

# **BALKAN EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY ON CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT (BECAN)**

FP7 DG-RESEARCH [CONTRACT No: HEALTH-F2-2009-223478]



## **BECAN EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SURVEY ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT (CAN) IN BULGARIA**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Project “Balkan Epidemiological Study on Child Abuse and Neglect” (B.E.C.A.N.) run from September 2009 until January 2013 in 9 Balkan countries and was co-funded by the EU’s 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP7/2007-2013)<sup>1</sup> and the participating partner Organizations. The project’s coordinator was the Institute of Child Health, Department of Mental Health and Social Welfare, Centre for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ICH-MHSW), in Athens (Greece), while the national coordinators for each of the participating countries were the following Organizations:

- Children's Human Rights Centre of Albania (Albania)
- Department of Medical Social Sciences, South-West University "Neofit Rilski" (Bulgaria)
- Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo (Bosnia & Herzegovina)
- Department of Social Work, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb (Croatia)
- University Clinic of Psychiatry, University of Skopje (F.Y.R. of Macedonia)
- Social Work Department, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, Babes-Bolyai University (Romania)
- Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation, University of Belgrade (Serbia)
- Association of Emergency Ambulance Physicians (Turkey)

The project’s evaluation was conducted by Istituto degli Innocenti (Italy) and the project’s external scientific supervision was undertaken by Prof. Kevin Browne, Head of the W.H.O. Collaborating Centre for Child Care and Protection (United Kingdom) and Chair of Forensic Psychology and Child Health, Institute of Work, Health & Organisations, University of Nottingham.

The BECAN project included the design and realization of an **Epidemiological field survey** and a **Case-Based Surveillance study** in 9 Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, F.Y.R. of Macedonia, Greece, Romania, Serbia and Turkey).

The 9 Epidemiological Surveys that were conducted aimed at investigating the prevalence and incidence of child abuse and neglect (CAN) in representative randomized samples of the general population of pupils attending three grades (the grades attended mainly by children 11, 13 and 16 year-olds). In addition, supplementary surveys were conducted to convenience samples of children that have dropped-out of school in countries where the drop-out rates are high for producing estimates of respectful CAN indicators at national level. Data were collected by two sources, namely by matched pairs of children and their parents, by using two of the ICAST Questionnaires (the ICAST-CH and the ICAST-P) modified for the purposes of the BECAN project.

The Case-Based Surveillance Study (CBSS) aimed at identifying CAN incidence rates based on already existing data extracted from the archives of agencies involved in the handling of CAN cases (such as child protection, health, judicial and police-services and NGOs) in the same geographical areas and for the same time period as the epidemiological field survey. The collected data were related to the characteristics of individual cases such as child, incident, perpetrator(s),

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caregiver(s), and information concerning the family. At the same time, the CBSS targeted to map the existing surveillance mechanisms, where available, and to outline the characteristics of the surveillance practices in each participating country. Moreover, comparison at national level between inductance rates of CAN as found in field survey in one hand and in case based surveillance study on the other would produce evidence based estimates of the instantiation of the “iceberg” phenomenon regarding CAN, viz. that actual rates of the phenomenon are substantially higher than the number of cases actually known or provided for by services in the participant countries.

In addition, in the context of the BECAN Project were built National Networks of agencies (governmental and non-governmental) working in the fields of child protection from the areas of welfare, health, justice, education and public order. In total, 9 National Networks were developed in the participating countries, having more than 430 agencies-members. Last but not least, a wide range of dissemination activities were conducted which included the organization of National Conferences and one International Conference, scientific papers, announcements to scientific conferences and meetings, publications in press/media, publication of Reports, etc. (more information about the project's activities can be found at the project's website: [www.becan.eu](http://www.becan.eu)).

Finally, BECAN aimed to include all aforementioned outcomes in terms of evidence produced, experience gained and networking of resources into comprehensive consolidated reports at national and Balkan level that could facilitate evidence based social policy design and implementation for improving child protection services and overall provisos.

The current Report describes in detail the methodology and the main results of the epidemiological survey conducted in Bulgaria to the samples of pupils attending the IV, VII, and X grades of schools and their parents.

## **A. GENERAL INFORMATION**

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The Bulgarian survey in schools was conducted simultaneously in the 3 stratified regions (Blagoevgrad, Varna, Veliko Tynovo) from 15 January to 30 June 2011.

The research team from South-West University “Neofit Risliki”, Blagoevgrad consisted by : Vaska Stancheva-Popkostadinova, national coordinator of BECAN in Bulgaria and chief researcher, Stefka Chinceva, coordinator for the implementation of the survey in Blagoevgrad region (in school and with drop out , Victoria Sotirova (psychologist), Ekaterina Mitova (pediatrician), Natasha Virmozelova (psychologist), Stanislava Stoyanova (psychologist). In total 32 field researchers (including local coordinators) participated in the field survey (social, workers, psychologists, social pedagogues, sociologist).

## B. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

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### 1. Permission(s) to access schools

The permission from Ministry of Education, Youth and Science was received in advance, in order to have access to the school, as well as respected local authorities-regional directorates of education in stratified regions.

### 2. Field Researchers' Training

The 34 professionals were selected and trained for the conducting of field survey, and 2 of them were excluded later, because of the change of their place of living. All the field researchers have an expertise in helping professions (see table 1)

**Table 1. Field researchers' specialty (N=34)**

Specialty	Blagoevgrad	Varna	Veliko Tynovo
Psychology	5	7	7
Social Work	3	6	
Social Pedagogy			3
Sociology	1		

The training was held at University Center Bachinovo, 7-8 October 2010. Trainers were V.Stancheva, St. Chincheva, Ek.Mitova, who were trained in Tirana, 2010.

Content of the training included: presentation of the project BECAN and ICAST-questionnaires; methodology and procedure for the epidemiological study, self-administered ICAST-CH, ICAST-P, structured –interviews with ICAST-CH, ICAST-P, standardized answers of possible questions. The stress was given on ethical issues. Pre and post Evaluation. Follow-up tasks was given to the researchers.

All the participants were satisfied with the provided training.

The local coordinators were elected at the end of the training.

In the stratified regions there were 7 field researchers and 1 Coordinator (Stefka Chincheva, SWU "Neofit Rilski", Department of Medical-Social Sciences for Blagoevgrad region), 11 researchers and 1 Coordinator (Irina Todorova, Technical University, Department of Social work for Varna Region), and 10+ researchers and 1Coordinator (Daniela Tasefska, University of V. Tynovo, Department of Psychology Veliko Tynovo region)

### 3. Other organizational aspects

In November and December 2010 the meetings with the teams in Veliko Tynovo and Varna were held in order to discuss follow-up tasks of field researchers, and to go briefly again in the procedure for the field research. The same meeting was held in Blagoevgrad in January

2011. All the field researchers received the translated manual with detailed field survey instructions.

### **Organization of Survey**

The study was conducted simultaneously in the 3 regions in the period of January 2011 to June 2011.

After the agreement received by Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, the meetings were arranged with the directors of regional inspectorates of education in then stratified regions. They send the letters to the school included in the sample, and present to them National and regional coordinators.

## C. METHODOLOGY

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### 1. Sampling Method – Sample

After an expert analysis 3 administrative regions were chosen to participate in the study– the region of Varna (Northeastern part of Bulgaria, the region of Veliko Tarnovo (Central part of Bulgaria) and the region of Blagoevgrad (Southwestern part of Bulgaria). The register of schools supported by the National statistical institute was used for the number of schools and students in the corresponding grades in order for the sample to be formed. Schools having students only in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade (students under 11 years old) and some schools with specific statute were excluded. All students who at the time of self-completion of questionnaires attend school in the corresponding grade will be included in the sample. The method of multi-stage stratified cluster sampling was applied in order to select the representative sample of children by using the combination of the following principles: region, location of school (town/ village) and the students' age groups (11 – 13 – 16). In this way 18 strata were formed. The number of students for each stratum in the sample was calculated with a probability proportionate to the size of the sample in the population. Schools have been used as clusters. In some schools it could be distinguished 2-age strati. With the aim of lowering the effect of correlation inside clusters (as the number of students in some schools is very large) only part of the students at the corresponding age in a class will be asked to complete questionnaires.

