



Human Rights and Democracy in Action

Pilot Projects on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education

Addressing Violence in Schools through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education

Project phase 1: POLICY AND RESEARCH REVIEWS

A. POLICY REVIEW

1. General Institutional Framework

1.1. Legal Framework

The Legal Framework related to the issue of addressing violence in school is constituted in Poland by the following legal documents:

- Education Act of 7 September 1991 (JL. No. 67/1996, item 329, amended);
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child , adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989 (JL. No. 120/1991, item 526);
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities signed in New York on 13 December 2006 (JL. 2012, item 882);
- Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 31 December 2002 on Safety and Hygiene in Public and Private Schools and Institutions (JL. No. 6/2003, item 69, amended);
- Act of 19 August 1994 on Protection of Mental Health (JL. No. 321/2011, item 1375);
- Act of 26 October 1982 on Upbringing in Sobriety and Counteracting Alcoholism (JL. 2012 item 1356; 2013, item 1563; and 2014, item 822);
- Act of 29 July 2005 on Counteracting Drug Addiction (JL. 2012, item 124);



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- Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 31 January 2003 on Specific Forms of Educational and Preventive Activities Among Drug Endangered Children and Youth (JL. No. 26/2003, item 226);
- Act of 9 November 1995 on Protection of Health against the Consequences of Consumption of Tobacco and Tobacco Products (JL. No. 10/1996, item 55, amended);
- Act of 9 June 2011 on Family Support and Foster Care (JL. 2013, item 135, amended);
- Act of 29 July 2005 on Counteraction of Domestic Violence (JL. No. 180/2005, item 1493, amended);
- Act of 26 October 1982 on Proceedings in Juveniles Cases (JL. No. 11/2002, item 109, amended);
- Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 23 April 2004 on Detailed Provisions Governing Pedagogical Supervision Qualifications (JL. No. 89/2004, item 845);
- Code of Civil Procedure. Act of 17 November 1964 (JL. No. 43, item 296, as corrected and amended);
- The Criminal Code. Act of 2 August 1997 (JL. No. 88/1997, item 553, corrected).

Peer violence is a very complex phenomenon that includes pedagogical, sociological, psychological and legal perspectives. All attempts to describe it as a legal phenomenon should cause concept narrowing. That is why an explicit legal definition of school violence does not exist in Polish law.

The phenomenon is legally defined in art. 2, par. 2 of the Act on Counteraction of Domestic Violence as *“a one-of or repeated intentional act or abandonment that violates the rights of persons [...], in particular such actions that expose these people to the danger of loss of life or health, affect their dignity, physical integrity, freedom, including sexual freedom or*



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cause damage to their physical or mental health and entail suffering or moral damages to people affected by violence”.

The issue of liability is regulated by the Criminal Code in art. 207, par. 1: *“Whoever torments either physically or mentally the closest person or another person being in a permanent or temporary dependence on the perpetrator either a juvenile or a person vulnerable because of his/her physical or mental condition, shall be subjected to penalty of deprivation of liberty for the period from 3 months to 5 years”.*

Several articles of the Criminal Code concern responsibility of teachers and other representatives of school staff:

Art. 304, par. 1: *“Every heard of the crime prosecuted ex officio has a social obligation to notify the prosecutor or the police.[...]”.*

Art. 304, par. 2: *“The state and local government institutions, which in connection with their activities became aware of the crime prosecuted ex officio, are required to immediately notify the prosecutor or the police and take the necessary steps until the arrival of the body responsible for prosecuting crimes [...]”.*

Art. 231, par. 1: *“A public official who exceeded his powers or failed to comply with obligations, [...], shall be subjected to penalty of deprivation of liberty for the period up to two years”.*

According to art. 240 of a Criminal Code, lack of notification of the occurrence or even attempting to commit a crime is subjected to penalty.

Although the definition of violence in Polish law is quite broad, it does not reflect the complexity of the phenomenon of peer violence, regarding its multilateralism, when a victim can become a perpetrator.

Peer violence has a wide spectre of action or non-action that can take the form of acts subjected to penalty as criminal offenses or acts that break the rules, established by a group. Acts that are subjected to penalty as criminal offences are the following: threats, blackmail,



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insults, defamation, battery, forcing somebody to carry out certain acts, destroying things, theft, robbery and sexual abuse.

Since there is a wide catalogue of actions that can be defined as peer violence, the spectrum of consequences for abusers is also wide. They may be responsible according to Criminal Code, Code of Civil Procedures and Code of Administrative Procedures. According to the Code of Civil procedures and the Act on Family Support and Foster Care, legal liability will be also born by parents or custodians. In practice, for a single act of peer violence an offender can be accountable in front of a Family Court as a criminal offender, in front of a Civil Court as a causer damage and in from of a school principal, for breaking the School Statute.

No matter if an act of an offender has features of a criminal offence or caused damage, each sign of peer violence breaks the rules of an administrative law, compulsory for each school according to the Education Act: the School Statute and other rules and inner procedures. Each school is obliged to develop their own inner regulations and codes of conduct in case of peer violence.

Since 2002, in accordance with the provisions of the core curriculum and School Statutes, each school is obliged to develop and implement a whole school transversal curriculum focused on prevention of violence among children and young people. This curricular is implemented within special classroom hours (once a week) and additional hours, managed by school principals. The majority of programmes impose the need of close cooperation with the local community and local authorities.

