaten, punished and disciplined from earliest Antiquity until the most recent times (see Prairat, 1994, for certain historical aspects of this educational paralysis). St Augustine himself (Confessions 1, IX, 15) asks God “is there any man who, by cleaving devoutly to thee, is endowed with so great a courage that he can regard indifferently those racks and hooks and other torture weapons from which men throughout the world pray so fervently to be spared; and can they scorn those who so greatly fear these torments, just as my parents were amused at the torments with which our teachers punished us boys?” Hardly surprising then if later he wrote that offered the choice between death or a reversion to childhood, who would not reel in horror and opt for the former (City of God, XXI, 14).

In the long history of western education, the perception of teacher cruelty, like that of parents, was far from negative. There was nothing unusual about this “black pedagogy”, as Alice Miller has called it. Smacking, flogging and caning were used quite consciously and deliberately on children who were actually required to praise the canes they had cut. German children sang of returning to the house from the woods with their arms full of beneficial branches since the birch provided a means of encouraging them to behave properly in their everyday lives.

The counterpart of this teacher violence was an equally high level of violence among pupils. Among juveniles in former peasant, and then industrial, communities, initiation rites and group confrontations formed part of the socialisation process, as illustrated in Pergaud’s famous novel *La Guerre des Boutons*, though the same applied to the old nobility. In the working classes, probably right up to the 1960s, peer group violence was long considered to be a ritual part of young persons’ transition to adulthood. But even among the middle classes, a 19th century Malthusian-inspired preference for a cherished child in a small family led to new forms of social control and education which, while in principle non-violent, amounted to a close-knit network of prohibitions. Violence then became, according to Crubellier (1979, p. 73), the rejected aspect of juvenile social behaviour and during recreation time its prohibition resulted in the banning of any games that might include a certain measure of such violence. This reminds us of Foucault (1975), whose analysis of modern power involves a demonstration of how liberal societies give birth to a series of gentle but continuing constraints that are beyond the imagination of their predecessors. The great 19th century lycée pupils’ revolts and their accompanying widespread disorders then appear as a form of juvenile resistance – part of a compression-explosion process and one that remained a force to be reckoned with and continued to pose a risk throughout that period (Crubellier, 1979, p. 150). From this standpoint, popular violence is seen as a cultural phenomenon, a form of socialisation that has become disorganised in modern and even more post-industrial societies, where, as Dubet observes (Dubet, 1999) the disappearance of the blue-collar worker reflects the drying-up of the working class world. Tolerated deviancy is then succeeded by rage and struggle.

What we call violence is ideologically and historically determined. Our current concern about violence in education also reflects our changing relationship to
violence. From being accepted, if not actually encouraged, it has become intolerable to us in Europe. This is not a universal phenomenon but it is an indication of a new shared vision of childhood. This vision oscillates between the continuing notion of totally uncivilised children requiring a form of orthopaedic correction and the consequences of what in 1900 the Swedish educationalist Ellen Key called the century of the child, with affection preferred to restraint, and prevention to punishment. The scales are never fully balanced and the Strasbourg meeting coincided with a period in several European countries when public and politicians are clearly more concerned with security and its accompanying armoury of enforcement measures than with prevention.

School violence in Europe: a new concern

Set against the centuries of cruelty touched on above, recent concern about school violence has to be seen in the context of a profound and continuing change in educational theory and practice. Violence against children is no longer tolerated and paradoxically this concern reflects a much more peaceful situation. This is in no way to imply that current violence should be dismissed or downplayed. Past sufferings neither explain nor excuse the violence of the present.

Nevertheless this concern about school violence was late to emerge as a national and European Community political issue. The official history of violence in schools in Europe is of very recent origin and features certain key dates: a meeting of experts organised by the European Commission in Utrecht in 1997, in preparation for the European Council meeting in June 1999, the European programmes stemming from this meeting and in particular the Connect Programme transversal projects; the Council of Europe conference in Brussels in 1998 and, lastly, the Strasbourg conference in 2002, under the auspices of the Secretary General’s integrated project on “Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society”. Many meetings have been held in connection with other programmes – since 1998, for example, Socrates and Daphne have often taken this dimension into account – and particular European networks, such as those organised by the six Connect Programme projects. Europe has also hosted the most important international scientific gathering on this subject in the form of a first world congress in Paris in March 2001, which was organised by our observatory, the European Observatory on Violence in Schools, with assistance from the French Ministry of Education and the European Commission (Socrates) (Debarbieux and Blaya, 2001) and attended by delegations from thirty-five countries and every continent. The impression is one of intense mobilisation in little more than the last five years.

The first official European Community involvement was a conference of experts and senior officials from all the European Union countries, organised by the Netherlands presidency and held in Utrecht from 24-26 February 1997 in preparation

for the June European Council and the parallel meeting of education ministers. We will consider this meeting later at greater length because it is particularly revealing about the opening stages of the debate in Europe (Debarbieux, 2001) and forms a baseline against which we can measure changes and new developments in how the problem is perceived. The conference theme was “safe(r) schools”. By no means were all of the countries represented by experts at the conference,1 and only some of them – Britain, Germany, Spain, France, Netherlands and Sweden – had produced even provisional reviews of the situation and research in their respective countries. Certain other national experts referred to the lack of research or reliable data, or even said that local institutions denied the existence of a problem about whose frequency very little was known, despite some distressing evidence to the contrary.

The purpose of the Utrecht meeting was to prepare conclusions for the European Union’s Council of Education Ministers, on the subject of safety at school. The experts’ main function therefore was to assist the political decision-making process. But with what precise focus? Was it really school violence, which was then very much an issue in France but still much less so in other European countries?

In practice, there was an ambiguity in the very proposals for this meeting, reflecting certain social, political, cultural and perhaps academic differences. One example was the preparatory note circulated by the Netherlands presidency before the Education Committee meeting of 19 December 1996 (Ref. SN 5094/96 EDUC). The note stated in connection with the theme “safe(r) schools” that it was sometimes also referred to as “combating violence in schools”. However this apparently trivial word “sometimes” concealed a semantic dispute about our initial conception of these phenomena. The debate was first concerned with whether the term “violence”, which some countries rejected and might be considered too dramatic, should be used at all or replaced by something more neutral. But above all it focused on a particular approach to disturbances in school. According to the preparatory note, they should examine the possibilities of reducing or preventing antisocial behaviour between pupils themselves and between pupils and staff. The summarising report by Ton Mooij (1997) therefore included two parts that were important for understanding the initial strategic approach: one on dealing with and preventing antisocial behaviour in pupils and the other on encouraging “prosocial” pupil behaviour. Very logically he proposed that any European initiative should come under the heading of dealing with antisocial and promoting prosocial behaviour among pupils.

From the outset, the summarising report saw school disturbances as primarily a behavioural phenomenon, mainly linked to the pupils, even though there were also suggestions of a multiplicity of causal factors. The resulting programmes were therefore concerned with changing behaviour or encouraging acceptable conduct.

1. The countries represented were Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and the Netherlands.
This was certainly not to deny the relevance of some of these programmes. However, certain specialists thought that a strictly behavioural approach oversimplified the problem and considered it – the term was used – a little too politically correct. Such an approach tended to downplay schools’ initial contribution to such behaviour. Naturally everyone acknowledged that schools were not responsible for all violence and opposed any excessive simplification of the debate to an automatic link between violence in school and a form of inbuilt institutional violence. Such an approach owed more to sloganeering than to scientific proof and simply served to cast blame on the teaching profession. However fundamental criticisms were levelled at the behaviourist approach, leading to its rejection by certain participants. The main one was that it paid too little heed to the environmental and institutional factors conditioning individual behaviour and their role in fomenting violence. Moreover such environmental factors needed to be seen in a broader political context. Briefly, they should not be exaggerated but the responsibilities of schools and other educational, social and political institutions had to enter into the equation. It could also be argued that encouraging so-called “prosocial” behaviour, involving the elimination of differences and imposition of a standard model of acceptable behaviour, reflected a form of soft totalitarianism. Discussion also focused on the promotion and dissemination of “good practices” – so beloved of European programmes – in a form of pump-priming exercise aimed at raising average standards. This might simply induce guilt feelings in those whose difficult circumstances in particularly sensitive areas and below-standard professional working conditions made it very hard to implement practices held up as models, irrespective of social context and without any real assessment of their transferability.

Differences of opinion about the use of the term “violence” also raised the important question of how to define the social phenomenon in question and thus the scope of any policy initiatives. Focusing solely on “undesirable behaviour” could oversimplify the debate and exclude certain aspects of the situation on the ground. Once again there was a risk of sacrificing effectiveness for political correctness. Without anticipating the results of research into the frequency of the most serious types of incident, it was perhaps necessary to find a strong term that would encompass such conduct as well as the general features of delinquent behaviour in European schools.

The discussions about definitions highlighted the links between recent research and policies directly concerned with school violence and older research and practice already well-established in northern Europe and now extending to certain southern countries, in part through the marketing of the well-known Olweus questionnaire. These researches and practices, whose importance is not in question and to which we will return, were not concerned with violence as a whole and did not use the expression. Instead they focused on school bullying (Olweus, 1978, 1993, 1999; see also Blaya, 2000). The meeting opted for caution in its conclusions. The terms “prosocial” and “antisocial” behaviour were omitted from the proposed
wording of the programme while the word “violence” itself did not appear. The initial formulation “promoting safety at school” was retained.