Total sample includes 3619 pupils, attending 207 classes in 85 schools, which is 1, 95% of the total population in the country (11,13,16 year olds)

### 3. Research Tools

The ICAST C is a multi-national, multi-lingual, consensus-based survey instrument.

The ICAST-C and ICAST-P questionnaires have been developed by the International Society of the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The ICAST questionnaires developed for and are being used in the UN Study on Violence against Children, namely the ICAST-P addressing parents and the ICAST-CH addressing children, can be used in epidemiological studies. South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad obtaining the rights to use the questionnaires from ISPCAN, as well as for their translation and cultural validation. Moreover, a Training Manual developed to be used during the training research teams in conducting epidemiological survey using the ICAST tools and to be distributed to the researchers. The Manual is based on the basic principles of the ICAST Manuals, but it also covers in every details all of the issues related to the methodology, the sampling, the administration of the questionnaires, ethical issues and coding of the data.

The ICAST-P and ICAST-CH questionnaires translated and validated in Bulgarian as well as the Training Manual (in all languages of participated countries in BECAN project) are available at

<http://www.becan.eu/node/25>.

#### **4. Data Collection & Fieldwork process**

In order to conduct the survey in the school settings in Bulgaria it was necessary to **obtain the permission** by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science to access schools.

After obtainment of official permission, an **information letter** was sent by the National Coordinator (in stratified regions) to the Directors of Regional inspectorates of education and/or to the School Principals (which are selected to be included in the sample) in order to be informed about the survey that will be conducted at their school.

The local coordinator communicate with the Directors of Regional Inspectorates and Schools (by phone and personal meetings) in order to obtain information about the number of classrooms of the selected grade in each selected school, and to make a schedule for the survey.

The Regional Departments for Child Protection also were informed about the field study and were asked for the support in the organization of field survey with drop-out of school children.

During communication with the schools' Directors the **date** and **time** that for the survey was arranged. The **delivery of Information Letters and Informed Consent Forms** to parents of the students regarding their child's participation in the survey was made 2-3 days before the data collection from students. The delivery of letters and forms was done by visiting the students at



school in order to preliminary inform them about the survey and distribute to them the information letters and Informed Consent Forms that they should give to their parents.

In some places (5) parents were informed about the study and were given the consent form during the parental meetings.

Data collection in school setting was made by self-completed questionnaires and structured interviews.

Parents completed

## **5. Ethical considerations related to the fieldwork process**

The parents and their children, participated in the survey were informed for their right to decline to participate and to withdraw to participate in the study in the information letter (for parents), and in the presentation of the research to the children, before the beginning of the study.

In the information letter was provided addresses and telephones of national and regional coordinators, as well as the contact details for Child Protection Department in the respected municipality.

The research team and the members conducting field studies are familiar with the interagency approach to working introduced, the requirement for working in a multidisciplinary team at every case of violence, as well as with the algorithm for each specific case, which should be followed.

It has been prepared a Declaration form for all who have access to data and information concerning the study. They are obliged to comply with the legislation, ethical and professional standards for working with personal data and official information. By signing the form they declare that they bear criminal liability if they disseminate or take advantage of the data and information they have access to.

Safety of the participants (but also of the research team) is of major importance in studies investigating sensitive issues, like abuse.

The safety plan was developed and introduced to each pair of the researchers. to be able to appropriately respond to any danger that they will face during the survey; at the same time, though, you should be extremely careful in order not to frighten your researchers by leading them to believe that they will for sure be exposed in (great) danger.

## D. RESULTS

### 1. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Socio-demographic characteristics of children are shown in Table 2.1.

	Grade group							
	11-year olds		13-year olds		16-General		TOTAL	
<b>Pupils</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Sample size (eligible for survey pupils)<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>1241</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>1105</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>1273</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>3619</b>	<b>100,0</b>
Unreturned parental consent &/or child's absenteeism	242	19,50	240	21,72	412	32,36	894	24,70
Negative parental consent form	284	22,88	133	12,04	91	7,15	508	14,04
Child's refusal	8	0,64	15	1,36	34	2,67	57	1,58
Completed ICAST-CH (valid & invalid)	707		717		736		2160	
<b>Excluded ICAST-CH due to invalid completion</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>3,63</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2,90</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>3,38</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>3,32</b>
<b>Participation rate (valid ICAST-CH)</b>	<b>662</b>	<b>53,34</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>61,99</b>	<b>693</b>	<b>54,44</b>	<b>2040</b>	<b>56,37</b>
<b>Parents</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Sample size<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>707</b>		<b>717</b>		<b>736</b>		<b>2160</b>	
Completed ICAST-P (valid & invalid)	457	64,64	551	76,85	444	60,33	1452	67,22
<b>Excluded ICAST-P due to invalid completion</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>29,10</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>20,69</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>19,82</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>23,07</b>
<b>Response rate (valid ICAST-CH)</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>45,83</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>60,95</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>48,37</b>	<b>1117</b>	<b>51,71</b>

Total sample includes 3619 children (represents more than 2.65% of the targeted population) and 2160 parents. Children are approximately equally distributed by age groups, and gender (tbl.2.1). They are attending 201 classes in 118 schools in the three stratified regions (tbl.2). Only 2,9 % of children had flunked years in school. Nearly two third of children (71%) lived in urban areas, and one third (29%) – in rural areas. Approximately eighty percent of parents are married, and thirteen percent are divorced. Majority of children lived with their mothers (90%) and fathers (82,8%). Majority of pupils has Bulgarian nationality (86,4%).

**Table 2. Sample description ( schools , classrooms, pupils, parents in the stratified areas)**

Geographical area	Grade group									Parents' Sample
	11-year olds			13-year olds			16-year olds			
	Schools	Class-rooms	Pupils	Schools	Class-rooms	Pupils	Schools	Class-rooms	Pupils	
Blagoevgrad	9	13	407	10	13	366	17	24	421	659
Varna	12	29	524	10	27	540	12	41	432	1024
Veliko Tyrnovo	5	14	310	4	10	199	9	36	420	477
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>1241</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>1105</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>1273</b>	<b>2160</b>

In 3 cases the same school was randomly selected in the sample for 2 grades, in Veliko Tyrnovo (11- and 13-year olds grades) and 2 in Varna (the first for 11- and 16-year olds and the second for 13- and 16-year olds).

**Table 2.1. Socio-demographic characteristics of children and their parents (sample's size = 2040)**

	N	%		N	%		
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Urbanicity of the place of residence</b>				
Girls	1049	51,42	Urban	1448	70,98		
Boys	991	48,58	Rural	592	29,02		
<b>Grade group (typical age of attending pupils)</b>			<b>Nationality</b>				
11 years old	662	32,45	Unspecified	19	0,93		
13 years old	685	33,58	Bulgarian	1745	86,43		
16 years old, General school	355	17,4	Turkish	183	9,06		
16 years old, Vocational school	338	16,56	Roma	15	0,74		
			Other	12	0,54		
			Don't want to answer	43	2,13		
			Don't know	22	1,09		
<b>Flunked years in school</b>			<b>Religion</b>				
Unspecified	21	1,04	Unspecified	51	2,50		
No	1961	97,13	Orthodox Christian	1062	53,39		
Yes	58	2,87	Muslims	291	14,63		
			Other	16	0,80		
			None	432	21,72		
			Don't want to answer	86	4,32		
			Don't know	102	5,13		
<b>Persons cohabitating with the child</b>			<b>Parents' marital situation</b>				
Unspecified	25	1,23	Unspecified	14	0,69		
father	1669	82,83	married	1518	74,93		
mother	1812	89,97	divorced/separated	270	13,33		
stepfather (mother's spouse)	61	3,03	cohabitating	115	5,68		
stepmother (father's spouse)	19	0,94	one parent is not living anymore	50	2,47		
foster father	7	0,35	both parents are not living anymore	1	0,05		
foster mother	6	0,30	Don't want to answer	45	2,22		
mother's partner	34	1,69	Don't know	27	1,33		
father's partner	4	0,20					
grandfather	441	21,88					
grandmother	623	30,54					
male sibling(s)	660	32,74					
female sibling(s)	629	31,18					
other relatives	75	3,72					
other non relatives	20	0,99					
			<b>Parental Educational level</b>				
				<b>Mother</b>	<b>Father</b>		
				<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>		
				<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>		
			Unspecified	42	2,26	94	4,61
			Hasn't gone to school	8	0,44	7	0,36
			Some grades of Primary school	40	2,20	14	0,72
			Primary school	45	2,48	33	1,70
			Middle school	181	9,96	150	7,71
			High School / Lyceum	542	29,81	516	26,52
			Vocational / Technical school	61	3,36	328	16,86
			University	542	29,81	428	21,99
			Post graduate studies (Masters, Doctorate)	16	0,88	10	0,51
			Don't know	383	21,07	460	23,64