1.2. Specific measures and activities undertaken by governmental bodies

State Programme *Safe and Friendly School*

The biggest and the most important programme implemented by the state is called *Safe and Friendly School*. Currently, the programme is in its second cycle that started in 2014 and it will continue till 2020. The first cycle of the programme started in 2008 and finished in 2013. In



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the same year a lot of important activities were initiated within the national educational priority which has been formulated as “Strengthening safety at schools and other educational institutions” while the year 2013 itself, has been declared as a Year of a Safe School.

In the same year the Minister of Education has reported the results achieved under the above mentioned priority in front of the Parliamentary Committee on Education, Science and Youth. 19 November 2013 the Committee decided to continue the programme for the next seven years and reported their opinion to the Council of Ministers. 28 July 2014 the Council of Ministers adopted a Resolution on the State Programme *Safe and Friendly School 20014-2016*.

The program itself functions as a tool that helps to initiate and coordinate efforts undertaken by different stakeholders at the central and regional levels that are aimed at increasing safety in schools and other educational institutions. It offers a special approach to the issue of safety, which is based on the latest developments of positive psychology. A particular model for schools to address violence has been developed. Approaching the issue of safety from a very broad holistic and social perspective, paying a lot of attention to preventive work, strengthening inner resources and capacity of each individual from one hand and the whole local community from the other hand are among the most characteristic features of the model.

While designing the framework of the programme for the second cycle, the Ministry of Education has taken into consideration main findings of the latest reports published by ESPAD, HBSC, UNICEF and WHO. Following spheres of problem and risky behaviour of children and young people were taken into consideration: school aggression, school violence, cyber violence, substance use disorder, mental health disorders, eating disorders and physical activity. Additionally, recommendations on audit at schools and other educational institutions conducted by the Supreme Chamber of Control were taken into account.



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The goal of the programme is to increase effectiveness of educational and prevention activities that are aimed to create safe and friendly environment in schools and educational institutions.

Three main objectives that are expected to contribute to the goal achievement were defined. The first one is to create healthy, safe and friendly environment at schools and educational institutions. The second one is to prevent problems and problem behaviours of children and young people. The last one is to promote healthy lifestyle among children and young people.

The programme is financed within Specific State Budget Provision. In 2014, 6 million PLN, which is approximately 1, 5 million Euro was spent on the programme activities. The same amount is planned to be spent annually, in the following years of the programme.

The activities are implemented on two levels – central and regional. Open calls for project proposals are announced every year. The project proposals can be submitted by non-government organizations, local government units and entities selected under the Public Procurement Law. That means that in order to receive financial support for the activities, schools have to cooperate with civil society, local authorities and other stakeholders.

Ministry of Education itself is also entitled to receive financial support within the programme for the activities implemented in interdepartmental cooperation with the Ministry of Interior.

The programme is expected to contribute to the improvements in three dimensions. First of all it is expected that schools will increase the number of activities that create safe and friendly environment, improve school climate, increase the sense of acceptance in the school community, reduce social exclusion and develop relevant teacher's and parent's competences. Next, the scope and severity of problems and problem behaviors of children and young people is expected to stabilize or be reduced by rising students' awareness in the sphere of safe functioning in the digital environment (with a special focus on new media) and increased



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effectiveness of support in developmental or life crisis. Problems and problem behaviour are defined as: aggression, violence, cyber violence, drug abuse. And finally, it is expected that the amount of schools and educational institutions that are engaged in the promotion of healthy lifestyle (especially healthy diet and physical activity) will increase.

Each year the programme announces one priority, selected from the above mentioned spheres. Prevention of aggression and violence at schools was the first priority of the programme, announced for the school year 2014/2015. The whole programme will be evaluated in 2017.

State programme Safe+

Another State programme, which is complimentary with the *Safe and Friendly School* is called *Safe+* and supports local government units in providing safe conditions for schools. It was adopted 23 June 2015 under the Resolution of the Council of Ministers. The activities planned under the Programme will be targeted at improving competences related to the security assurance for all school stakeholders and their environment. In addition, the programme is focused on the development of cooperation of schools, non-governmental organizations and local community, involvement of parents in safety-in-media education and emergency procedures.

It is focused on 4 spheres: safety online, open and positive school climate, physical safety and fire-safety. Certain activities are recommended in connection with each sphere. Safety online means development of ICT competences of students, parents and teachers from one hand, and the increased ability of a school staff to prevent and react on threats posed by digital environment. Activities, recommended under the second sphere deserve special attention. They include: increased cooperation of schools with non-governmental organizations and local institutions dealing with safety, students' social and active citizenship competence development, antidiscrimination activities, inclusion and integration with the local community. The sphere of physical safety is more focused on technical procedures, such as security status



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and emergency procedures. And the sphere of fire-safety involves equipping schools with special didactic materials for practical training and preparing fire-fighters to work with students.

The main target groups of the programme are students, parents, teachers and other representatives of school staff.

Project proposals submitted under the *Safe+* call should take into consideration local specificity and situational diagnosis in a given school. That will help to define the causes of a problem, chose relevant approaches that are in line with the aims of the Programme and design actions that will influence changes in med-term and long-term perspective. The Programme is intended to bring sustainable changes in the school culture. There should be evidence of continuity after the end of a project. The projects should take into consideration school's own resources and the capacity of a local community. Cooperation with local institutions and stakeholders including State fire brigade, police and non-governmental organizations is especially important.