However, subsequent meetings and the official programme descriptions had no reservations about the term violence, whose use has become frequent and almost routine. This applies equally to European and national programmes. Blaya (2001) noted for example that whereas the word had hardly been used in the English school context even four years previously, it had now become common currency. The same applies to European academic and technical publications, not to mention the media. In the above-mentioned Council of Europe report (Council of Europe, 1999), François Dubet’s introduction is simply headed “Violence in Schools”, while Nicole Vettenburg’s contribution is “Towards a Definition of the Concept of Violence”. The specialists’ contributions to the Utrecht meeting have been revised and published on a number of occasions in journals that have immediately placed them under the heading of school violence as such. Similarly a special edition of the well-known Spanish journal Revista de Educación (1997) was entitled La Violencia en los Centros Educativos, while that of the main French specialist education journal Revue Française de Pédagogie (RFP 1998) was La violence à l’école: approches européennes. Two other important works to emerge from the Connect Project assess the situations in ten European countries and describe various programmes and policies. The first, produced by the European Observatory of School Violence, is entitled Violence in school: ten approaches in Europe (Debarbieux and Blaya, 2001), and the second, edited by Peter K. Smith of London University, is called Violence in schools: the response in Europe (Smith, 2003). The two projects kept in close contact with each other and some authors feature in both works. The European Commission agreed to contribute to the financing of a European Observatory on Violence in Schools, in itself a political act, even though the amount was very limited and only for two years. However, such official interest and academic and political events are probably less important than what is happening on the ground. The fact that following the recent meeting in Strasbourg it has been possible to produce a compendium of case studies is evidence of such activity, and of the measure of success achieved by the anti-violence movement. The Strasbourg meeting was primarily attended by those active in the field and heads of institutions, which shows that the problem’s existence is no longer being denied.

A suspect movement?

Naturally the reasons for the anti-violence movement and the new concern about violence could raise suspicions. They might simply reinforce traditional representations of children as essentially feral creatures and thus justify excessively regressive policies to control them. In other words they could be an excuse for imposing constraints as part of the free-market society’s concern for security. Wacquant (1999) has warned of a new punitive culture originating in America and dragging old Europe into a neoconservative philosophy whose advocacy of zero
tolerance for young delinquents serves to criminalise poverty from the earliest age. All these activities might then be simply a manifestation of media- and politically-manipulated public opinion. Such criticisms are crude but not without foundation.

It is clear, for example, that much of the interest in violence in schools can be traced back to overdrawn media campaigns in most European countries. Spectacular news stories about quite exceptional events are given prominent coverage to support the notion of barbarian hordes of children, all somehow tied up with collapsing school standards (itself particularly associated with one-parent families), and simplistic explanations based on the direct influence of television or video-game violence or the role of immigration. This was the case in Germany when reunification led to heightened xenophobic tensions (Funk, 2001). In Britain (Blaya, 2001) the Dunblane massacre acted as a catalyst and media attention has been equally in evidence in Sweden (Lindström, RFP 1998) and Spain (Moreno, RFP, 1997). In France the subject seems to be an inexhaustible treasure trove for the press and television. Research and action programmes have often been sponsored by government and the authorities. In 1995 a joint education and interior ministry invitation to tender provided work for nearly a dozen teams (Charlot and Emin, 1997). Most of the major European programmes, such as Socrates, Daphne and Connect, have extended eligibility for funding to activities concerned with violence. Programmes to counter bullying have long qualified for national and local assistance, for example in Britain and Sweden.

In other words, both nationally and in Europe school violence has become a marketable commodity on which teams of fieldworkers and researchers base their careers. However, it would be oversimplified and unfair to see this research and fieldwork purely in terms of public sector output, as we have shown elsewhere from an epistemological and political standpoint (Debarbieux, 2001). These activities are more than just a cynical compilation of news items. Far from legitimising a political philosophy that would criminalise poverty, they set out to deconstruct the headlines, develop new research methodologies and improve fieldwork practices in a way that, contrary to the claims of the ultra-left, offers an alternative to purely enforcement-based approaches. The debate has helped to clarify matters and the Strasbourg conference was important in that it revealed the changes under way. More than anything else it has highlighted ways in which this increasing activism has helped to establish a more solid foundation of objective knowledge, as well as the gaps that remain.

**The changing debate in Europe**

What appear to emerge from the Strasbourg conference are certain significant changes compared with the initial 1997 meeting in Utrecht or even with the material published by the Council of Europe after the Brussels meeting (Council of Europe, 1999). I will look at four major changes, which I will then relate to the recent globalisation of the problem. These changes concern the definition of the
term violence, the recognition granted to victims, the growing resort to local solutions and the political dimension of the problem.

First development: accepting a broad definition

In her report, Nicole Vettenburg (Vettenburg, 1999) raises – like many participants at the recent Strasbourg meeting – the vexatious problem of defining violence. The report of the Utrecht meeting shows clearly enough how important this is to an understanding of the problem as it arises today. Vettenburg regards it as a necessary first step: “we must begin by defining the concept of ‘violence’ and applying this definition in practice” (op. cit., p. 31). The fact is, as she insists with many others (Neidhardt, 1986; Debarbieux, 1996; Dubet, 1999, etc.) that neither current terminology nor research uses a clear-cut definition of the term. In her view, this lack of a clear definition makes it hard to explore the problem at European level: “the fact that there is no unequivocal definition and application of the concept of violence means that there is a lack of figures which would enable an overall picture to be established”. Discrepancies between definitions, survey methods, survey periods and so on, also make it impossible to ascertain the number of pupils and teachers subjected to violence in the various countries every year. Because research has started only in the last few years and we have no data on the past, we are also unable to say whether violence in schools is increasing.

This is a crucial point. One of the chief conclusions of the Vettenburg report is, logically, that “in the near future and within a European context it is essential to work towards establishing a common definition”. Four years on, are we closer to doing that? Yes, undoubtedly, but not close enough – and our efforts have probably not been entirely conscious ones. Although the keeping of records on violence in schools has progressed markedly in the last four years (see summaries in Debarbieux and Blaya, 2001, and Smith, 2003), we still have no overall picture of the situation in Europe, and so can say nothing definite. Even here, however, knowledge has progressed, and the conditions needed to start keeping European records are close to being fulfilled.

The first, preliminary point one might make is that the problem of defining violence is clearly an artificial one, and needs to be disposed of as rapidly as possible. As Passeron says (Passeron, 1991), any attempt to confine concepts within the strict limits of a definition “reduces them at once to pale, academic residues, to useless, boiled-down clusters of verbal associations, with no indicative value or vigour”. In methodological terms, we must also beware of treating “violence” as an indivisible whole and studying it as such. Instead, we should multiply the viewpoints (indicators) – one way of reconnecting a concept otherwise too general to be useful with the realities. This process of accumulating separate viewpoints allows us to circle the object of study, building up knowledge which remains provisional and can always be discarded in the light of fresh indicators and further research. Numerous research projects have in fact been carried out, using different indicators, and these all connect with one another. They may not be comparable
term-by-term, but they do illuminate the patterns and processes – for example, the
fact that most victims and aggressors are boys, the extent to which certain people
are victims more than once (a question to which we shall return), and so forth.

In spite of, and with, all these differences, the viewpoints are in fact coming closer.
Firstly, most writers on violence in schools – Nicole Vettenburg herself being one
of them – accept a broad definition of violence, extending beyond criminal
offences to “acts” which are not necessarily offences or which, at least, are rarely
referred to the courts (for example Gottdfredson, 2001; Roché, 1996) and often
connecting them with a general worsening of the climate in schools. This has been
my own position for many years (Debarbieux, 1996, 1999, 2002): one should
listen to the victims in defining violence, which may take the form of a brutal,
random assault, but may also be a wearing succession of varied, stress-inducing
incidents, which are rarely treated as offences, and do not necessarily count as
such. Instead of defining violence from the aggressor’s or the law’s standpoint,
one should start by classifying it from the victims’ standpoint. The most notable
instance of this is undoubtedly the way in which school bullying, which used to be
ignored in discussions of violence, is increasingly accepted as an indicator for part
of the problem and extended beyond peer harassment to include, for example,
arrestment of pupils by teachers and teachers by pupils (Smith, 2003). The first
important change is actual acceptance of the term “violence” (or its even imperfect
translations), which is broader and harsher than the politically correct, behaviourist
model of “antisocial conduct”.

At the same time, acceptance of this term is accompanied by rejection of any hard-
and-fast definition. The complexity and diversity of the problem is recognised, as
is the existence of different sensibilities in Europe. This is important, insofar as
acknowledging complexity means rejecting gurus who have just one answer –
which, for that very reason, is certain not to work. We shall see later that the first
thing this involves is listening more to the victims of violence in schools.

Semantics are sometimes a matter of power, and the semantics of violence might
be left – at least partly – to the victims. In reality, the number of comparative sur-
veys is increasing, even if these are still insufficiently known, or indeed published.
Individual countries are starting to set up scientific data banks, using various indi-
cators, but allowing for the significance, now generally recognised, of repeated
victimhood. International data banks are also being established: they exist for
bullying (for example, Smith, 2003); at our observatory’s urging, they exist or are
starting to operate for “violence” in England, Germany, Belgium, France and
Spain; and they are being set up this year in Brazil and Quebec. The indicators
used are “climate in schools”, commonest types of violence as defined by victims,1
and offences (even though we know that criminal codes themselves are relative

1. The ways in which victims classify violence are not “subjective”, since there are in fact very few
types, with little difference between countries. But the emphasis placed on certain types of “violence”
is conditioned by social position, as well as actual intensity of victimhood: teachers, for example,
always emphasise “verbal violence”, the kind they encounter most frequently, while pupils talk more
about fighting and physical violence.
(Dufour-Gompers, 1992)). There may be others, but the important thing, in terms of method, remains plurality of indicators. In short, the methods exist, and they are being passed on and shared. The European programmes have played a part in this. The time for European syntheses is coming: we already have national syntheses and, in a few years (if not months), we shall have them on a broader level too. Scientists indeed move faster than states: research projects are proliferating, but very few countries have regular surveys. This may, of course, be a good thing: it is a well-known fact that official statistics tend to focus more on action by the police and courts than on actual crime, and always play down minor forms of victimhood. We shall come back to this later.