## 2. RESPONSE RATE

Response percents by grade group for total sample (children and parents) are displayed in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1.** Response rate of children and their parents

	Grade group								
	11-year olds		13-year olds		16-General		TOTAL		
	<b>Pupils</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Sample size (eligible for survey pupils)<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>1241</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>1105</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>1273</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>3619</b>	<b>100,0</b>	
Unreturned parental consent &/or child's absenteeism	242	19,50	240	21,72	412	32,36	894	24,70	
Negative parental consent form	284	22,88	133	12,04	91	7,15	508	14,04	
Child's refusal	8	0,64	15	1,36	34	2,67	57	1,58	
Completed ICAST-CH (valid & invalid)	707		717		736		2160		
<b>Excluded ICAST-CH due to invalid completion</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>3,63</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2,90</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>3,38</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>3,32</b>	
<b>Participation rate (valid ICAST-CH)</b>	<b>662</b>	<b>53,34</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>61,99</b>	<b>693</b>	<b>54,44</b>	<b>2040</b>	<b>56,37</b>	
<b>Parents</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
<b>Sample size<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>707</b>		<b>717</b>		<b>736</b>		<b>2160</b>		
Completed ICAST-P (valid & invalid)	457	64,64	551	76,85	444	60,33	1452	67,22	
<b>Excluded ICAST-P due to invalid completion</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>29,10</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>20,69</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>19,82</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>23,07</b>	
<b>Response rate (valid ICAST-CH)</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>45,83</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>60,95</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>48,37</b>	<b>1117</b>	<b>51,71</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Pupils registered to school

<sup>2</sup> Parents addressed in order to complete the ICAST-P were the parents of pupils who have completed the ICAST-CH and had no problem to give their parent the ICAST-P

Response percents by grade group and geographical area for children are displayed in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2.** Response rate of children by grade group and geographical region

Grade Group	Geographical Region	Pupils' Sample N <sub>eligible</sub> . <sup>1</sup>	Completed ICAST-CH (valid & invalid)	ICAST-CH that excluded due to invalid completion	valid ICAST-CH questionnaires	
					N	P.R. <sup>2</sup> (%)
11-year olds	Blagoevgrad	407	162	15	147	36,12
	Varna	524	374	16	358	68,32
	Veliko Tymovo	310	171	14	157	50,65
<b>TOTAL 11-year olds</b>		<b>1241</b>	<b>707</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>662</b>	<b>53,34</b>
13-year olds	Blagoevgrad	366	226	8	218	59,56
	Varna	540	364	13	351	65,00
	Veliko Tymovo	199	127	11	116	58,29
<b>TOTAL 13-year olds</b>		<b>1105</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>61,99</b>
16- year olds	Blagoevgrad	421	271	11	260	61,76
	Varna	432	286	17	269	62,27
	Veliko Tymovo	420	179	15	164	39,05
<b>TOTAL 16- year olds</b>		<b>1273</b>	<b>736</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>693</b>	<b>54,44</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3619</b>	<b>2160</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>2040</b>	<b>56,37</b>

<sup>1</sup> N<sub>eligible</sub>: Number of pupils registered to school

<sup>2</sup> P.R.: Participation Rate; it is calculated as a percentage of N<sub>ELIGIBLE</sub>, indicating thus the percentage of the pupils' total sample that the survey managed to reach

Response percents by children' grade group for parents are displayed in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3.** Response rate of parents by children's grade group and geographical region

Grade group	Geographical Region	Parents' Sample	Completed ICAST-P (valid & invalid)	ICAST-P that excluded due to invalid completion	valid ICAST-P questionnaires	
					N	R.R. (%)
11-year olds	Blagoevgrad	162	138	60	78	48,15
	Varna	374	209	32	177	47,33
	Veliko Tymovo	171	110	41	69	40,35
<b>TOTAL 11-year olds</b>		<b>707</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>45,83</b>
13-year olds	Blagoevgrad	226	223	56	167	73,89
	Varna	364	229	23	206	56,59
	Veliko Tymovo	127	99	35	64	50,39
<b>TOTAL 13-year olds</b>		<b>717</b>	<b>551</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>60,95</b>
16- year olds	Blagoevgrad	271	197	18	179	66,05
	Varna	286	137	30	107	37,41
	Veliko Tymovo	179	110	40	70	39,11
<b>TOTAL 16- year olds</b>		<b>736</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>48,37</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2160</b>	<b>1452</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>1117</b>	<b>51,71</b>

Response percents by grade group and geographical region for children and parents paired sample are displayed in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.4.** Children and parents paired sample, by children's grade group and geographical region

Grade group	Geographical Region	Valid questionnaires		Valid ICAST CH-P pairs
		ICAST-CH	ICAST-P	
11-year olds	Blagoevgrad	147	78	68
	Varna	358	177	171
	Veliko Tymovo	157	69	56
<b>TOTAL 11-year olds</b>		<b>1241</b>	<b>662</b>	<b>324</b>
13-year olds	Blagoevgrad	218	167	91
	Varna	351	206	205
	Veliko Tymovo	116	64	9
<b>TOTAL 13-year olds</b>		<b>1105</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>437</b>
16- year olds	Blagoevgrad	260	179	64
	Varna	269	107	99
	Veliko Tymovo	164	70	65
<b>TOTAL 16- year olds</b>		<b>1273</b>	<b>693</b>	<b>356</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2040</b>	<b>1117</b>	<b>828</b>

*Prevalence and incidence of child exposure to violence and positive&non-violent parenting practices*

For the purpose of BECAN epidemiological study we use definition of maltreatment, given by WHO (1999): "Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power."

For the purpose of analysis we used categorization of the items in 5 types of victimization: psychological, physical, sexual, domestic violence and neglect; and positive & non violent parenting practices. Response options for the questions in above mentioned types were identical, and scale of answers for incidence rate included:

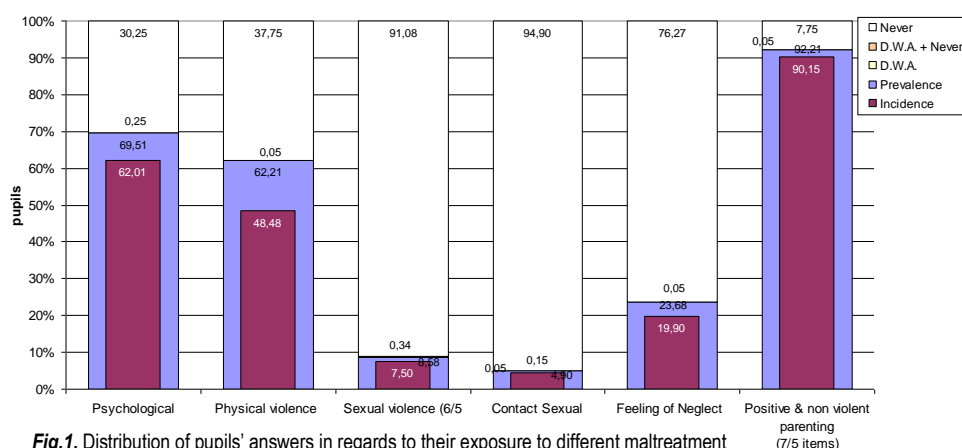
- 1-2 (once or twice a year)
- 3-5 (several times a year)
- 6-12 (monthly or bimonthly)
- 13-50 (several times a month)
- more than 50 (once a week or more often)

For prevalence there is a following answer of the respectful questions: *Not in the past year, but it has happened to me before.*

For the purposes of the analysis and presentation of the main results we rely on the following definitions:

- "*Incidence*" is defined as the number (percentage) of children reporting any frequency score under "During the past year (previous 12 months, e.g. 2010)" in at least 1 item of the scale.
- "*Prevalence*" is defined as the number (percentage) of children reporting having experienced at least 1 behavior of the scale during their entire life time (either in the past year or before).