The budget of the programme is significant. 15 million PLN (around 3,75 million Euro) will be spent on project activities in 2015. For the next three years of the programme, an amount of 20 million PLN (around 5 million Euro) is foreseen for each year.

The programme is correlated with 9 other State Programmes: *Safe and Friendly School 2014-2016*; *Cyberspace Protection Policy of the Republic of Poland 2011-2016*; *National Programme for Counteracting Drug Addiction 2011-2016*; *National Action Plan on Equal Treatment 2013-2016*; *Government's Programme on Reducing Crime and Anti-Social Behavior "Safer Together" 2007-2015*, *National Mental Health Programme*, *National Programme of Combating Violence in Family for 2006-2016*, *Programme for Limiting the Health-Threatening Consequences of Tobacco smoking in Poland* and *Operational Programme Digital Poland for 2014-2020*.

European Commission Program *Safer Internet*



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The European Commission program *Safer Internet* was launched in 1999. It is aimed at promoting the safe use of new technologies and the Internet among children and young people. Since 2005, new issues related to risks arising from the use of mobile phones, on-line gaming, P2P file sharing and other forms of online communication (real-time chats and instant messaging) have been added.

Under this programme a Polish Centre for Programme *Safer Internet* (PCPSI) was established in 2005. Currently, the Centre operates under the *Connecting Europe Facility* programme. It is run in cooperation between two organizations: a non-governmental non-profit organization the Nobody's Children Foundation and the Research and Academic Computer Network, which is a combination of a company, a non-profit organization and a research institute. The Centre runs three projects: *Saferinternet.pl*, helpline and *Emergency.pl*.

Saferinternet.pl project aims to increase public awareness about the threats posed by the latest information-communication technologies. Safety education for students, their parents and teachers is among the actions with the highest priority. The project is implemented in cooperation with the Orange Foundation.

Helpline project offers support via telephone and online for children, young people (www.116111.pl), their parents and teachers (www.800100100.pl). The support concerns issues of safety in the Internet and different threats that it may entail.

Emergency.pl (www.dyzurnet.pl) is a focal point and a hotline, which accepts anonymous reports about the cases of online content, which are prohibited by law, e.g. child pornography, pedophilia, racist or xenophobic content.

2. Civil society activism

NGOs and other organized social groups seem to be very active in the area of school violence. The review presents the biggest and the most widespread programmes. However, since according to the guidelines of the State Programme *Safe and Friendly School* the schools



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should cooperate with NGOs and/or local government units in order to implement their projects, a great number of local NGOs and smaller organizations, such as Parent's association or Alumni associations are implementing small local projects that address violence at schools.

Social programme of Regional Newspapers and Orange Foundation *School without Violence*.

The social programme is the answer on the results of the public opinion poll conducted in 2006 by the Institute for Social Research that revealed that almost 1/3 of Polish students, teachers and parents think that aggression and violence are the main problems of schools. The programme has been run since 2006 under the auspice of the President of the Republic of Poland by 18 regional newspapers that belong to two publishing groups – Regional Media and Polskapresse in cooperation with the Orange Foundation. Pedagogical Publisher Operon is a partner of the programme. The programme has four ambassadors – two Olympic champions and two world champions.

The aim of the program is to combat violence in Polish schools by raising awareness of all school stakeholders, changing attitudes towards violence and providing schools with specific guidance, support and tools that will help to address the problem effectively and on a system level.

The programme is implemented on the national level and is open to every school. If a school wishes to participate in the programme it has to follow 10 rules: school is a community, respect for everyone, act together against violence, open up and discuss problems, always react against violence, teacher is not alone (partnership with students), students know how to act, cooperation with parents, cooperation with the local community, reward examples of good practice. The schools are supported in the development of their community, integration of the local community around the school life, community service projects and parents' involvement. The regional newspapers organize educational and informational campaigns. The publications contain guidelines and examples of good practice. Regular researches help to monitor the



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dynamics of the phenomenon. More than 4000 schools take part in each edition of the programme. The schools get free publications, leaflets, guidelines, videos and posters. The programme has its website with lesson plans and education materials. Teachers from schools are invited to take part in workshops that are organized in every region. The workshops are aimed to develop teachers' competences in dealing with violence at school. Victims and witnesses of violence can get a direct psychological support. Students are invited to take part in different contest, e.g. a blog, a T-shirt design, a photo or a film showing positive examples of behaviour. 160 best prevention programmes were awarded grants of total amount 800 000 zł, that is around 200 000 Euro. Students, teachers and parents were among the authors of the projects. The most active volunteers take part in Summer Schools of leadership. In the "Best teacher" contest all students can select one best teacher in the region every year. At the end of the year the schools organize a Day without Violence. It is organized in one day in every school in the country. Around 2 000 schools take part in the festival every year.