The participants at the Strasbourg conference also wanted something more than national statistics or international comparisons. In their conclusions, several groups called for two main things – diagnosis prior to action, and rigorous evaluation of the results – and pointed out that action must be given time to work before its effectiveness was measured. Action and research needs are identical here: a prior survey of the strengths and weaknesses of schools is needed to ensure that efforts are not dissipated. Many researchers insist on this, for example de Cusson, one of the world’s leading criminologists (Cusson, 2002). Taken together, the various diagnoses provide a scientific picture of the situation and a basis for assessment of the action taken. Thus a project carried out by the National Institute of Education in Slovenia starts by “determining the school’s strengths and weaknesses” before defining aims and plans. Portugal’s Peaceful School Project uses the “Me and School” questionnaire prepared by our English colleagues, Smith and Sharp (Smith and Sharp, 1994) for this prior diagnosis. At Friedrichshafen in Germany, all the pupils are questioned before any programme is launched. Albania has also prepared a questionnaire as a basis for problem-solving, and this extends to parents. We could cite many other examples from the case studies on which the papers at the conference were based. In short, the idea of quantifying violence has made headway. This opens the way to another major breakthrough: “bringing the victims into the picture” – which may well be what “figures on violence in schools” should chiefly be about.

Second development: bringing the victims into the picture

Stray comments during the conference, the group rapporteurs’ summaries and the projects described all point to one thing: a new feeling for victims has developed in Europe (including the emergent countries). Taking just one example, the success of the Russian Federation’s experimental counselling centres for women and child victims reflects the immense need for such services in a country which seems to have largely lacked them until very recently. The same can be said of many other projects, such as Belgium’s mediation project, which covers partnership with agencies providing support for child victims and the establishment of counselling centres. The projects to stop harassment of children by other
children, launched in the Czech Republic, Malta and other countries, operate on similar lines, as does the global approach presented by the town of Angers (France) under the title “Stop the violence”, which tries to give people “the courage to say no”. The fact that teachers themselves are increasingly exposed to violence, and the need to protect them, were also particularly emphasised.

Seeing things from the victims’ angle is not something which has developed in the same way throughout Europe. Some countries, particularly in northern Europe, have a relatively old “victim culture”. Others are at a very early stage in this process of “discovering” victims. Nor should it be forgotten that victims have often been the “forgotten ones of history” (Gernot, 2000) – long before the hypocritical euphemism, “collateral damage” gained currency. For the time being, one result of this recognition is a desire to find out more about the realities – quantitative and qualitative – of victimhood.

Obviously, as Vettenburg noted, compiling figures on victimhood is not a problem-free exercise. In the present state of European thinking, however, the problems are not insoluble. We shall thus attempt to form a clearer picture of what keeping figures on violence in schools might involve, and of the importance of having a “broad” definition of violence itself. In the last thirty years or so in the United States, and the last fifteen or so in several European countries (Zauberman et al., 1995; Van Dijk and Mayhew, 1993; Perreti-Watel, 2000), the “victim survey” has become, or been suggested as, a useful alternative approach, helping to correct the various forms of bias inherent in official crime statistics. Instead of relying on official statements, sample groups are questioned, to establish whether – and in what way – they have been victims. In schools, this method is starting to produce results. My own surveys in France (Debarbieux, 2002) show, for example, that there is a discrepancy between official records and the level of violence actually suffered by pupils. Reports from schools themselves suggest that racketeering (repeated theft with extortion) is a minimal risk in French secondary schools: fewer than 800 cases are reported every year for a total of over 6 million pupils, that is 0.013% of all pupils are victims. These official records are among the world’s most reliable, since only a highly centralised state like France could oblige all schools to report violent incidents, using standard software. None the less, the number of victims is seriously underestimated. Victim surveys of a sample of secondary school children (N = 6487) carried out by our team showed that 8% had been subjected to racketeering. The same applies to other types of victimhood. One of the indicators we use is racism (which is an offence in France). Recent ministry figures show that 200 cases of “racism” were recorded in a three-month period, affecting 0.003% of pupils. And yet 23.6% of the children we surveyed said that they had been the target of racist insults. This is a spectacular discrepancy. The following table shows the main types of victimhood suffered by the adolescents in our sample.
The problem here is not that the resources devoted to official record-keeping are inadequate: official injunctions, standard software, involvement of government services and exact definition of acts to be recorded (in this case, those listed in a special bulletin and covered by the Criminal Code) – all of this should make for reliable records. But the records are not reliable, because they are fated to miss the mark, just as comparisons based on them would also miss the mark – even in an ideal world, where all states used the same system and standard definitions. Official records can never give us a true picture of the number of victims, since they are distorted by official expectations, the authorities’ involvement, and above all, the distrustful or resigned silence of the victims themselves. The resulting “dark figure” is so high that no accurate assessment of victimhood levels is possible. This is even truer in schools, where there is still a strong tendency not to take child victims seriously – as if adults considered violence a normal part of the socialisation process, a point clearly made in the United Kingdom by the famous Elton report on discipline in schools (Elton, 1989).

In any case, bringing the victims into the picture is not just a matter of counting them (prevalence). Comparing school violence in different schools and countries by comparing victim numbers might seem a tempting option. The risks would thus be lower in a school where 6% of pupils had suffered violence than in one where the figure was 10%. But this might be misleading. In fact, there may be fewer victims and more violence, if the victims are subjected to more violence more frequently. The point which emerges most clearly from research in Europe and North America is the importance of repetition in the experience of victimhood. The worst types of violence and crime are not necessarily isolated, unforeseeable, random events (although they obviously can be): the research shows that some types of violence and crime at least are systematic, and that persistence and continuity are inherent features of them (Blaya and Debarbieux, 2000). Special attention has been paid to the psychological effects of bullying on victims. Many of the latter suffer from anxiety, depression, loss

**Table 1: Types of victimhood suffered by pupils in underprivileged lower-secondary schools (France, 1999-2000)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No answer</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insults</td>
<td>5.2% (340)</td>
<td>71.6% (4708)</td>
<td>23.3% (1531)</td>
<td>100% (6579)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>9.6% (634)</td>
<td>23.6% (1552)</td>
<td>66.8% (4393)</td>
<td>100% (6579)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>5.6% (366)</td>
<td>24.6% (1619)</td>
<td>69.8% (4594)</td>
<td>100% (6579)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>5.5% (359)</td>
<td>50.3% (3308)</td>
<td>44.3% (2912)</td>
<td>100% (6579)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racketeering</td>
<td>4.0% (261)</td>
<td>8.0% (528)</td>
<td>88.0% (5790)</td>
<td>100% (6579)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of above</td>
<td>6.0% (1960)</td>
<td>35.6% (11715)</td>
<td>58.4% (19220)</td>
<td>100% (32895)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of self-esteem and physiological and psychosomatic disorders (Williams et al., 1996). In extreme cases, they may even become suicidal (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999). The social effects of repeated exposure to violence have been highlighted by criminologists, who report that victims retreat into themselves and avoid public places, which are then left free for even worse violence – the familiar process of civil collapse (for example Roché, 1996). Our survey of 35,000 French school children between 1994 and 2000 showed, for example, that violence in schools had increased in problem areas with high social exclusion levels, becoming more radical and also more collective. Instead of increasing, however, the number of victims had actually dropped slightly – but a group of just under 10% of pupils were subjected to far harsher and more frequent forms of violence. Many of these repeated victims developed a negative self-image and were terrified of other children.

Table 2: Pupils subjected to several types of violence – underprivileged secondary schools in France, 1999-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple victims</th>
<th>Number cited</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>1,458</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice</td>
<td>1,653</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three times</td>
<td>1,171</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four times</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five times</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total cited</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,619</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Mean = 2.90 Standard deviation = 1.24)

The worst affected 2.6% of pupils certainly need special counselling and protection. There are plenty of programmes for exceptionally violent children (the “hard cases”), but little is done for multiple victims, until it is too late (for example counselling centres for suicidal adolescents). In short, bringing the victims into the picture certainly means ascertaining their number – but it also means ascertaining repetition and intensity levels for the various forms of “micro-violence”, which are very hard to pinpoint in official surveys. The more often a person is subjected to violence, even “micro-violence”, the more senseless, disorganised and violent the world comes to seem. This is reflected in the following table, which relates perceived levels of violence (on a scale running from “enormous” to “nil”) to the number of types of violence suffered (from 0 to 5, using the following indicators: theft, theft with extortion, insults, racist insults, assault).
Table 3: Sense of violence depending on number of times on which violence has been suffered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple victims</th>
<th>Enormous</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Nil</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three times</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four times</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five times</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18.6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>22.6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>25.5%</strong></td>
<td><strong>28.6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.7%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The correlation is highly significant. \( \chi^2 = 446.83, \text{ddl} = 20, 1-p = >99.99\% \).
The figures in the table are linear percentages, based on 5,541 responses.

The table shows clearly that violence seems far less prevalent to children who have never experienced it (even children living in problem areas), while insecurity increases with the number of times which violence has been suffered: it is four times stronger in five-time victims than in children who have never experienced it, or experienced it only once. This sense of insecurity is based on genuine experience, and is not imaginary. Ultimately, the indicators used are not overly-important: by combining them we can, above all, ascertain the number of multiple victims, that is those who have suffered various kinds of violence – and this may hold a methodological key to international comparison. An example is provided by Blaya’s research (Blaya, 2001), which shows, among other things, that British schools may have as many child victims as French, but that fewer British children are victims more than once, since anti-bullying campaigns and more counselling and tutoring by teachers produce results: violence stops faster.

**Third development: proximity**

Growing agreement on causes and principles is obviously accompanied by growing agreement on what should be done. Let us be clear on one thing: we are talking here about agreement between people who see education as the key. The ones who see punishment as a cure-all are scarcely seen or heard at meetings like those in Strasbourg – although this approach is still firmly rooted in certain national powers. In Strasbourg at any rate, as at most international meetings, there was obvious agreement on the need for local networks (“hand-sewn”, one speaker called them) as an antidote to useless generalisations and gross simplifications. This need to give action a local dimension is also implicit in recognition of the fact
that the causes are complex. The main macro-social, and particularly socio-economic, causes may be recognised, but the experts largely agree with local optimists that nothing is predestined.