The results from our study showed that the majority of children experienced psychological (69,5%) or physical (62,2%) violence at least once during their life. Nearly a quarter of children felt neglected, 8,6% of children reported for the experience of sexual violence and 4,4% had experienced contact sexual abuse at least once in their lives (Fig.1). One fifth of children did not have any adverse experience during their lifetime (27,06% in the past 12 months), and 18,14% of children experienced only one type of violence. The prevalence of multiple victimization (child's exposure in 2-4 types of violent experiences) is higher (61,6%) in comparison with incidence rate (49,1%). Smaller percentage of children (5,6% /3,9%) experienced all types of violence (Table 4). The biggest part of children reported that their parents experienced positive & non-violent practices in the upbringing (92,2%/90,2%) .



**Fig.1.** Distribution of pupils' answers in regards to their exposure to different maltreatment forms and to positive parental behaviors during their life time (prevalence) and/or during past year (incidence) by scale

**Note**

- Incidence:** percentage of children reporting any frequency score under "During the past year (previous 12 months)" in at least 1 item of the scale
- Prevalence:** percentage of children reporting having experienced at least 1 behavior of the scale during their entire life time (either in the past year or before)
- D.W.A.:** percentage of children answering "Don't want to answer" in all items of the scale
- Never:** percentage of children reporting that they have "Never" in their lives experience none of the scale's behaviors.
- D.W.A.+Never:** percentage of children answering "Don't want to answer" in 1 or more items of the scale and "Never" to all other items of this scale

**Table 4.** Distribution of children by the number of different types of violence they had experienced during their lifetime (prevalence) and during the past 12 months (incidence)

Different types of violent experiences	Prevalence		Incidence	
	N	%	N	%
0	414	20,29	552	27,06
1	370	18,14	487	23,87
2	623	30,54	590	28,92
3	519	25,44	331	16,23
4	114	5,59	80	3,92
<b>Multiple victimization (2-4 types)<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>1256</b>	<b>61,57</b>	<b>1001</b>	<b>49,07</b>

<sup>1</sup>. Multiple victimization was operationally defined as a child's exposure in more than one (up to 4) types of violent experiences, namely to  psychological, physical and sexual violence as well as to domestic violence

*Influences of certain socio-demographic categories on the types of violence exposure*

The results of our study reveal influence of some sociodemographic characteristics on the certain types of maltreatment: grade/age group, gender, urbanicity and geographical areas.

*Grade/age group\**

\*Because in our study between grade and age group of children practically there is a full congruence, the separate analyses according grade and age were not performed. In the analysis we use grade and age group as an equivalent variables.

Below are presented only the scales for which the analyses revealed a significant main effect of grade group. Significant main effect of grade group and significant interactions were found only for sexual and

contact sexual violence. Life time exposure (prevalence) and exposure during the previous year (incidence) were highest for 16 years old children from vocational schools (Fig.2).

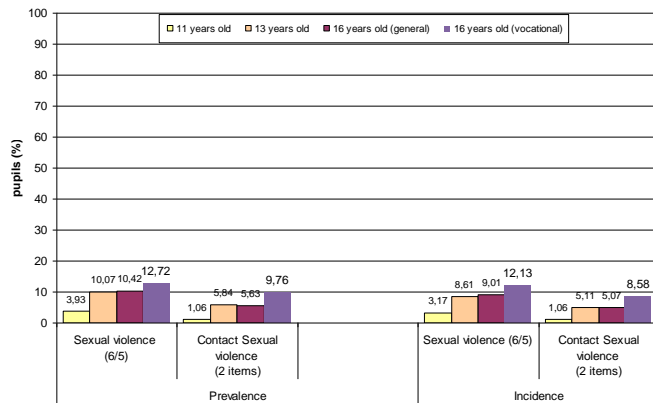


Fig. 2. Prevalence and incidence rates of pupils' exposure to violent behaviors by grade group

Gender and grade influence on the types of violence

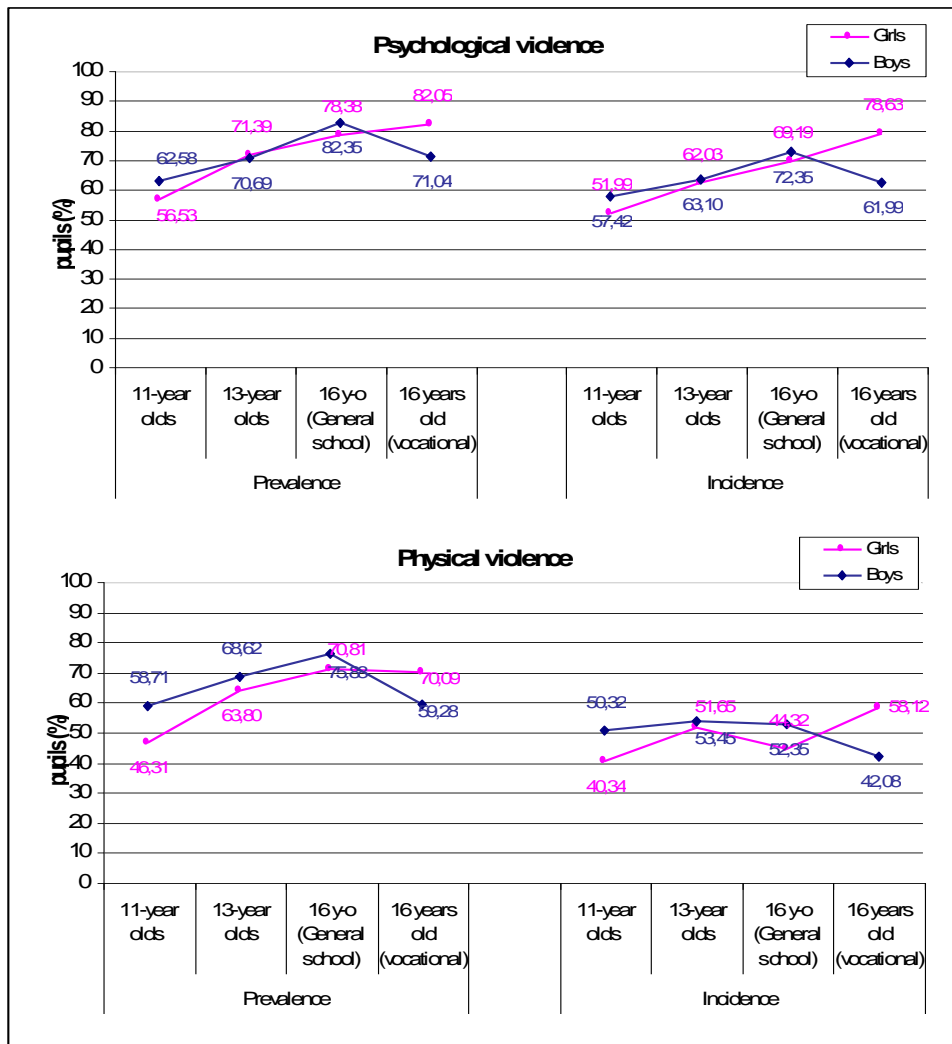


Fig. 3. Prevalence and incidence of psychological and physical violence by age and gender



Urbanicity influence on the types of violence

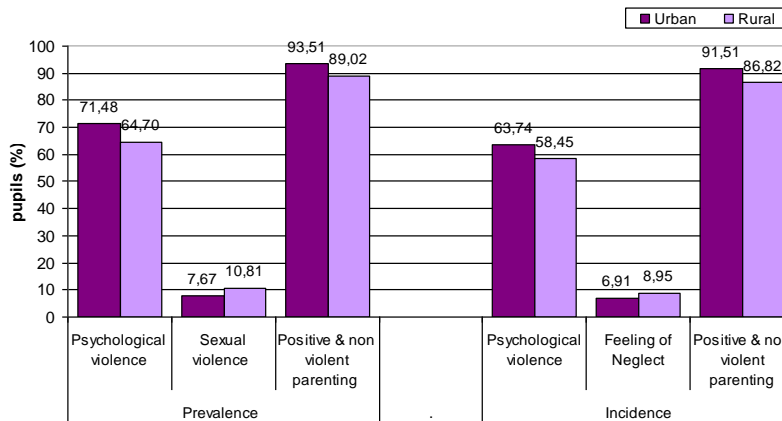


Fig. 4. Prevalence and incidence rates of pupils' exposure to violent behaviors by urbanicity.