The programme cooperates with public and non-governmental organizations and institutions: Child's Ombudsman <http://www.brpd.gov.pl/>, Centre for Citizenship Education <http://www.ceo.org.pl/>, Centre for Volunteering <http://www.wolontariat.org.pl/>, Civis Polonus Foundation <http://www.civispolonus.org.pl/>, Nobody's Children Foundation <http://www.fdn.pl/>, Catholic Movement Against Drugs (KARAN) Foundation <http://www.karan.pl/>, "Praesternno" Foundation <http://www.praesterno.pl/>, Amity Institute <http://www.amity.pl/>, Committee for the Protection of Children's Rights <http://www.kopd.pl/>, Nationwide Emergency Service for Victims of Domestic Violence "Blue Line" <http://www.niebieskalinia.pl/>, Polish-American Freedom Foundation <http://www.pafw.pl/>, Polish Centre for Mediation <http://www.mediator.org.pl/>, Bliżej Dziecka (Closer to a child) Foundation <http://www.przemocwzskole.org.pl/>, Spójrz inaczej (Look from a different perspective) Foundation <http://www.spojrzinaczej.pl/>, Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Dzieci (Children's



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Friends Association) <http://www.tpdzg.org.pl/> and the Centre for Education Development <http://www.ore.gov.pl/>.

The programme is managed by the Expert Board that sets standards and models of activities, monitors the implementation process and participates in the development of educational materials.

The *Schools without Violence Programme* is the biggest and the most well known in the country. Nevertheless, we will describe some examples of smaller programmes, which are shorter or more local, in order to give a picture what else is happening in this sphere.

The programme of violence prevention STOP

The programme of violence prevention STOP, implemented by the Bliziej Dziecka (Closer to a Child) Foundation can be regarded as an example of good practice. It functions in three regions (among 16) and in the capital city and was ordered by the Department of Welfare and Social Prevention of the Ministry of Education. The programme was developed by the experts of the Foundation, who combined their experience of work at schools with the latest achievements of educational research in Europe and the USA. It is a coherent system of addressing violence in schools that empowers teachers, students and parents to take actions for change.

The programme has three target groups: students, teachers and parents. Students are trained to protect themselves from different types of violence in a peaceful way, they learn how to behave if they witness violence and how they can use help of adults. A very important part of the training is communication skills development, building relations and developing empathy. Teachers get more knowledge on the phenomenon of violence and holistic prevention approaches including diagnosis, community building strategies, reaction, intervention and building partnerships with school stakeholders. Parents learn how the family influences the roles of victims, abusers and passive bystanders of children and how to cooperate with a school.



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The programme is different from the majority of the programmes available in Poland because it pays attention to both levels – prevention and intervention. It is efficient because it is focused on sustainable processes rather than single actions. It helps the schools to develop an internal system of addressing violence, that works as a part of everyday processes. School stakeholders are empowered to develop such approaches that allow them to be independent from external experts and other additional resources. What is important, while offering trainings for teachers, the program is focused not on a separate teacher, but on the whole teachers community of a school or a significant representation of teachers from one school. This approach ensures capacity for a sustainable systemic change. In addition, the teachers are equipped with tools – lesson plans, questionnaires and computer programmes to calculate results.

And last, but not the least, the programme has developed a complete trainer's pack and offers trainings for education professionals and representatives of local authorities who would like to implement the programme in their local communities independently.

Violence at School

Another example, that we considered interesting for our work is a project that was initiated by the Centre for Citizenship Education in 2007. The project is called *Violence at School* and approaches the phenomenon of violence from the perspective of an active citizen. The main focus is made on the social context and the bystander behaviour. The project, that reaches its target group through the website is addressed to students directly. The instructions on what should be done and what should be avoided are presented in a simple, short and clear manner. What is interesting, the project is promoted as a possible inspiration for the activities of a Student Council with additional resources and examples available. It should be mentioned that the Centre offers a lot of projects targeting students councils and the project on violence can be regarded either separately or as an element of a bigger programme intended to empower student councils.



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Nobody's Children Foundation programmes and campaigns

Nobody's Children Foundation is an important figure in the sphere of addressing violence due to a big amount of actions on its account. It should be mentioned, that the organization approaches violence from the perspective of the whole society, rather than a school, although schools have a lot of opportunities to benefit from their activities.

Here are some of the social campaigns, organized by the foundation over the last few years. *Hug the Hater* is a campaign against verbal violence in the Internet. It is aimed at raising awareness of young people about negative consequences of hate speech online and disseminating knowledge on the relevant intervention methods. The campaign is organized under the auspices of the wife of the President in partnership with the Facebook company. *Add a Friend* campaign has similar aims, but its target group is younger and it is organized in cooperation with the Walt Disney Company. *Words hurt for the whole life* campaign was aimed at raising awareness of the whole society on the long-lasting negative consequences of verbal violence. *Childhood without violence* was promoting positive methods of upbringing and informing parents about the negative consequences of physical violence towards children. At the same time it was motivating representatives of local communities take actions to protect children who experience violence. *Stop cyber bullying* campaign was intended on attracting attention of the whole society to the problem of peer bullying with the use of modern information-communication technologies.

The foundation implements a violence prevention project which is called *Let's Protect Children*. The project is presented here as an example of what actions may organizations of civil society undertake within the National Programme *Safe and Friendly School* programme, described in section 1.2. The programme is supported by the City of Warsaw and implemented in partnership with the Orange Foundation.