Economics, of course, do not account for everything. The risk-factor approach is clear on this point (Farrington, 2000): there is no single cause of violence in schools, but a combination of risk factors, none of which, on its own, provides an explanation. Various risk factors have to be simultaneously present for violence to become a probability, though not a certainty (see review of the question in Fortin and Bigras, 1996). Social problems do, however, explain a great deal (Debarbieux, 1996, Lagrange, 2001), even though they do not necessarily lead to violence. The sociology of violence in schools is a sociology of social exclusion (Devine, 2001). In fact, combining macro- and micro-social causes is the only way of making a serious political point, concerning the negative effects of globalisation on exclusion – thus ensuring that the responsibilities of governments and international institutions are not forgotten. Research findings and local experience help to bolster positive discrimination policies and attempts to achieve equality in what is often known as “social Europe”. Leaving these global constructs on one side, they also show that the local, interactive production of violence is at issue: publications on the subject and project reports clearly show the roles played by teaching teams and community involvement. There are also many projects based on schools themselves. Examples include those carried out at the Lluis de Requesens high school at Molins de Rei (Spain) and high schools in Bucharest (Romania), and the JEJE (Schools for Young People – Young People for Schools) project, launched at Genk and now under way at 120 schools in Flanders – and there are too many case studies and other publications to be listed here. Training also takes as its starting point this general confidence in the real capacity of schools themselves to do something – the Swedish programme at Pitea is a notable example.

Proximity in this context also means proximity to communities and institutional partners – indeed, local co-operation is currently one of the norms in this area. This is the case in Prague and Turin (with its “conflict centre”), and in Bucharest and Oradea City in Romania. Some countries, such as Sweden, Germany (the example of Cologne was cited at the conference), Britain and France, have long experience of school-police partnerships. This does not reflect a strictly punitive approach to the problem, but it does, consciously or not, mark a step towards neighbourhood policing, which is said to have definite preventive value. The involvement of social workers is commoner. Some of them choose to specialise in this area – though problems are not unknown. In Brussels, for example, some mediators are not readily accepted by teachers. Conversely, some teachers may try to unload school discipline onto “specialists”, which is no answer.

The dominant approach is thus both idealistic (faith in the power of partnerships) and pragmatic (highly localised projects, pragmatic diagnoses). Instead of ambitious, but unrealistic national plans, it favours targeted programmes. Few “universal” (cure-all) programmes were presented at the conference – and a good
thing too. I would simply say that the effects of the programmes implemented certainly need to be assessed more carefully. They do point, however, to a genuine community of viewpoints – on the problems too. Thus all the groups insisted on the “time” factor, the difficulties caused by a failure to monitor project funding politically and the problems of evaluation. All of this reflects a desire for further progress.

Fourth development: posing the problem in political terms

I can afford to spend less time on something which struck me as notably new at the Strasbourg conference – the fact that, for the first time and without taboos, the problem of violence in schools was approached in political terms. The changes here are unmistakable and they point to the issues which need to be discussed in building an education-focused, social Europe. Far from being simply a “behavioural” problem affecting the young, violence was seen as a major challenge, for the old and also for the new democracies. The terms in which this challenge was envisaged had also changed since the first Council of Europe meeting, in Brussels. Massification (which does not necessarily mean democratisation) of education was seen as the basic problem. As Dubet pointed out, turning schools into mega-schools reveals social inequalities, which those schools help, if not to create, at least to perpetuate. Massification itself is a useful model, and an old one (for example Testanière, 1967; Ballion, 1982; Lindström, RFP 1998), and convincingly explained the birth of violence in certain countries’ schools. Massification, however, is twenty years old – so is that explanation still sufficient?

The presence of the east European countries made the political picture even more complex. For many of them, the problem is not so much massification (long since effected for ideological reasons) as post-totalitarian fragmentation and disillusionment with the liberal growth model. Inequality, which is one of the factors in violence, exists not just within countries, but between them. One must also face the fact – although this is clearly not the whole story – that violence in schools is one aspect of trouble in the world at large. To this extent, the schemes described in the case studies do not necessarily reflect the policies of the countries concerned (some of which actually have no political, or at least economic, systems), which the promoters of those schemes blame for generating inequality.

This “European” trend is in fact a global one. The leading institutions have taken up the question. We have seen this in the case of the European organisations, and the same is true of Unesco, which made action to curb violence in schools one of its priorities for the first time in 2003. Specialists in the field have set up a think-tank network, leading to regular world conferences, the next two being scheduled for Quebec in 2003 and Rio de Janeiro in 2005. The recently installed Brazilian government has also made action against violence in schools one of its two priorities in the education field. Two further international meetings were announced at the conference: one in the Netherlands, on conflict resolution, and the other in the Russian Federation. The African countries represented at the Strasbourg meeting
also feel concerned by this question – not just because they hope for help from others, but also because they themselves can teach others something about conflict resolution. One thing is certain: interest and anxiety are becoming universal in an area where, until recently, silence was the rule. And that in the space of less than ten years.

**Conclusion: newshounds beware!**

I should like to conclude this report by simply coming back to a question asked by several journalists and a few participants. Yet another meeting! – What for? What’s new? There is something profoundly depressing in journalists’ hunger for a scoop at all costs – for new angles on the problem or dramatic new solutions. Practical measures must be given the time they need to work, but this constant running after the new and spectacular produces a situation in which some very important and promising programmes are scrapped and forgotten. It makes miracles seem the only answer, but miracles have nothing to do with getting things done in the real world, where the key word – as all the groups agreed – is time. I myself would add another: modesty. Repeated violence calls for repeated prevention, and repetition is not a headline grabber or – alas – a vote catcher.

**Bibliography**


III. THREE REPORTS – RUSSIAN FEDERATION, SOUTHEAST EUROPE, UNITED KINGDOM
VIOLENCE AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Valery Chinkov
Russian Ministry of Education
Russian Federation

The issue being discussed at this conference is one of tremendous importance, both for the new democracies and for states with long-standing democratic traditions. Violence among children and young people is a highly topical issue in the Russian Federation today.

The causes of violence and the forms that it can take vary. The economic crisis that occurred in the Russian Federation in the 1990s affected the most vulnerable sections of society, in particular children and adolescents. When the former centralised system of working with young people in schools and place of residence broke down, children and adolescents were left to fend for themselves and with the country in a state of crisis, their problems became much worse. As a result, the level of antisocial behaviour among children and adolescents rose sharply. For various reasons, parents were unable to protect their children from the many negative effects of the new, aggressive social climate.

In the Russian Federation, the most common types of child violence are as follows: antisocial behaviour; criminal behaviour (including murder), self-harm, vandalism, vengeful behaviour prompted by frustration over wasted talent, theft, violence, abusive language, intolerance and the belief in the supremacy of one’s own ethnic group.

Acts of aggression towards children are committed both by other children and by adults. Some examples are:

- sexual violence, media-inspired aggression: by the age of 17, the average child will have witnessed up to ten thousand murders on-screen (statistics provided by the Subdivision for Juvenile Affairs, Moscow);
- psychoactive aggression, alcohol and drugs: one in every five adolescents aged between 15 and 18 has used drugs; one in two smokes and one in three uses alcohol (statistics provided by the First Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Children, 10 May 2002);
- criminal aggression: in 2001, 185 000 offences were committed by teenagers, 147 000 of them either serious or very serious crimes, such as murder, rape, group theft (official statistics published in the Gazyeta on 3 April 2001);
- domestic violence, poor parenting: due to traditionalist attitudes within the family; emotional blackmail; overt threats; indiscrete behaviour on the part of
parents; emotionally distant parents; lack of affection within the family; lack of respect for the elderly). Aggression on the part of teachers: 16% of pupils suffer physical abuse and 22% mental abuse from teachers (according to an official Russian government report presented in 1999 to United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child);

– Parental cruelty: occurs in roughly 45% to 49% of families (statistics provided by the Acmeological Institute, Moscow, online publication of “Cruelty in the modern family”).

In order to make proposals for organising local partnerships to prevent and combat violence in schools, it is important to understand how the present state of affairs came about in the first place. We, for our part, have concluded that in the case of the Russian Federation, the most obvious reasons are as follows.

Firstly, the acute crisis that afflicted the country in the 1990s and which was triggered by economic and political factors has led to a significant rise in crime, the spread of terrorism, continuous armed conflicts and an increase in the number of gratuitous, destructive and aggressive acts. All this has helped create a more aggressive climate in everyday life in general and in schools in particular. It is important in this context to look at the various factors (both internal and external) which influence the development of aggressive forms of human behaviour.

Secondly, deprived of the external, restraining factors that traditionally existed in the Russian Federation and of the institutions that were a feature of totalitarian society, young people have acquired an apparent freedom of behaviour, unimpeded by any system of moral checks and balances. Today, responsibility for bringing-up the new generation falls almost entirely on parents. In a context of widespread impoverishment, however, most parents are too busy taking care of their family’s physical survival to give their children the attention they need. And even if they had the time, many would not know how.

Thirdly, there is the influence of the media. The unbridled growth on every channel of productions that are awash with violence and aggression creates in the impressionable minds of the young an idealistic image of a Superman, locked in a ruthless struggle against his arch-rivals and mortal enemies. The means by which this struggle is waged are exclusively physical, meaning violent. Aggressiveness in such “cultural works” is, in general, seen as a positive attribute, which all good boys and girls need in order to get by in everyday life.