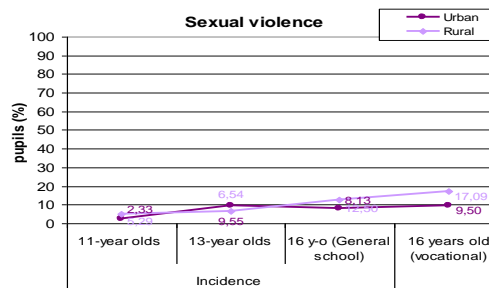


Fig. 5. Prevalence and incidence rates of pupils' exposure to sexual violent behaviors by grade group and urbanicity.

With the exception of 13 years old children from urban areas, all other grade groups have higher rate of incidence according sexual abuse. Significant main effect and significant interactions were found for 11 years old (0,036) and 16 years old children from vocational school (0,042).

Gender and geographical region influence on the types of abuse

There is no significant interaction between prevalence and the last year experience (incidence) of the types of violence and neglect and geographical regions, in the total sample. An interaction between gender and geographical region has been found. The prevalence of physical violence in boys is higher in Blagoevgrad and Varna regions, whereas in girls, it is higher in the Veliko Tynovo region (Fig. 6).

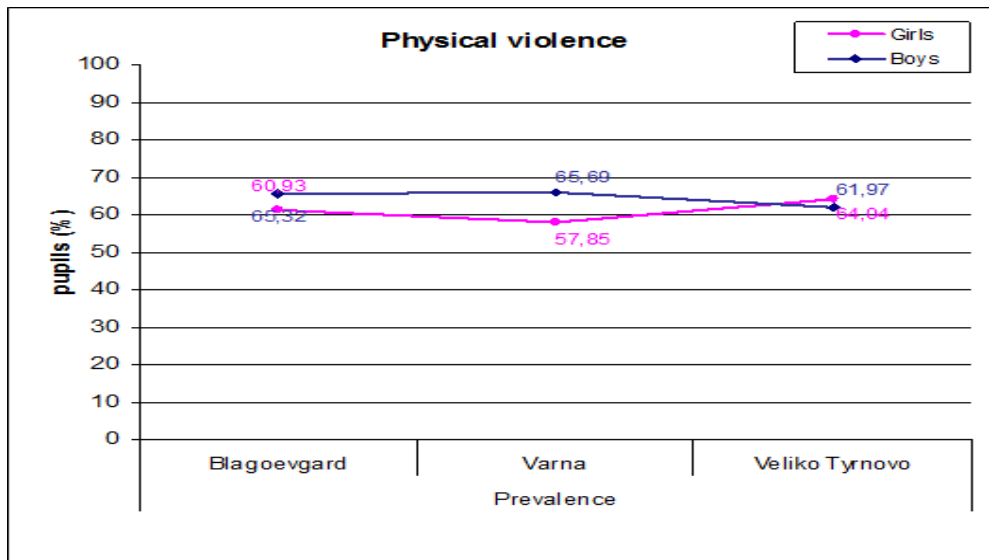


Fig. 6. Prevalence and incidence rates of pupils' exposure to violent behaviors by child's gender and geographical area.

### ***Grade/age and geographical area influence on the types of violence exposure***

Only the scales for which the analyses revealed a significant interaction of grade group x geographical area are presented here)

By age group, psychological violence is most prevalent in 11 years old children from Blagoevgrad, 13 years old children from Varna and 16 years old children (from general and vocational schools) from Veliko Tyrnovo (Fig.5). There is a similar trend for the prevalence of positive& non-violent parenting practices.

Eleven years old children from Blagoevgrad and sixteen years old children (from general and vocational schools) from Veliko Tyrnovo reported higher incidence of positive and non-violent parenting practices in comparison with children in the same groups from other regions (Fig.10).

The prevalence of feeling of being neglected is higher in children from Veliko Tyrnovo for all age (grade ) groups (Fig. 7).

The incidence of feeling of being neglected is higher in 13 years old and 16 years old (general and vocational schools) children from Varna region in comparison with the children in same age groups from other two regions. The incidence of being neglected, reported by 11 years old children from Blagoevgrad region is higher in comparison to children from Varna and Veliko Tyrnovo regions (Fig. 9).

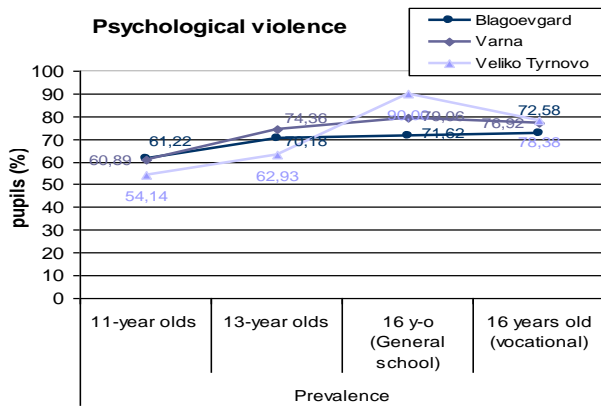


Fig.7. Percentage of pupils in different age/grade groups who have experienced psychological violence at least once in their lifetime (prevalence) with regard to geographical region

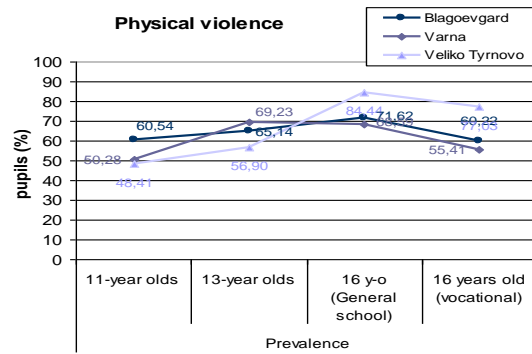


Fig. 8. Percentage of pupils in different age/grade groups who have experienced physical violence at least once in their lifetime (prevalence) with regard to geographical region

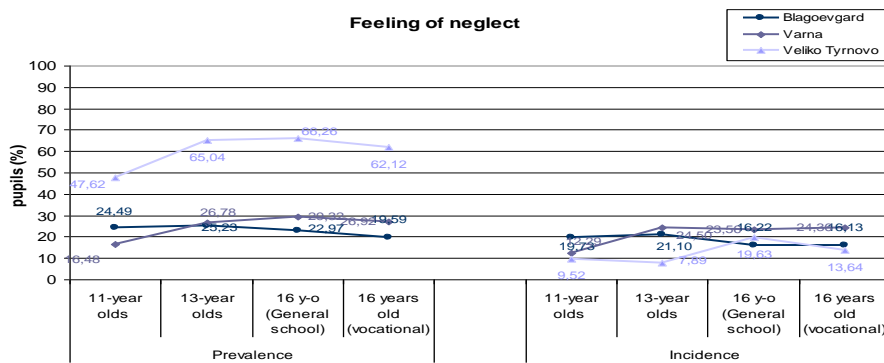


Fig. 9. Percentage of pupils in different age/grade groups who felt neglected at least once in their lifetime (prevalence) and once in the past 12 months (incidence) with regard to geographical region

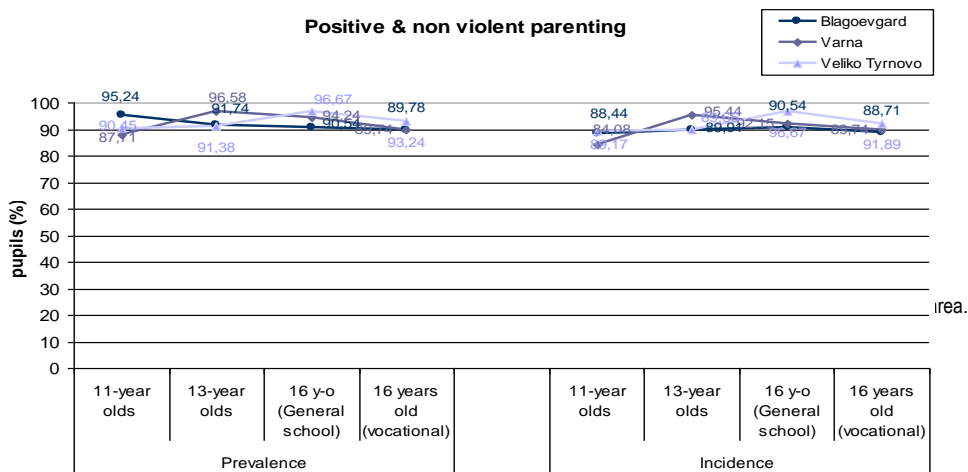


Fig.10. Percentage of pupils in different age/grade groups who have experienced positive parenting practices at least once in their lifetime (prevalence) and once in the past 12 months (incidence) with regard to