The aim of the project to protect children from peer violence and violence from the side of adults. The programme is addresses to educational institutions with resocialization



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programmes and implemented by incorporating standards of child's protection that were formulated by the project, into their internal regulations. The standards are the following: established procedures of intervention in case of suspicion of child abuse, protection of student's personal data and image, safe access to the Internet, established and written rules of conduct between teachers and students, verification of teachers for criminal records of violence against minors, internal teacher trainings on detection and reaction on the symptoms of violence, students' and their parents' education on protecting children from violence. When the standards are incorporated into the school documents, it receives a relevant certificate.

Apart of that, the Foundation operates the funds of Velux Foundations based in Denmark and announces call for projects within *Safe Childhood* programme. The projects are intended to protect children from violence and abuse and support their parents or custodians. Project proposals can be submitted by non-governmental organizations that support local communities in improving the safety standards of children and young people in three categories: safe internet, prevention of violence against children up till 6 and supporting children victims of violence.

During the first cycle of the programme in 2010-2012, the Foundation has financed 146 projects that reached more than 20 000 children, 10 000 parents and around 5 000 education professionals in all regions of the country. Currently the programme is in its second three-year cycle.

The last example of the activities undertaken by the organization, targets teachers and the system of education directly. The projects is called the *Violence Protection Academy. How to educate children and young people?* It offers workshops, blended-learning trainings and conferences for teachers and other educational professionals. The teachers learn how to create their own lesson plans to address the issues of aggression and violence with their students.

National Partnership for Protection of Children against Violence



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The next initiative which is worth being described here is a *National Partnership for Protection of Children against Violence*. It is an informal coalition of institutions and organizations aiming to integrate activities, exchange experience and lobby to improve the child protection system in Poland. The Partnership, that was officially inaugurated in February 2011 in the Office of Ombudsman, is coordinated by the Nobody's Children Foundation. Initially, 24 organizations joined the partnership, but the initiative has been expanding. The activities are divided into seven spheres: development of networks and partnerships, that is connected with further expansion; exchange of knowledge, opinion and experience (online and off-line); assurance of high quality of support to abused children and their parents/ custodians by the development of standards of support; competence development by trainings, supervisions, conferences and dissemination of education materials. The other two spheres are lobbying for improvements in legislation and awareness rising activities, including local and national projects.

3. Official statistics

The issue of violence in general and violence at school has been in the focus of attention in Poland for the last ten years. It is being addressed on the level of state and on the level of civil society. There is a lot of different data and statistics, which is just a part of a whole complex picture.

In March 2006 the Institute for Social Research has conducted a public opinion poll among students, teachers and parents all over the country. The research revealed that aggression and violence is one of the biggest problems of Polish schools. 33% of respondents expressed such an opinion.

In 2012 the Nobody's Children Foundation conducted a nationwide assessment of the level of violence towards children. According to this research, 6 out of 10 children experience peer violence.



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According to the findings of the latest research, conducted by the Educational Research Institute, around half of the students in Poland experience violence at schools, whereas 10% of the students are the victims of bullying.

The other research, that was conducted within the nationwide *School Without Violence* Programme confirms the results of the above mentioned researches and provides the following information: 63% of students in Polish schools experienced verbal violence, 33% - psychological violence, 7% - severe physical violence, 41% - physical violence, 20% - material violence, 19% cyber violence, 14% sexual violence and 60% of students were the witnesses of violence.

The *School without Violence* programme has also provided statistics on the beneficiaries of the first cycle (2010-2012) of the programme: around 20 000 schools (56% of all public and private schools, including schools for adults) and around 1 500 000 students (28% of all students in the country). Considering that IV editions of the programme has already been implemented, we can state that all schools and students in the country could be potentially reached by the programme. Furthermore, the programme reports, that 150 000 teachers take part in the activities every year (23% of all teachers in the country), 3 350 teachers took part in the regional workshops (5% of all teachers in the country), 200 teachers were trained to act as Programme consultants, who trained almost 15 000 students, teachers and parents during the first five years of the programme.

4. Reflective commentary

Legal framework in Poland provides sufficient tools to address school violence on the levels of administrative law, civil law and criminal law. It also obliges teachers and school directors take measures in order to prevent violence and react if acts of violence occur. The sphere, that still should be developed in this respect, is a clear definition of peer violence in the legislation, which is substituted with definitions taken from laws on domestic violence and harassment legislation for the time being. There are many common features between those



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phenomena, however, peer violence is more complex. The main difference is that domestic violence and harassment is characterised by a one-sided nature, meaning that a victim and an abuser are two different persons, which is not the case with peer violence. Looking at the issue of peer violence from the perspective of legislation, it is important to take into consideration additional elements, such as: age of victims and offenders; a phenomenon that takes place in a group; a fact of breaking administrative, civil and criminal laws; a fact that the act is most likely to be connected with a public space, such as a school, a dorm, a sport club, or a neighbourhood and a deliberate intent. It is also very important to take into consideration a fact, that in the case of peer violence, the alternation of roles of victims and offenders take place. In one situation a person can be a victim, while under the other circumstances the same person can be an offender.

The political actors in Poland recognize an undoubted and significant need for addressing violence at school. Two complex State Programmes *Safe and Friendly School* and *Safe+* justify this position. The programmes have a thorough scientific background and significant financial instruments. The programmes are widely promoted and accessible. The guidelines of the programmes are developed in line with objectives and principles of the Council of Europe Charter of Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education. A strong focus is made on active involvement of a wide range of stakeholders and cooperation with non-governmental organizations. The desirable activities are intended to bring democratic changes in the sphere of governance of educational institutions, fostering the empowerment and active participation of learners, educational staff and stakeholders, including parents. There is also an element of promotion of social cohesion, development of personal and social skills that reduce conflict and promote non-violence in the resolution of problems and disputes. A special attention is paid to development of educational professionals, partnerships and collaboration.