A close look at the content of television programmes shows that special crime programmes featuring documentary footage of victims of violence and disasters are broadcast by various Russian TV stations virtually throughout the week. These programmes, moreover, are shown in the morning and evening, times when there is every chance that youngsters, including children under the age of 10, will be watching. Special “crime” programmes also appear on an almost daily basis, showing documentary footage of bloodied corpses, victims of car crashes or other accidents, gangland shootings, and so forth.
If one looks at the list of TV films on offer, one quickly notices that every week, viewers can choose from dozens of films and series containing violent scenes. Admittedly, most films containing hard core portrayals of violence are broadcast after 10 p.m. Not infrequently, however, such productions manage to slip into the “children’s slot”.

Compared to documentaries about crime, of course, fictional violence does not seem so terrible or shocking, but it does nevertheless have a harmful psychological effect on young people. A recent study carried out in the federation showed, for example, that, when it comes to videos and television, the average schoolchild has a fairly monotonous diet: one in three films are either war films or thrillers, while one in five comes under the heading of “erotica”. The heroes of the films most popular with children typically have no home life, and their goals and motivation tend to be far removed from those of your average family man, their primary concern being to satisfy their libido (41%), commit murder (17%) or save their own life (17%). Values such as friendship, justice, honour and dignity barely feature at all, making an appearance in just 3% of films. The sheer welter of violence gradually creates the impression that this is the only way to live.

One of the characteristic features of child psychology is that information received by the child from the screen is perceived by them as being the truth. Both in play and in real-life situations, children will often copy what they have seen, in particular violence assimilated from the screen. As a result of their viewing, children can come to regard violence as an acceptable pattern of behaviour and a way of dealing with their problems. In some European countries, special legislation has been passed to protect children from TV violence. In the Russian Federation, however, no such measures have been taken as yet.

Fourthly, there is the particular nature of adolescent psychology. Within the peer group, which, for adolescents, is the most significant social setting, conflict is seen as the norm, and any attempt to avoid it elicits a negative reaction from the group. Extensive sociological research conducted under the auspices of the Urals State Professional and Pedagogical University shows that the outside world is perceived by adolescents as an aggressive environment, where one has to tread carefully. According to the findings of the research, 57.7% of adolescents believe that the spread of drug abuse is to blame for aggression, while 41.9% cited the desire for supremacy as one of the causes of violence.

This opinion stems from adolescents’ belief that power in society is simply the primacy of one group of people over another. Adolescents make a direct connection between power and submission, taking the view that violence is a legitimate part of the machinery of power. At a meeting of the Board of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs in April 2002, the problems of homeless children and juvenile crime were discussed. In presenting their reports, the Russian Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Alexander Chekalin, and the First Deputy Head of the Public Security Service, Nikolai Getman, cited some frightening figures. In 2001,
increases in “child crime” were recorded in twenty-seven regions across the Russian Federation. The number of crimes were committed by juveniles was 185 000, 147 000 of them serious or very serious crimes. According to Boris Gryzlov, the problem of juvenile crime was linked to another issue which, although not new, was nevertheless urgent, namely child homelessness.

At the board meeting, attended by the Deputy Prime Minister, Valentina Matvienko, the ministers of education and of health, and the heads of various other institutions, attention focused on finding joint preventive measures to reduce overall human suffering – from the problem of unhappy childhoods to the hopelessness of “life behind bars”. The deputy prime minister observed, for example, that, under the rules of the Russian criminal code, parents were responsible for raising their children. The question of how and in what conditions children were raised within the family was rarely discussed in public, however, and not enough attention was given to the subject in the media.

Among the various priority measures which the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs is planning to take is an increase in the number of qualified staff in temporary isolation centres for juveniles and the setting-up of support centres for the militia and members of the voluntary people’s militia to exercise supervision over youth affairs and youth recreation and leisure across the country. As was pointed out at the meeting, alongside the problem of homelessness, we now have another problem, namely the emergence of extremist youth organisations. According to current statistics, 10 000 or so adolescents now belong to some extreme radical group or other.

The ministry board has adopted a comprehensive programme to improve the performance of the internal affairs agencies in combating and preventing juvenile crime over the period 2002-03.

It may seem surprising, but we have grown so used to the ever-increasing wave of child crime that we have failed to notice how we have fallen prey to the absurd notion that the best response to rising juvenile crime is to build more correctional facilities. Paradoxically, the efforts being deployed by society in the social, economic and educational fields are focused on correcting and preventing cruelty, rather than fostering a more peace-loving attitude.

A few words about the measures being taken at federal level, which, while they are not directly aimed at preventing child aggression, are nevertheless of indirect assistance in reducing the impact of the various factors that contribute to child aggression.

At the hearings before the State Duma of the Federal Assembly, the Basic Principles of the State System for Preventing Neglect and Juvenile Crime Act, adopted on 24 June 1999, was debated and attention drawn to the problem of under-funding of the federal targeted programme. Participants in the parliamentary hearings also emphasised the need to set up a special-purpose presidential
fund to finance measures to combat child neglect, and recommended that the State Duma examine, as a matter of priority, the above-mentioned draft law and another on “the basic principles for organising the activities of the commissions responsible for juvenile affairs and for protecting the rights of juveniles”.

In compliance with a Russian government resolution, a number of federal programmes aimed at improving the lot of children were approved, in particular programmes on the themes of:
- children with disabilities;
- development of social provision for families and children;
- preventing neglect and juvenile crime;
- orphaned children;
- gifted children;
- development of the All-Russian Children’s Centres, Orlyenok and Okean;
- children of the North;
- children of refugees and displaced persons;
- children of Chernobyl;
- safe motherhood.

Positive examples of measures designed to prevent child aggression can be found in some of the projects and other initiatives currently being implemented in Russia, such as:
- government Resolution No. 44 of 23 January 2002 on the federal programme “Integrated measures to combat drug abuse and illegal trafficking in drugs for the period 2002-04”;
- the Basic Principles of the State System for Preventing Neglect and Juvenile Crime Act, adopted on 24 June 1999;
- recommendations drawn up by the Russian Ministry of Education and adopted in 2001 on “preventing the abuse of psychoactive substances”, a compendium of methodological material on preventing the abuse of psychoactive substances among juveniles and young people, within the framework of the presidential Children of Russia programme;
- project on “Cruelty prevention and the rehabilitation of child victims of violence”;  
- the 21st Century without Violence and Cruelty programme;
- the “Cascade” project (to prevent domestic cruelty and violence);
- storytelling therapy;
- drawing as a means of defusing psychological tension.

A new entry has been added to the federal state statistics in an effort to keep track of children between the ages of 7 and 15 who are not enrolled in school and who have no fixed abode. As part of its participation in the Council of Europe’s
integrated project “Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society”, the Russian Federation has submitted a number of proposals, principally:

– to hold a series of seminars, workshops and parliamentary hearings before the State Duma;

– to develop teaching materials for schools, posters and leaflets promoting the Council of Europe’s programme, video and films;

– to take into account international research on the causes of the problems in question and effective methods for preventing them, as well as on inter-ethnic and inter-faith conflict;

– to conduct a pilot project (or projects) in a chosen municipality with the aim of preventing child violence, with the participation of municipal government bodies, child welfare organisations, the media and other concerned parties.
PEER VIOLENCE AND BULLYING IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

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In south-east Europe, increasing attention is being paid to violence among children and the young and to bullying. It seems that both phenomena are on the increase. Of course, this statement should be considered through the perspective of awareness-raising and knowledge. Even though some research results are available, a much “softer version” of these issues is presented to the public than in many western European countries.

Now is the time to open the discussion and introduce preventative programs on school violence and bullying in south-east Europe. The sooner the matter is tackled, the better the chances for prevention. Most school workers are interested in the topic and ready to acknowledge this phenomenon in the framework of various psychosocial seminars and training initiatives, although in some parts of south-east Europe there is still reluctance to confront this problem, which will be discussed later.

It was not possible to investigate existing research on peer violence and bullying in different countries in south-east Europe. The situation presented in the paper is based mainly on the contacts I have had with numerous school workers in the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union, in the framework of psychosocial training for teachers. However, two available research results from Slovenia and Serbia are illustrative. In Dekleva (1996), research carried out at the Criminology Institute at the Faculty of Law in Ljubljana showed that, among primary and secondary school children, at least 45% of pupils reported being bullied; 20% were bullied more than once or twice during the academic year and approximately 5% experienced bullying daily.

Research data from Serbia’s Institute of Pedagogy in Belgrade (Gašić Pavišić, 1998) provides the figures in the table below.

Pavišić concludes that youth violence in Serbian schools is unsatisfactorily dealt with for the following reasons:
- there are no school-based preventative measures;
- there are no effective ways of protecting students from violent behaviour;
- the structure and the quality of school relationships, school personnel on one side and students and parents on the other;
– an organisation of classes and outside schoolwork which contributes to violence and aggressive behaviour of students.

Table 1: Frequency of peer violence in school, age group 10-17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has anyone in school ever:</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
<th>No %</th>
<th>No answer %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threatened you physically?</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>78.52</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatened you with a weapon?</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>97.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackmailed you by asking for money?</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>96.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackmailed you by asking you to execute orders?</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>94.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbed you or destroyed your possessions?</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insulted or laughed at you?</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaten or injured you in any way?</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>96.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assaulted you sexually?</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why the delayed discovery

Bullying was “discovered” in south-east European countries much later than in western Europe, and even today in many regions it is still not part of the public debate. For different reasons, this phenomenon was not tackled at a time when the discussion on bullying was already in progress in western Europe. Some of the reasons for this stem from socialist times. Under socialist regimes, institutions in general, including educational institutions, were highly protected, indeed almost untouchable. To recognise the existence of peer violence in schools would have discredited the institutional image and could have been interpreted as a slur on the entire social system.

There are other ideological causes which contributed to the fact that peer violence was not dealt with at a time when Europe was already fighting against it. The wide-spread idea that the socialist social system was enhancing prosocial behaviour and humanity in general was not conducive to recording any kind of extensive violence. Personally, I remember that twenty-five years ago, as a child psychiatrist in Slovenia, I had started to write about family violence and child abuse, when my colleague, a psychologist who was very much a Communist party liner, wrote a long paper in the leading Slovene newspaper, entitled “Child and family abuse – a fashion imported from capitalism”. Probably for similar reasons, it would have been unpopular to draw the public’s attention to the problem of peer violence.