### Frequencies of the experience of most common behaviors in Psychological Violence

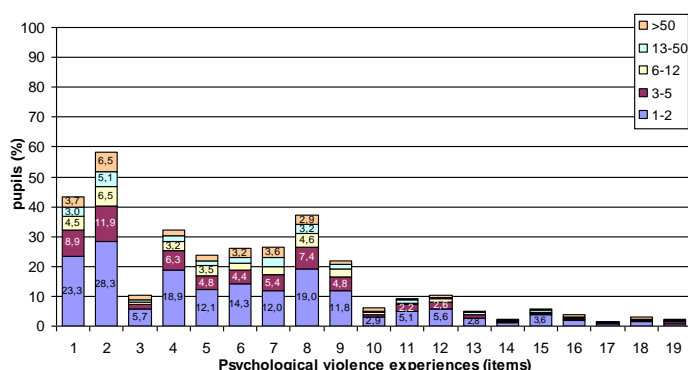


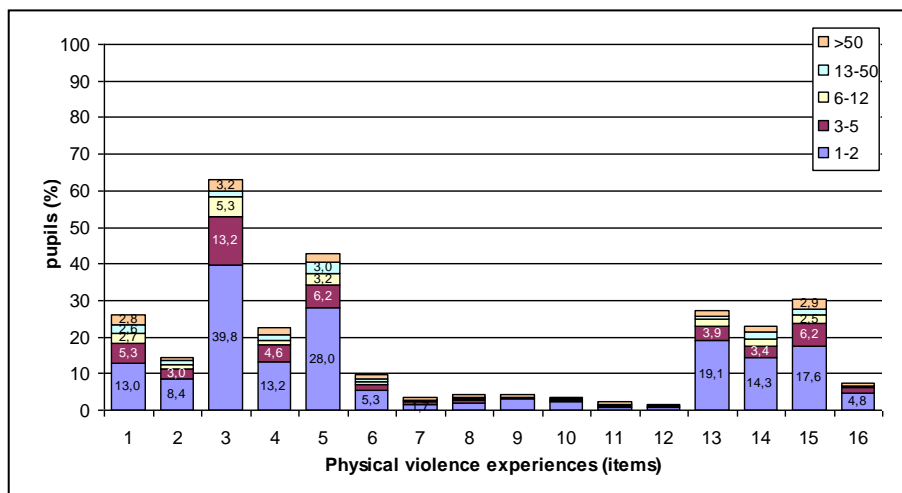
Fig.11. Distribution of pupils' exposure to 19/17\* different experiences of psychological violence, by experience (item) and frequency they experienced it during the past year (incidence).

#### Items\*

1. Shouted, yelled, or screamed at you very loud and aggressively?
2. Insulted you by calling you dumb, lazy or other names like that?
3. Cursed you?
4. Refused to speak to you (ignored you)?
5. **Blamed you for his/her bad mood?**
6. Read your diary, your SMS or e-mail messages without your permission?
7. Went through your bag, drawers, pockets etc. without your permission?
8. Compared you to other children in a way that you felt humiliated?
9. Ashamed or embarrassed you intentionally in front of other people in a way that made you feel very bad or humiliated?
10. Said that they wished you were dead or had never been born?
11. Threatened to leave you or abandon you?
12. Threatened to kick you out of house or send you away?
13. Locked you out of the home?
14. **Threatened to invoke ghosts or evil spirits, or harmful people against you?**
15. Threatened to hurt or kill you?
16. Did not get enough to eat (went hungry) and/or drink (were thirsty) even though there was enough for everyone, as a means of punishment?
17. Have to wear clothes that were dirty, torn, or inappropriate for the season, as a means of punishment?
18. Locked you up in a small place or in a dark room?
19. Threatened you with a knife or a gun?

The most common types of psychological victimization are insulting by calling abusive names, aggressive shouting, yelling and screaming, comparison with other children in a way that the child felt humiliated. Less reported are: treat to invoke ghost or harmful people against the child, wearing inappropriate for the season clothes as a punishment, lock in a dark room, dark room, greatened with a knife or a gun.

## **Frequencies of the experience of most common behaviors in Physical Violence**



**Fig. 12.** Distribution of pupils' exposure to 16/15\* different experiences of physical violence, by experience (item) and frequency they experienced it during the past year (incidence)

### Items\*

1. Pushed or kicked you?
2. Grabbed you by your clothes or some part of your body and shook you?
3. Slapped you?
4. Hit you on head with knuckle or back of the hand?
5. Spanked you on the bottom with bare hand?
6. Hit you on the buttocks with an object such as a stick, broom, cane, or belt?
7. Hit you elsewhere (not buttocks) with an object such as a stick, broom, cane, or belt?
8. Hit you over and over again with object or fist ("beat-up")?
9. Choked you or smothered you (prevent breathing by use of a hand or pillow) or squeezed your neck with hands (or something else)?
10. Intentionally burned or scalded you?
11. **Put chilli pepper, hot pepper, or spicy food in your mouth (to cause pain)?**
12. Tied you up or tied you to something using a rope or a chain?
13. Roughly twisted your ear?
14. Pulled your hair?
15. Pinched you roughly?
16. Forced you to hold a position that caused pain or humiliated you as a means of punishment?

\* The item in bold had been excluded from the short-version of the ICAST-CH completed by the 11 y-o grade's pupils

As for types of physical violence children most commonly reported (Fig. 12) were slapping, spanking, pinching, roughly twisting child's ear (most often by an adult), pulling hair. More severe forms of physical violence are reported less commonly (intentionally burning, tiding with chain, hitting with an object)

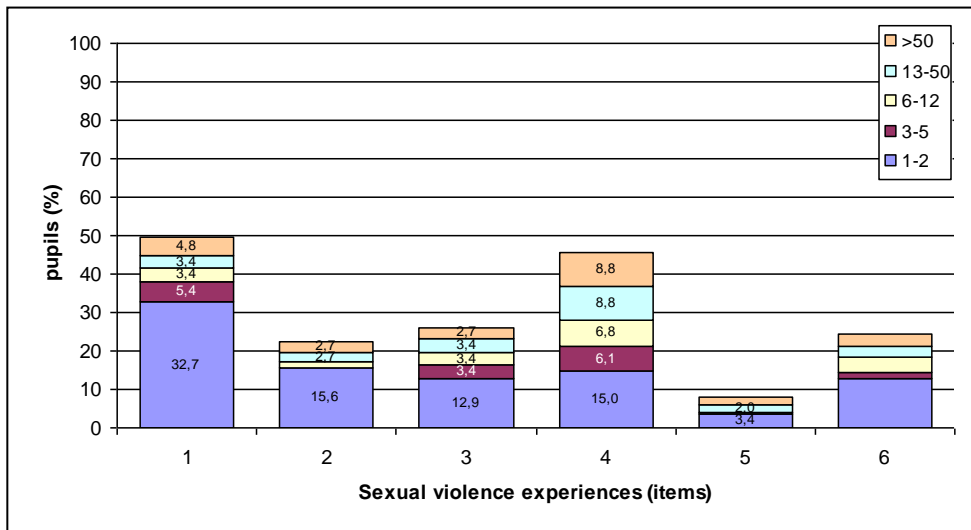


Fig.13. Distribution of pupils' exposure to 6/5\* different experiences of sexual violence, by experience (item) and frequency the experienced it during the past year (incidence)

Items\*

1. Made you upset by speaking to you in a sexual way or writing sexual things about you?
2. Made you watch a sex video or look at sexual pictures in a magazine or computer when you did not want to?
3. Made you look at their private parts or wanted to look at yours?
4. Touched your private parts in a sexual way, or made you touch theirs?
5. **Made a sex video or took photographs of you alone, or with other people, doing sexual things?**
6. Tried to have sex with you when you did not want them to?