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For the time being it is impossible to evaluate the effects of the programmes, since they are in their early stage, although, some personal comments can be made concerning the directions in which they are implemented.

It seems that the majority of educational stakeholders concentrate on the technical and quantitative aspects of a change, and the main attention is paid to the issue of physical safety and cooperation with the relevant community partners, such as police. One of the reasons of such trend may lay in comparative simplicity of the actions, that are focused on a technical side of the phenomenon and complexity of activities that are focused on sustainable changes in school culture. The later, in order to be initiated in a particular institution, requires deep personal reflection and both personal and interpersonal changes in a certain percent of the employees, or a very skilful and conscious management of a process. Unfortunately there is no special focus of the change management skills and leadership competences development for school directors in the described programmes, although the important role of school directors is highly recognized.

The offer of civil society organizations in addressing violence at schools is varied and diverse. The scope of the activities ranges from a very small projects by local organizations to national networks, established by big organizations, well known for their activities in this sphere. The methods are also very different – from short campaigns that attract public attention to the phenomenon, to coherent and well-developed programmes focused on the process and aimed at personal and institutional change. Unfortunately, there is not much evidence that such kind of programmes are widespread. The effectiveness and efficiency of the programmes seems to be also very different. In the general perception of teachers, school directors and school pedagogues, there is not enough good workshops with interactive methodology available. An the ones that are available are rather short and not sufficient to develop relevant competences.



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It seems that there is a need of a training programme that will target the whole school culture and approach the school as an organization in change.



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B. RESEARCH REVIEW

1. Documentation of existing research

1.1. Violence at school

<http://www.szkolabezprzemocy.pl/479,badania>

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The research was implemented by the Institute of Sociology of the University of Warsaw and financed within the Social programme of regional newspapers and Orange Foundation.

The aim of the research was to identify factors that enhance school violence. Typical characteristic features of schools with low and high level of school violence were described and compared. Simultaneously, a study on social climate was conducted in the same schools and several typical characteristic features that enhance positive school climate were described. On the next stage, all common factors that appeared in two studies were identified and compared. On the last stage of the research, a description of school characteristic features, that may be significant from the perspective of school violence and bullying was developed.

Theoretical approach

The research was conducted in 150 randomly selected schools, including 50 primary schools (students aged from 6 to 12), 50 lower secondary schools (students aged from 6 to 12) and 50 upper secondary schools (students aged from 6 to 12). A methods of in-depth interviews with students and teachers was selected. Violence index was based on the students responses about their own experience of being a victim of violent behaviour.

The research was focused on finding interrelation between school violence and school atmosphere. *School atmosphere* is perceived as a quality of interpersonal relations at school. It concerns interpersonal relations among peers and interpersonal relations between teachers and students.



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The research intentionally rejected to use classical questions concerning personal characteristics of abusers and victims. This decision was the consequence of the adopted perspective, that students do not function in vacuum, but in a society that influences them. The same student may find friends and acceptance in one school, while in another school he/she may become a victim of bullying. Certain measurable and less measurable factors may influence the situation. Number of students in a school can be regarded as a measurable factor, while school atmosphere (or school climate) is a concept that is very complex, and depends on factors that are very difficult to assess. *School atmosphere* encompasses a broad range of educational concepts, including the physical setting, the psychological environment created through social context, conflict intensity in a peer environment and numerous components related to teacher characteristics and behaviours.

Basic findings

The report reveals that schools in Poland are very differentiated from one another according to the level of school violence and bullying. There were institutions with a very low and a very high level in all three groups of schools – primary, lower secondary and upper secondary.

What is interesting, assessment of school atmosphere was also very differentiated. There are schools with positive atmosphere that attract students during classes and after classes. But there are also schools that discourage students, places where they feel unhappy and reluctant.

The report concludes that:

- School size, amount of student, localization (big city - countryside), does not seem to influence the issue of school violence and bullying; no clear direct interdependence was observed.
- School atmosphere is directly related with the issue of school violence. There are less victims of violence in schools, where the atmosphere was described as positive. In schools with negative atmosphere the level of violence and bullying was high.



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- An issue of relationship between teachers and students is connected with the issue of violence. The level of violence is higher in schools, where conflicts between students and teachers are more often.
- Democratization of schools, involving students in the decision making processes and treating students as partners, seems to reduce the level of school violence and bullying. This finding concerns situation in lower secondary and upper secondary schools (students aged 13 and older).

The report gives evidence for the statement that negative school atmosphere creates favourable environment for the development of school violence and bullying. And vice versa – positive school atmosphere is a preventive factor that helps to deal with the problem.

Speaking about the risk factors on the individual level, it is important to look closer on the information collected during the interviews with students who were victims of bullying. There is evidence, that primary risk factors are the features that are related to the sphere of social competences and interaction. Victims of violence and bullying feel lonely, have few friends, they are convinced that nobody would help or support them. This conviction concerns not only situation of bullying, but also general issues, such as homework or problem with computer, etc.