Even today in certain regions, and for non-political reasons, speaking about family violence and bullying is not well-accepted or is even taboo. When I proposed the topic of physical and sexual violence in the family for a seminar for health
workers in Chechnya and Ingushetia, a colleague, a Chechen paediatrician, stood up and declared that she would not hear of any such thing because in Chechnya this type of thing did not happen or it was so exceptional that it was not worth mentioning. I observed similar resistance to the treatment of family violence some years ago in Kosovo, in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Although less pronounced, the same situation exists with regard to peer violence and bullying. School authorities and teachers are anxious to present a good image of their schools and classes. We often hear, “Well, children do fight from to time, which is normal. But there is no long-lasting and malignant persecution. This does not happen in our schools.” Sometimes we have the impression that family relationships, as well as student relationships in schools, are perceived as a moral identification card of the nation or of some ethnic group and therefore idealised. A denial of violence is a part of the idealised picture of one’s ethnic or religious group. In this kind of environment, a certain institutional and personal courage is needed to open the topic of violence of children and among children.

Another obstacle to disclosing peer violence and bullying might stem from not wanting to attribute causes of inappropriate social behaviour to children. My experience in working with teachers and medical workers in many regions, especially those of Caucasus, has been that children are mostly perceived as innocent, good creatures, a tabula rasa so to speak, on which parental and school education imprints personality traits and behaviour. To admit to frequent violent behaviour among children means discrediting the parents, teachers and the community. This is particularly unacceptable in regions still characterised by strong cohesion among family members and where the extended family is seen as the outstanding social group, protecting its members and their reputation. As mentioned above, to recognise that children are capable of “evil” and malignant behaviour in schools would depreciate both family and school institutions.

An important reason for the lack of awareness of bullying as an issue in many post-socialist countries is the absence of information and education concerning the problem. There is limited access to the existing literature and a lack of literature in the language of the country.

**Specific causes of the increase in peer violence in south-east Europe**

Peer violence and bullying in south-east Europe are on the increase partly for the same reasons as in European Union countries. Nevertheless, there are some additional causes specific to this region. The transition from the socialist system to new forms of social organisation, in particular the development of the market economy, can be linked to dramatic changes in the social structure of the population and to changes in people’s prevailing values, notably the young. In the socialist era, the prevailing values were egalitarianism, collectivism and solidarity.
These values were combined with traditional values—such as patriarchal relationships in family and community, and for a large part of the population, we could add respect for religious values. Individualistic behaviour was under strong social control.

Today, anomy, or a lack of respect for basic social values, is a characteristic of post-socialist countries. The old normative system disintegrated before a new one could be established. The ideology of collectivism has been replaced by the ideology of individualism. Personal benefit has become a main goal while the benefits of the community are being neglected. The prevailing and the officially declared values (through political programmes, media, advertising) are achievement and success, wealth and social power. Ways to access these goals are not questionable. All means are permitted and used, in short, anything goes. It should be stressed that the development of the market economy is in its wild capitalism phase, and values of more or less decent market behaviour that could at least be partially positive, have not developed. In these conditions, those who have want to have more, and the have-nots want to get rid of their “looser” label. Some of the young try to acquire power and a “reputation” through violent behaviour, and to benefit from small material advantages such as having their coffee or drinks in a bar paid for by their exploited peers.

Under socialism, numerous prosocial activities for children existed and were accessible to all. Today, collective activities for children and the young, such as the pioneer, cultural and sport organisations, have for the most part been done away with. Organised sport, culture and out-of-school educational activities for children that used to be free must now be paid for, and children should be fashionably equipped for some of them, a situation beyond the reach of poor families.

The high level of poverty has a negative influence on the psychosocial climate in schools and in the communities. Under socialism, social differences and inequalities were much smaller and those who were rich did not flaunt it, because being rich was not in line with the official ideology of social equality. The present huge polarisation between the rich and the poor is also reflected in the relationship between children of those groups. Rich children are frequently united in groups that despise and exclude poor children.

The situation I have described is a source of frustration for children and the young who do not have rich and powerful parents, but wish to achieve the same status and material advantages as their economically better situated peers. To do so, some become persecutors or extortionists.

Inter-ethnic conflict is specific to the Balkan and Caucasus regions, making violent behaviour a normal model of behaviour. The possession and use of arms has become a normal part of life; children and adolescents posses them and bring them to school. In the above-mentioned Serbian research results (Gašić Pavišić, 1998), we can see that among third year secondary school students, 9.2% have some kind of weapon, most often a knife, a gun, a pistol, a boxer, a stick.
In some regions inter-ethnic tensions are reflected in continuous and repetitive peer violence between ethnic groups or in persecution of an individual child.

South-east Europe, especially those regions affected by armed conflict, are characterised by problems related to migration. There are many internally displaced persons, refugees, and returnees. The domestic population does not always react favourably towards internally displaced persons and refugees. Children do not accept their new peers. They can become victims of bullying. Returnee children can be in a very special situation. Those that left the country are resented by the population who remained behind in the conflict areas. “They are those who ran away while we remained here loyally”, a boy from Goražde (Bosnia) said about his peers returning from Germany after the end of the war. “I hate them more than Serbs”. A returnee girl in Sarajevo, who stayed in Slovenia during the Bosnian war, complained about the despicable and excluding behaviour of her co-students. She said, “I learned to be quiet about all my suffering as a refugee. When I tried to speak about it they got aggressive and started to compare life in the besieged Sarajevo with my life in Slovenia. They obviously hated me and did not want to be friends with me.”

Bullying among the young for political reasons, for example bullying a child whose parent is a prominent member of an unpopular political party, is sometimes reported by teachers. In some regions, where huge extended families and family clans still prevail, peer violence could be an extension of long-lasting conflicts and hostility among families, though this is rare.

Preventative measures

Western Europe has various individual, educational, community-based and social models of peer violence prevention that could certainly be applied to south-east Europe. However, we must be cautious when transferring western models. The positive impact of the transferred models can be diminished if the approaches used are not culturally appropriate or if the topic dealt with is disconnected from the situational or social context.

Examples of such programmes are the numerous conflict-management training courses run in the region, aiming to diminish inter-ethnic tensions and conflict among children. Although a lot of money is spent on such programmes, they have a limited impact. They include very few children and young people, and those who do participate are not at risk of turning to violence or bullying. When participation in training is voluntary, the children and young people involved are basically pacific, and are not really in need of training.

The first step in violence prevention would be to disseminate information and raise awareness of the issue among school workers, the young and the general public, mainly through media. An effective approach would be to integrate the topic of peer violence and bullying into the broader framework of psychosocial programmes for school workers. Such programmes could include:

- children’s rights, relations among children, popularity and unpopularity of children;
- developing prosocial behaviour;
- the teacher’s role in protecting socially jeopardised children;
- examining how teachers have contributed to the rejection of a child by peers;
- all aspects of bullying, with a special emphasis on the responsibility, difficulties and distress of teachers having to face this problem.

I also recommend setting up on-going programmes, with at least three consequent modules. Training courses should be participative, dominated by group discussions in which teachers will be able to present their cases and experience in the field and discuss questions and problems faced.

For peer violence to be reduced in a community, it is important that programmes cover a critical mass of schools, so that a culture of non-violence and non-bullying becomes the prevailing attitude and behaviour model at community level. The subject of peer violence and bullying can be a starting point for efforts to reduce inter-ethnic and inter-religious tensions and to encourage reconciliation. If these topics are approached directly, they usually provoke rejection, but tackling them through school violence and bullying creates a neutral platform from which to start.

Another often effective approach to curbing youth violence is to develop voluntary work for children and young people, on behalf of the school or the community or on behalf of individuals (for example assistance to younger children with learning difficulties or to children with special needs, and so forth).

Besides improving the quality of life in the community, voluntary work spreads awareness of mutual support among different groups. Volunteering represents a tremendous social learning experience that enhances the prosocial development of the young. Through volunteering, young people enter into various social environments, approach people living in different social circumstances and deal with different ethnic, cultural and religious groups. Facing diverse situations, interacting with families and individuals from different groups develops tolerance and respect for differences. Besides responding to certain social needs, voluntary work is a cohesive activity bringing together members of different ethnic groups. Face to face encounters and common activities reduce or eliminate prejudices and hostile attitudes among the young and foster reconciliation and coexistence.

Youth volunteering is an agent of socialisation for solidarity and responsible citizenship, and it promotes and protects mental health of the young. It raises self-esteem, develops social skills, provides a sense of belonging to a prosocial group. Young volunteers learn to work in groups and develop a sense of co-operation. All of these are general measures against violence and measures which enhance positive social behaviour. Combining action with reflection in programmes for young volunteers increases the socialising impact of voluntary work.
In conclusion

In many parts of south-east Europe, peer violence and bullying are an “added value” of inter-ethnic conflicts and specific social processes affecting the region. Preventing school violence and bullying in these regions undergoing social transition have an “added value” as well. It will reduce inter-group tensions and conflicts and help develop a more tolerant and democratic society. This is an additional argument for investments in holistic, community based preventative programs. Many regions are interested in this type of programme and certainly fruitful co-operation between western and south-eastern Europe could be established.

Literature


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Psychosocial programmes and other materials of the Foundation Together – Regional Centre for the Psychosocial Well Being of Children, Ljubljana.