\* The item in bold had been excluded from the short-version of the ICAST-CH completed by the 11 y-o grade's pupils

Most prevalent behaviors in the frame of sexual violence, that children were exposed to were: upsetting by speaking sexual things, touching private parts of adults, and trial for making sex with the child.

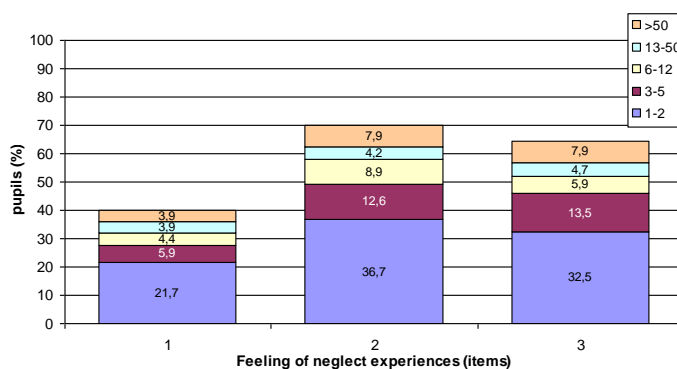


Fig. 14. Distribution of pupils' exposure to 3 different feelings of neglect, by feeling (item) and frequency they experienced it during the past year (incidence)

Items

1. You did not feel cared for?
2. Felt that you were not important?
3. Felt that there was never anyone looking after you, supporting you, helping you when you most needed it?

Most prevalent in the frame of neglect, that children were reported was: feeling that he or she is not important.

### Positive & nonviolent parenting

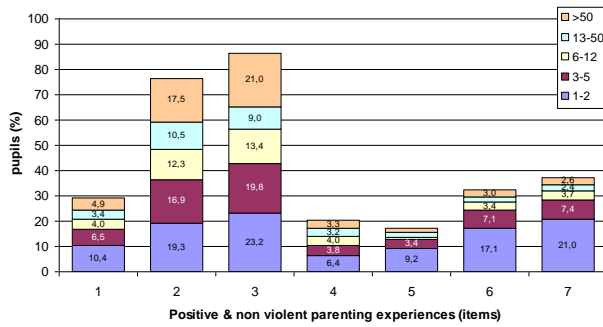


Fig. 15. Distribution of pupils' exposure to 7/6\* different experiences of positive & non violent parenting by experience (item) and frequency they experienced it during the past year (incidence)

#### Items\*

1. **Told you to start or stop doing something (e.g. start doing your homework or stop watching TV)?**
2. Explained you why something you did was wrong?
3. Gave you an award for behaving well?
4. **Gave you something else to do in order to distract your attention (e.g. to tell you do something in order to stop you watching TV)?**
5. Took away your pocket money or other privileges?
6. Forbade you something that you liked?
7. Forbade you to go out?

#### Scale

1-2 (once or twice a year)  
13-50 (several times a month)

3-5 (several times a year)  
more than 50 (once a week or more often)

6-12 (monthly or bimonthly)

19

\* Items in bold had been excluded from the short-version of the ICAST-CH completed by the 11 y-o grade's pupils

**The Prevalence rate of Domestic violence is 37,60% (N=767), while its incidence rate is 27,89% (N=569).**

### Domestic violence (items 11, 12, 13a and 14)

## Internal consistency of ICAST-CH scales

Cronbach's alpha was applied for the assessment of the reliability for ICAST-C scales.

Results are presented in Table 5. With the exception of the the "Contact sexual violence " scale (alpha = .45 for prevalence and alpha = .41 for incidence ) which has a fair alpha, for all other scales internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was moderate to high (between .72 and .84 for prevalence, and between .67 to .82 for incidence).

**Table 5.** Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of 3 scales of maltreatment (psychological, physical and sexual violence), of the feeling of neglect and of the positive & non violent parenting scales

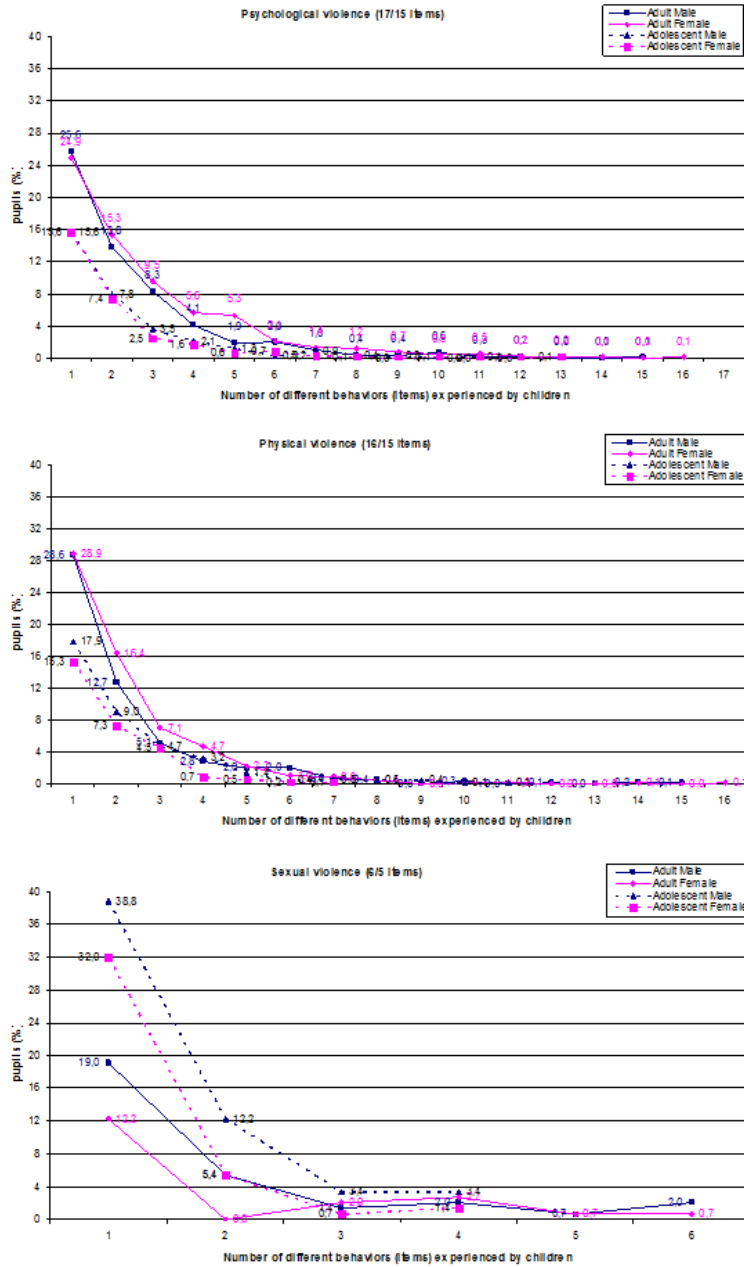
	Prevalence	Incidence
<b>Psychological violence (19/17 items)</b>	<b>0,840</b>	<b>0,816</b>
<b>Physical violence (16/15 items)</b>	<b>0,817</b>	<b>0,796</b>
<b>Sexual violence (6/5 items)</b>	<b>0,759</b>	<b>0,705</b>
Contact sexual violence (2 items)	0,451	0,411
<b>Feeling of neglect (3 items)</b>	<b>0,749</b>	<b>0,753</b>
<b>Positive &amp; non violent parenting (7/5 items)</b>	<b>0,721</b>	<b>0,672</b>



## Perpetrators

Perpetrators for each forms of violence are presented in the figures below, distributed by gender and age characteristics.

For both physical and psychological violence an adult was more likely to have been the perpetrator (more often female), while for the sexual violence an adolescent male was reported more often.



**Fig. 16** Percentage of pupils who have experienced different violent behaviors by number of different behaviors (items) they have been exposed to and by type of perpetrator (adult male or female and adolescent male or female)

According to the positive parenting practices in the process of upbringing, adult female is more often reported as a persons who applied them.