The report concludes that although violence at school is widespread, it is a highly undesirable phenomenon, especially bullying, its recurrent form. Combating school violence should be a priority for the whole society because of several reasons. It has a highly negative impact on all members of a group or community, because it is a prolonged process that engages the whole group. Students who are bullied can experience negative physical, school, and mental health issues. The abusers learn that violence and breaking rules of social life are accepted forms of goal achievement, while the bystanders can experience both negative influences.



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The main message of the report is that improvement of school climate will also lead to decrease of school violence. It is also stressed that this issue demands further research, but the general recommendation is that schools should focus on the development of positive school climate and build systems of peer group social control, that help to prevent and stop school violence.

1.2. Aggression and school violence. The state of research report.

<http://www.ibe.edu.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy-ibe>

Published in July 2014

The research was conducted by the Educational Research Institute within a project „Education Quality and Effectiveness Research and Institutionalization of Research Facilities” co-financed by the European Union within the European Social Fund.

The aim of the desk research report was to provide basic information about school aggression and violence. Definitions of aggression, violence and bullying are presented along with data about the scale of the problem, both in Poland, and on international level. In addition, main trends concerning the scale of school aggression are described, based on surveys carried out in Poland and in other countries. The last part of the report provides a list of individual and school-level risk factors, i.e. certain characteristics of students and schools that make the both more vulnerable to the problem of violence.

Basic concepts:

The research distinguishes three different concepts: *aggression*, *violence*, *bullying* and adopted the following definitions:

Aggression – conscious, intended action aimed at causing harm (in a wide understanding of the meaning) to somebody (Aronson, Wilson, Akert, 2006).

Violence – a kind of behaviour, when an aggressive side is using his/her advantage over a victim. The advantage can be:



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- preponderance (e.g. several students deride their classmate),
- physical (e.g. a stronger student beats a weaker one),
- psychological (e.g. caused by interpersonal or communication abilities),
- formal, power relationship based (e.g. a teacher humiliates a student).

Although it is admitted in the report that teachers and school principals can also be abusers or victims, the research is focused on peer violence among students, which is defined as *school violence* and takes place either at school, or on the way to/from school. The third possible context is the Internet and mobile phones, when students from one school are involved.

Different types of violence (Czapiński, 2009; Komendant-Brodowska et al., 2011b) were taken into consideration during the research:

- *Verbal violence*, that does not involve physical contact and takes place in the presence of a victim (e.g. insulting, name calling).
- *Relational violence*, that does not involve physical contact, in which harm is caused to the relationships or victim's status in a group (e.g. excluding from a group, backbiting).
- *Coercion* by means of threat, power or manipulation to do something against the will.
- *Material violence*, that involves objects or money (e.g. stealing or damaging objects that belong to a victim, extorting money).
- *Physical violence*, that involves physical contact between a perpetrator and a victim (e.g. beating, kicking, knocking down, pushing). If other objects or weapons are used, or a medical intervention is necessary, we speak about *severe physical violence*.
- *Cyber violence*, that involves use of information-communication technology (e.g. a nasty text message or e-mail, comment in a social network service, publication of pictures or videos that show a victim from a negative perspective).
- *Sexual violence*, that involves sexual sphere (e.g. attempts of sexual conduct against the will of a victim).



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Bullying - a kind of aggressive behaviour when an individual or group of individuals repeatedly attack, humiliate or exclude from the group a person who is relatively weaker (Salmivalli, 2010). Seven characteristic features were adopted as indicators of bullying (Rigby, 2010, p.31):

1. An abuser or a group of abusers intend to cause harm.
2. An abuser or a group of abusers use a favourable situation, when they have advantage over a victim.
3. An intentional act of harmful behaviour or threat takes place.
4. The behaviour is not provoked and has no direct reason.
5. The behaviour is recurrent.
6. Victims cannot or do not want to protect themselves, victims feel abused.
7. Abusers feel their advantage over victims.

Two features – advantage over a victim and repetitiveness of attacks – are regarded to be the key indicators.

Basic findings

The report takes note that a whole spectre of aggressive behaviour is present in Polish schools. The most common phenomenon is verbal aggression/violence. Between 9% and 15% of students in Polish schools are victims of bullying. The scale of the problem remains at the same level over the last few years.

Boys are more exposed to peer violence than girls. Indicators of victimization go down with age. Students of primary school (from 6 to 12 years old) are more exposed to violence than students of lower secondary school (from 13 to 15 years old). The lowest number of victims of bullying is among students of upper secondary schools (from 16 to 18 years old). However, if to compare three types of upper secondary schools, the level of bullying in vocational schools is the highest, go down in technical schools and the lowest in general upper secondary schools.



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The research data has not confirmed a common opinion that level of violence depends on a school size and is lower in smaller schools than in schools with a big number of students.

The report emphasises that school climate is an important factor that is connected with the phenomenon of school violence. It explains that aggression and school violence are phenomena that mostly take place within a certain social context, rather than in a relationship between a victim and abuser. Speaking about the directions of further research, scientific and practical activities, the report suggests that focusing on the elements of school climate that can help to prevent violence, is the most useful and effective type of research.