1. During the Medical Network for Social Reconstruction in the Former Yugoslavia Conference (Crikvenica, Croatia, 26-29 June 2003), a workshop on school violence and bullying took place at which representatives of various regions of the former Yugoslavia expressed an interest in joint prevention projects.
DEVELOPMENTS AIMED AT IMPROVING PUPIL BEHAVIOUR AND REDUCING ESCALATION TO VIOLENCE

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I cannot claim to be an expert on violence in schools, but I do have a lifetime of practical experience working as a head teacher in a range of challenging schools and most recently with the role of advising central government about the design and implementation of a national strategy for improving behaviour in schools in England.¹

Violence is the most extreme manifestation of unacceptable pupil behaviour. Good behaviour and well taught emotional and social competencies are both vital to learning and are in themselves an essential part of the school curriculum. The poor behaviour of just one pupil can affect not only their educational chances, but also the chances of every other child who is in a class with them. Children emulate role models, some of them with elements of violence, and if unchecked will test boundaries of acceptable behaviour until violence results.

I must stress that in most schools in England, pupils are not badly behaved. Most of our schools are well ordered communities which involve staff, parents and pupils in an ethos that supports education in a positive and safe environment. School inspection reports identify problems with pupil behaviour in only one in twelve secondary schools (ages 11-18) and one in fifty primary schools (ages 5-11).

Unfortunately, the negative publicity associated with just one violent attack in school can outweigh much of the good work that is going on. Public perception is that behaviour in our schools is getting worse and teachers report a growing concern about the rising rates of low-level disruption in their classrooms and an increase in the numbers of children with more challenging and long-term behavioural problems.

It is true that a variety of behavioural patterns, particularly bullying, are an issue in every school, often centred on just a few classes. In some schools there are more severe problems. Problems encountered can range from low-level disruption, for example interrupting the teacher or the work of other pupils, right through to the most extreme end of the behavioural scale – physical and verbal attacks.

¹. The National Behaviour and Attendance Improvement Programme, which is part of the Department for Education and Skills, applies only to England and not the entire United Kingdom.
This wide range of behaviours, while all of them considered poor, out of necessity require different approaches. To treat the chatterer at the back of the classroom with the same severity as a pupil who commits assault would be foolhardy. Yet at the age of 5, inattentiveness or hyperactivity may be the only symptoms of a conduct disorder that could result in exclusion from school for violence at age 15.

In designing the programme of support for behavioural issues, there were two important elements which we bore in mind. The first is just how essential the need for early recognition and intervention is. Secondly, that there is no “one size fits all” solution to behavioural problems.

We know that the earlier behavioural problems begin, the more serious the outcome is likely to be in later life. Recent studies have found that children who showed signs of conduct disorder at age 10 had average additional costs to the state of approximately €110 000 by age 27. This takes into account a variety of interventions including the costs of extra educational provision, foster or residential care, crime and healthcare. The good news is that the earlier prevention measures are implemented, the more likely they are to be effective. The cost of early intervention work was found to be around €850 which covers around twenty-five hours of intervention work by mental health experts (Stephen Scott, 1998, British Medical Journal 323).

Consequently we are developing a co-ordinated approach to the way schools teach children about appropriate behaviour that will reduce the need for staff in schools to deal with poor behaviour or conflict situations. I refer to “staff” as opposed to “teachers” because there is a growing cohort of adults in English schools working as learning mentors, teaching assistants, education welfare assistants, lunchtime supervisors and so on, who play a vital role in addressing the behavioural needs of pupils in support of teachers.

This behaviour improvement strategy, which is currently being piloted in thirty-four local education authorities under the National Behaviour and Attendance Improvement Programme (www.dfes.gov.uk/ibis), has measurable success criteria:

– bullying and harassment will be reduced;
– attendance and motivation will increase;
– exclusions will reduce;
– assaults on staff will be increasingly rare;
– teacher retention will increase;
– youth crime committed during school hours will fall:

The thirty-four local education authorities were selected as those facing the greatest challenges from escalating street crime. Many of the schools are at the extreme end of the spectrum in support needs. The annual cost of the programme is €110 million.
The support provided by the behaviour improvement strategy can be expressed in the form of a pyramid. The bottom layer shows universal policies. These will be available to all pupils and all schools, because positive behaviour is something that has to be worked on all the time.

Firstly, there are personal, social and health education, and citizenship lessons. Through these, pupil discipline and behaviour may be improved as they learn to appreciate the effect of their actions on their own lives and the lives of others and to understand the limits and codes of personal and social behaviour. They learn that rights and responsibilities go hand in hand and consider their behaviour both in and beyond the classroom towards those in authority and each other.

More broadly, we want to enable teachers and school staff to have the confidence to manage pupil behaviour in every class and around the school. We are currently piloting behaviour management training with teachers in the behaviour improvement programme schools. A National Behaviour Training Curriculum has been designed. This series of fifteen modules each of which contains ten hours training designed for a senior member of the school staff – a “lead behaviour professional” – who supports colleagues both in the classroom and around the school. It offers a comprehensive, consistent, training curriculum that covers the nature of behavioural difficulties, principles of inclusion, auditing behaviour within the school and practical strategies for training teachers and other staff on the job in support of positive whole school approaches to behaviour.

The last thing that I mentioned, whole school behaviour policies, drawn up by school governors in consultation with parents, pupils and staff, are very important in helping to create an atmosphere that promotes positive behaviour. Setting out what is expected of both staff and pupils alike, and then working within this framework, is the best possible way of creating a school ethos where everybody treats each other with respect. Training in the principles and practical implementation of whole school behaviour policies is a key element in the National Behaviour Training Curriculum.

Auditing behaviour in schools is an important starting point for lead behaviour professionals. A detailed whole school behaviour audit instrument is currently being trialled and this is the first stage to achieving some standardised measures of behaviour patterns, to inform whole school behaviour policies, to aid targeted intervention and against which to measure improvements.

On the second layer of the pyramid, there are initiatives that have a proven positive effect on children’s behaviour when difficulties start to emerge. Extended schools offer community access to wider services such as health, social services or adult learning. Pupils’ behaviour and attendance improves when they associate school with activities over and above those forming the mainstream of school. Where parents and friends use the school as a learning resource it encourages young people to value their surroundings and participate in what is on offer. The Little London Community Primary School, located in one of the most deprived
areas in Leeds is an example of this. They have a “community wing” that includes housing and social services, community policing, higher education and further education facilities and faith groups. There is also a breakfast club, homework club, computer classes, mentoring schemes and language classes at weekends. Since opening the wing, the children have come into contact with a range of adults other than teachers and the low expectations of both pupils and parents have been raised.

Another scheme that has a positive effect on behaviour, as well as reducing truancy, bullying and violence is the “Safer schools partnerships”. Here, a police officer is stationed in selected schools in communities with high crime rates, and works closely with school staff to enable vulnerable pupils to move through the transition phase from primary to secondary schools without being victimised. They can also support the introduction and development of conflict resolution techniques, such as restorative justice, into the school environment. Most importantly, this initiative creates a greater appreciation and sharing of the problems that young people face and improved strategies for police involvement before violence in school results.

As we move further up the levels of the pyramid, the support becomes more intensive and caters more for the individual, for those pupils whose behaviour is more challenging. Learning mentors and connexions personal advisors both develop one-to-one mentoring relationships with children who need particular support.

Then there are learning support units (LSUs) that provide separate short-term teaching and support for disruptive pupils at risk of exclusion. There are currently over 1,100 units in secondary schools and sixty pilot LSUs in primary schools around England. They reduce disruptive influences from mainstream classes, while keeping pupils in school and learning while their behavioural problems are tackled.

A further initiative to come out of the behaviour improvement programme are the behaviour and education support teams (BESTs). We know that the most effective results for vulnerable children and their families are achieved when practitioners are enabled to work together in the schools. BESTs do just that. They work on both the key points that I identified earlier – early intervention, and promoting positive behaviour in a way that best suits the individual.

Ninety-one of these support teams have been set up in the thirty-four pilot LEAs. They vary in detail from place to place. But in essence they are made up of education welfare officers, family liaison and social workers, child and adolescent mental health workers and counsellors. They might include, in some places, police officers based in the school and the lead behaviour professional.

In addition to supporting individuals or groups of pupils at risk, BESTs offer shared expertise to help schools develop and implement behaviour policies. They can deliver elements of staff training in the National Behaviour Training
Curriculum. They also help staff by demonstrating effective family work and by brokering in other services – family support or drug and alcohol services for example. They can ensure that schools have trusted, skilled people on hand, and that through them, schools will not be alone in tackling deep-rooted problems.

Finally, at the top of the pyramid, is the pupil referral unit. This is a form of alternative provision that can offer a broader curriculum and make provision for appropriate work-related education. Through lesson plans that better suit pupils’ needs, behaviour, attendance and attitudes to learning can be improved.

Schools cannot work in isolation to improve levels of behaviour. A commitment to improving behaviour in school requires input from everybody: parents, children and other professionals. The different elements of the programme allow this to happen.

We are closely monitoring the impact of the project to determine which elements will be developed more widely and to prioritise behaviour intervention strategies for all schools to adopt. Our minister will be making announcements about this shortly. We want to create a culture in all schools where any form of poor behaviour, let alone violence, is not tolerated and is dealt with quickly, while remaining sensitive to the needs of the individual pupil. More than that we aim to shift the emphasis on tackling misbehaviour away from the reactive towards specifically focused, early intervention strategies that will pre-empt the escalation of misbehaviour into violence. The behaviour improvement programme is testing a range of such strategies so that in the future incidences of violence in schools, though rare at the moment, will decrease further.
APPENDIX
FINAL DECLARATION

Violence at school¹

Public opinion in general, and all the relevant players in particular, have become acutely aware in recent years of the phenomenon of violence at school, especially in connection with the tragic incidents which have been widely reported by the media.

These tragic events, of which there are – thankfully – relatively few, are in fact the tangible expression of violent incidents which are less serious in nature but occur more frequently; although it is difficult to quantify how often they occur, there is no doubt that they are becoming more common.

An increase in violent incidents is characteristic of all European societies, and the educational community is no exception. This trend is varied, and does not affect all social groups in the same way. Nonetheless, violence destabilises democracy as a whole.