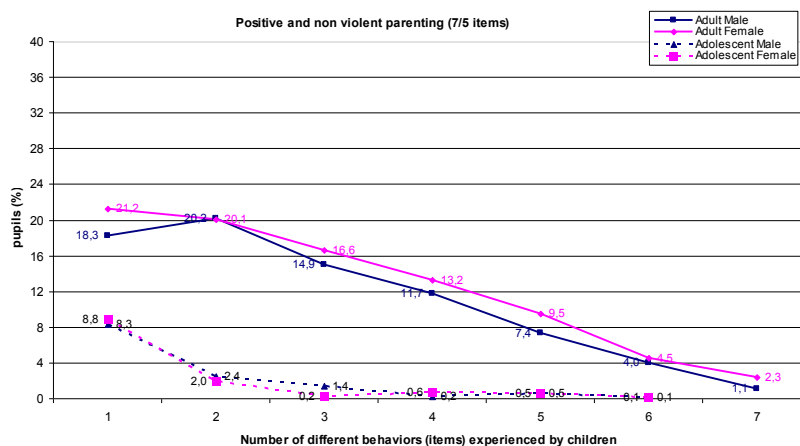


Fig. 17. Percentage of pupils who have experienced different behaviors by number of different behaviors (items) they have been exposed to and by type of care giver (adult male or female and adolescent male or female)

### Perpetrators of sexual violence

Most frequent perpetrators of CSA against girls of all age groups are child/adolescent males that are most often somebody they know; next most frequent category of perpetrators are adult men, mostly unknown to their victims

For younger boys the most frequent perpetrators of non-contact CSA are unknown adult men. For older boys the most frequent perpetrators are child/adolescent females who they know for both types sexual violence and sexual violence in general.

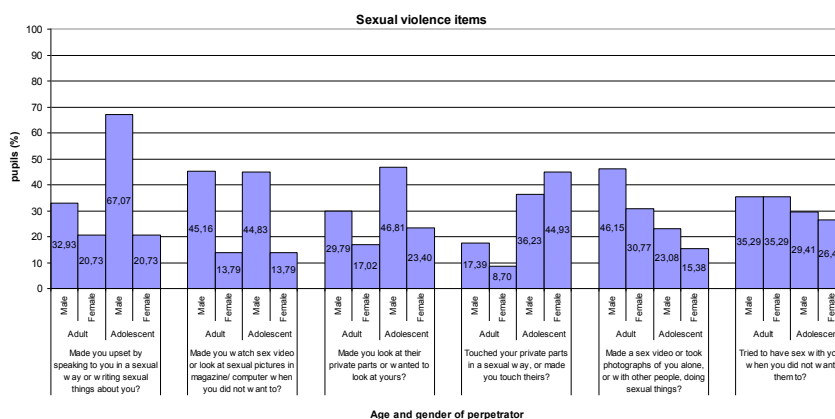


Fig. 18. Percentage of pupils who have experienced 6 different behaviors of sexual violence by type of perpetrator (adult male or female and adolescent male or female).

#### Note

The percentages are calculated on the total number of children who had each experience; their sum exceeds 100%, in case some children have experienced the same behavior from different types of perpetrators.

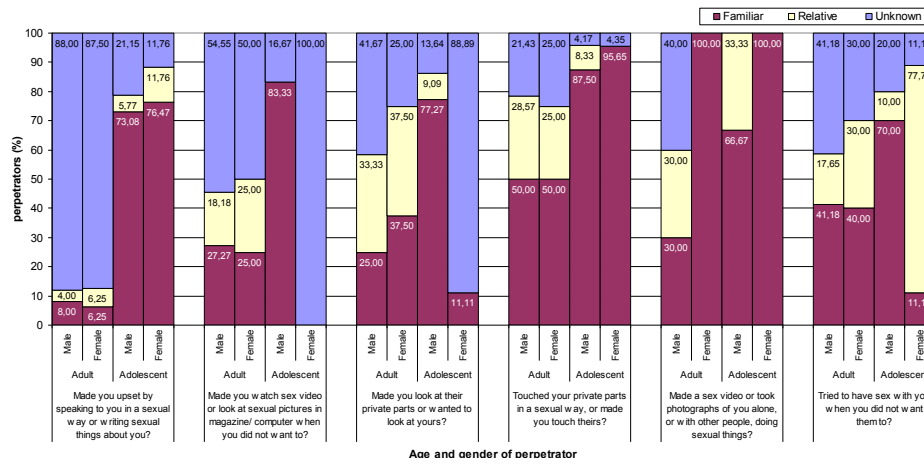


Fig.19. Distribution of perpetrators as reported by children experienced each of 6 different behaviors of sexual violence, by type of perpetrator (adult male or female and adolescent male or female) and his/her relationship to the child (unknown person, familiar person, a relative).

Note: The percentages are calculated on the total number of perpetrators that had been reported by children who had each experience.

## E. DISCUSSION (OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS)

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The results of the study indicated:

- High prevalence rate of psychological (69,51%) and physical (62,21%) violence
- High incidence rate of psychological violence (62,01%)
- Urbanicity has a significant effect on the prevalence of psychological ( $p < 0,002$ ) and sexual ( $p < 0,02$ ) violence and positive & non-violent parenting ( $p < 0,0001$ ), as well as on the incidence of psychological violence ( $p < 0,02$ ), neglect ( $p < 0,015$ ), and positive & non-violent parenting ( $p < 0,001$ ).
- Gender and grade have significant 2-way interaction and main effect on prevalence of psychological violence in 13 years old children ( $p < 0,02$ ) and on prevalence of physical violence in 11 years old children (0,001); on incidence of psychological violence (0,002) and incidence of physical violence (0,01) in 16 years old children from vocational school.
- In most of the cases of psychological and physical violence perpetrators were adult persons from the close circle of the child, while for the sexual violence most frequently perpetrators were adolescents.
- There is significant internal consistence between all scales of IVAST-CH, with the exception for contact sexual violence.

## F. FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS

During the implementation of the epidemiological study with school-aged children and their parents Bulgarian team faced many obstacles, as well as there were supportive factors.

The excellent communication and support from Regional Inspectorates for Education, school masters, school teachers and school psychologists, pedagogical advisers, as well as Departments for Child Protection were main factors that facilitated the implementation of the survey.

In Varna region during the implementation of the study, there was a flu-epidemic in Varna which influenced the rate of participation

Some parents were suspicious and call to the coordinators to ask for more explanations about the Survey. Some parents didn't return the questionnaires

Some children found the questionnaire too long, and didn't finish fulfillment of it.

Part of children doesn't approach seriously and fulfill the questionnaire automatically.

## G. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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BECAN was one of the first epidemiological study about prevalence and incidence of CAN, which provided valuable data and delineates the directions for follow-up studies in the respected field.

The BECAN study is an important step to collecting an information about the prevalence and incidence of child abuse and neglect in Bulgaria, as well as about developing a working system for monitoring child abuse and neglect cases. The information and results, collected during the survey will provide possibility for development of evidence-based prevention of child abuse and neglect.

The results of the project revealed the most common types of violence in school age population of children, and on the other hand show some good parents' practices, that children value a lot.

During the implementation of BECAN project the network of helping professionals at national and international levels was developed, in order to stimulate sustainability of good collaboration and partnership in the field of child abuse and neglect prevention.

In our point of view such kind of survey should be conducted regularly in the period of 2 years, in order to be able to follow the trends and to evaluate any preventive efforts implemented. One of the main advantage of the BECAN study was a great opportunity to build Balkan network of researchers and practitioners.

The results of BECAN project are the good base for developing a new surveys of its kind, using already develop set of instruments. Through implementation of BECAN activities, new ideas and areas for research were delineated: ethical considerations in conducting research with children, extended research with other vulnerable groups, research on teachers attitudes and needs in the process of dealing with child abuse and neglect in school setting.

We recommend:

- Do not use an active parental consent for children older than 14 years.
- Short version of ICAST –CH to be developed for the use in the survey with disadvantaged group of children: children with disabilities, drop-out of school children etc.
- Continuous analysis of the data, collected in BECAN project according child satisfaction with the survey, some analysis of correlations between family SES and types of violence experience, trials to reveal some protective factors against violence.
- Regular implementation of epidemiological study on child abuse and neglect (BECAN model) in general population of children and adolescents.
- Extended study of prevalence and incidence of child abuse and neglect in drop-out of school children and children with disabilities.
- Study of protective and risk factors for child abuse and neglect.

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