In this respect, whilst adequate responses must be provided, they must nonetheless be particularly balanced, so as not to exaggerate the relative scale of the problem in school environments throughout the Council of Europe member states.

Violence at school is not a new phenomenon, but it would appear that it has changed considerably in nature over recent years, particularly on account of the school environment’s growing inability to isolate itself from the tensions and difficulties of all sorts that characterise society in general, and the local communities in which schools are located in particular.

Violence at school covers incidents that differ enormously, ranging from minor incidents to very serious cases: all of them must be dealt with appropriately. Particular attention should be given to issues related to gender.

There is a wide diversity of situations in the member states, in terms of the forms that school violence takes and its context and causes. Nonetheless, a very wide consensus has emerged on the need to implement local partnerships, the arrangements for which should of course be adapted to individual situations.

¹ The 150 participants, representing ministries of education and of youth, youth movements at national and local level, local and regional authorities, NGOs and local agencies of ministries of the interior and of justice contributed to the drafting of the Final Declaration.
The following basic guidelines should be adhered to:

- violence prevention should be a key aspect of education for democratic citizenship (tolerance and intercultural dialogue, gender equality, human rights, peaceful resolution of conflicts, human dignity, non-violence);
- young people should be seen as players and key partners in any activity in this area;
- mechanisms should exist for taking action even before violence occurs, by raising awareness among all the parties concerned and through preventative work;
- rapid and proportional reaction mechanisms should be available where such phenomena do appear;
- all parties must recognise the need to act and these parties should step up their active role;
- exchange and dialogue should be developed at all levels within communities, but also between them, especially at European level;
- priority should be given to protection and care of victims;
- support should be provided to assist families in their educational role.

**Why partnerships?**

Since the underlying causes of violence at school are partly the result of external phenomena, any action, particularly preventative action, should bring together not only the various elements in the education system but also all the players from the local community.

Consequently, the development of partnerships is a precondition for the short-, medium- and long-term effectiveness of prevention work, and represents a clear added value in comparison with any action, however laudable, that may be implemented separately by each of the parties.

Violence has an enormous social cost, which requires that preventative action be taken with a view to reducing its frequency in a tangible way.

The principle of partnership, whilst not necessarily calling into question the powers and specific rules applicable to each of the parties, does imply de-compartmentalisation and the establishment of cross-disciplinary ties between the parties or services concerned.

Generally speaking, the concept of partnership in preventing violence is also the key element of any activity for this purpose in a democratic context that respects the fundamental values that unite the Council of Europe’s member states. Accordingly, building partnerships is a contribution to the harmonious functioning of democratic institutions.
Who are the partners?

Naturally, the very diverse range of national, regional or local situations must be taken into account; nevertheless, we consider that it would be appropriate to take account of the following partners, in different ways and to varying degrees:

– the school community, in all its forms, especially teachers and their organisations, administrative and managerial bodies, social and medical services and all non-teaching staff. Particular attention should be given to the role of pupils, including very young pupils, parents and their representatives;

– the local and regional authorities and their various specialised services, particularly those involved in preventing violence in general, the social services, the police, services of regional planning, cultural activities;

– all youth organisations, formal or informal;

– representatives of civil society, especially non-governmental organisations involved in cultural activities, non-formal education, or violence prevention focusing on certain groups or districts, and of faith communities;

– the social, economic and political worlds in general;

– the media, in particular local and regional media;

– representatives of social research circles, from academia or specific structures;

– the national authorities involved in policies on education, youth, culture, social and economic issues, health, justice and law-enforcement, regional planning and urban policy, and especially their decentralised services at local level.

Elements to be considered in drawing-up local strategies for awareness-raising, prevention and appropriate reaction

While it is clear that, all too often, moves to introduce such strategies are a reaction to visible incidents of violence, it would in future be appropriate to establish such prevention-oriented initiatives before serious incidents occur, or for incidents that are less acute but repeated.

It should be emphasised that any strategy in this area should first consists of launching a process that will develop in time, rather than establishing formal structures, although the latter are obviously necessary. Accordingly, it is important to design such strategies in the long-term.

In this respect, assessment of the climate in schools and in the community as a whole is essential. An analysis, bringing together all the partners on the basis of local circumstances, should be carried out to determine, pragmatically but comprehensively, the various phenomena existing in the local community that might lead to the development of violence.

It would be appropriate to introduce a system of indicators identifying phenomena with the potential to lead to violence as soon as they appear (early warning systems).
Places or fora for sharing information, awareness-raising, identifying common objectives, evaluation and monitoring the situation should be established. Nevertheless, considerable flexibility should be maintained, in order to be able to adapt quickly to changes in the local community or to newly-revealed problems.

Where a phenomenon with the potential to generate violence is identified, or where violent incidents are observed, there should be a rapid reaction, particularly:

- support for potential or confirmed victims, encouraging them to express themselves and helping to guarantee a return to a sense of personal balance;
- there should be a clear reminder of the rules for the perpetrators of violent acts, together with balanced and appropriate punishment that is specifically focused on repairing harm and recognising what one has done, and the implementation of educational measures;
- action should be taken to address the underlying phenomena that lead to the emergence of visible violence. This is the area in which the role of the community at large is particularly important.

In implementing any prevention strategy, it is appropriate to have a clear procedure aimed at defining each person’s role and responsibility, and the role and responsibility of the community as a whole. In this respect, any prevention strategy should be conducted in a context of democratic dialogue that respects the players’ cultural, economic and sociological diversity. Clear co-ordination of activities is needed, in order to avoid the phenomena of bureaucratisation and conflict of interests. The training of the protagonists concerned should be included in this process.

Developing mediation measures is at the heart of prevention strategies. All the players concerned may, at certain points, assume the role of mediator, nevertheless it would frequently be useful to have a specific body or specific individuals, including young people themselves, appointed to listen and to intervene in the capacity of mediators.

**Recommendations**

*The Council of Europe member states and signatory states to the European Cultural Convention should:*

- take any measures at national level that would be likely to promote and encourage the development of local partnerships for preventing and combating violence at school, particularly through the adoption of a legislative framework that creates favourable conditions, and recognition of the importance given to their development;
- pay particular attention to creating a favourable context for the development of long-term preventative measures;
- adopt appropriate budgetary measures to ensure the introduction and functioning of local partnerships, in full or in part;
encourage the various ministries and departments concerned at national, regional or local level to participate constructively in local partnerships;

establish national bodies to monitor the situation at national level and provide assistance or support to local partnerships;

include the prevention of violence at school in initial and in-service training for educational staff within a multidisciplinary framework;

give particular attention to the impact of the media regarding violence among young people;

promote sharing of experience and information as well as dissemination of good practices.

Local and regional authorities should:

integrate the prevention of violence at school in their general programmes for preventing violence in everyday life;

encourage their various departments to contribute to the establishment of strategies to combat violence at school;

support the development of prevention strategies, inter alia, in material and financial terms;

implement youth policies that incorporate consultation and participation by young people in local and regional democratic life;

promote the sharing of experience and information as well as dissemination of good practices.

School establishments should:

play their full role in introducing initiatives, even and especially before any violent incidents occur also through including violence prevention in the curriculum in an appropriate manner;

take particular action to develop a favourable climate within schools, by encouraging de-compartmentalisation of the roles and functions of the various internal players in school life;

encourage the opening up of schools to the communities in which they are located;

guarantee the democratic functioning of schools, with particular recognition of the rightful place of pupils and their parents.

Youth organisations should:

contribute their experience and skills to prevention work;

promote training or awareness-raising activities about prevention, in association with the other local partners;

work to develop youth policies at local level that will include the youngest groups.
Local and regional media should:

– provide balanced coverage and reporting that not only deals with incidents of violence, but also brings to the public’s attention positive actions to prevent violence or increase awareness;

– contribute to the training of pupils, teachers, parents and the entire educational community in the field of the media and ethics;

The Council of Europe should:

Pursue the work begun at this conference, particularly through:

– the publication and wide dissemination of the conference report and this Final Declaration;

– the rapid preparation of a handbook on the implementation of strategies to prevent violence at school, on the basis of the conclusions set out above, and including a number of specific examples of good practice;

– the completion of training modules for the parties concerned, particularly teachers, youth leaders, parents and the various local players;

– the preparation of a draft recommendation by the Committee of Ministers on partnerships for the prevention of violence at school, bringing together the three bodies involved in organising this conference;

– the inclusion of the specific elements involved in preventing violence at school in the general conclusions that are to be adopted at the close of the integrated project on “Reponses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society”, particularly with regard to the implementation of general prevention policies;

– the recognition of the role of education in developing networks of observatories of violence in everyday life, as part of the integrated project;

– the continuation of the work already begun in the area of the media and violence, particularly as regards material targeted at young people (media education, ethical guidelines, media impact on behaviour);

– the organisation of specific activities in this field taking into account the particular features of different European countries or regions (especially south-east Europe);

– the strengthening of working relationships with other international organisations (such as Unesco and Unicef) to develop synergies, in particular for the dissemination of experience and good practices and the analysis of causes of violence at school.
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[www.coe.int/violence](http://www.coe.int/violence)
Violence in schools – a challenge for the local community reviews the highlights of the Council of Europe conference Local Partnerships for Preventing and Combating Violence at School (December, 2002). The conference discarded repression altogether as a means of curbing violence in schools. Instead, discussion focused on mediation, intercultural dialogue, early warning systems, prevention programmes at primary school level, and above all, on respect for the human rights of both the victim and the offender. The clear message that emerged from this meeting was that the prevention of violence should be education-oriented, and that schools should open up and engage in local partnership initiatives with community actors, including the police, which take into account the specific features and environmental factors of the community.

The Council of Europe has forty-five member states, covering virtually the entire continent of Europe. It seeks to develop common democratic and legal principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals. Ever since it was founded in 1949, in the aftermath of the second world war, the Council of Europe has symbolised reconciliation.