1.3. Safety of students and social climate in Polish schools

<http://www.ibe.edu.pl/pl/component/content/article/38-aktualnosci/525-przemoc-w-polskiej-szkole>

Published in July 2015

The study was conducted by the Educational Research Institute within a project „Education Quality and Effectiveness Research and Institutionalization of Research Facilities” co-financed by the European Union within the European Social Fund.

The main purpose of a study was to deepen knowledge on violence and aggression in Polish schools and to describe school climate, including the quality of social relations and prevailing principles in schools. The report includes data of a quantitative study complemented by primary findings of a qualitative research, document analysis and literature review.

The study was conducted in 2014 and involved students, teachers, school pedagogues, school psychologists and directors from primary (students aged 6 - 12), lower secondary (students aged 13 - 15) and upper secondary schools, including technical and vocational schools (students aged 16 - 19).

Basic concepts:



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The report gives an extensive description of the concepts *school climate*, *school culture* and *classroom climate*.

The concept of *school climate* has been analysed from different perspectives with a references to Polish and foreign researchers and their classifications of the elements of school climate. A common agreement is that *school culture* is a perception of objective school reality that is shared by different individuals and includes its social environment, conditions and culture, which is different from the objective reality itself. This is “the way teachers and students perceive their working environment and the way this perception influence their behaviour” (Ostaszewski 2012), „reflection of a school environment experienced by students” (Kulesza 2007c), „common opinions about a school” (Gaziel 1997) and “a set of teachers’ and students’ opinions about situations, events and characteristic features of a school, that can be regarded as relatively sustainable results of its functioning” (Pytko, 1995; Adrjan 2011). It may also be defined from the perspective of relations as “quality and coherence of interpersonal relations at school that influence cognitive, social and psychological development of students (Haynes, Emmons, and Ben-Avie, 1997). From the perspective of safety as “quality and nature of school life that encompass norm, values and expectations giving the feeling of social, psychical and physical security (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli and Pickeral, 2009).

School climate is a multidimensional concept. It includes:

- *Quality of social relationships* – between students, students and teachers, director, parents (concern, indifference, respect, aggression, trust, mistrust, humiliation, contempt, sense of belonging, participation in decision making);
- *Features of educational environment* – learning methodology, level of pressure on achievements, level of competition, conditions to develop interests, relations between students and teachers, level of support to pupils by teachers, level of labelling, encouragement and enforcement of discipline);
- *Physical and emotional security* – level of trust in teachers, teachers’ engagement in conflict resolution, approaches to peer aggression limitation.



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- *Features of school physical environment* – including size, appearance and equipment. (Ostaszewski, 2012).

Another approach, developed by Stockard and Mayberry (1992; in Bear et al. 2011, Griffith 1999) is focused on two wide dimensions: *Social Order*, which refers to structure, aims, norms, values, social roles and *Social Action*, which refers to everyday interaction between students, teachers and parents.

The concept of *school climate* is close to other concepts, such as *school culture*, *school atmosphere*, *school ethos*, *educational climate* and *educational atmosphere*. The first one is more popular in sociology, two other ones in psychology, while two later are widely used by the scholars in Poland.

School climate, which is subjective and unstable by its definition is an important element of a *school culture*, which is more objective and sustainable (Szczecińska, 2010; Adrjan, 2011). It also encompasses vision, mission, values and norms of an organization, which forms its identity and specific standards of practice. When *school climate* is analyzed, the research is focused on impressions and expectations. When *school culture* is analyzed, the research is more focused on its organizational structure (Stolp, Smith, Szczecińska 2010). Another approach is to regard *school culture* as an objective reality (conditions, norms, values) and *school climate* as the way of its perception.

Classroom climate is defined as „intellectual, social, emotional and physical environment of learning” (Amborse et al., 2010); „all rules of work and life in a group that are set by a teacher and regularly reinforced by solving everyday learning and problem situations” (Konarzewski 2000); and “formed by interactions between students and teachers and students between themselves” (Allodi, Adrjan 2011).

Basic findings

The study shows that the majority of students in Polish schools experience aggressive behaviours from the side of their colleagues at least from time to time. Relational and verbal aggression are the most common. Relational aggression is exceptionally painful for students.



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Unfortunately, school staff primarily reacts in cases of aggression and physical violence, usually severe physical violence. Far less attention is devoted to the cases of psychological violence. Slightly more than one third of the students experience at least a few aggressive behaviours per month from their colleagues, which they describe as “unpleasant”, while one-tenth of students are victims of bullying. Their main strategy to deal with bullying is avoidance; asking teachers for help is very rare.

Aggression and bullying is mostly widespread in primary schools (students aged 10 - 12), to a lesser extent in lower secondary school (students aged 13 - 15) and to the smallest extent in upper secondary school, especially comprehensive secondary school (students aged 16 - 19).

The level of violence is lower in classes where students declare that teachers are friendly and supportive, where students know and accept school rules and where teachers and school principals discuss school rules with students clearly and in detail. Answers of school staff also highlighted the importance of preventive factors related to school climate, such as good teacher-student relationships, clear rules and extensive cooperation of teachers, principals and parents. Teachers often perceive lack of parent involvement as a risk factor.

Four-fifths of the students feel safe at school, but nearly one in ten feels endangered. More than half of the students like their classmates, while this indicator is slightly higher in primary schools than in secondary schools. At the same time almost half of the students admit that there are students in their class with whom they would not sit at one desk; being different is one of the reasons to be rejected.

Students’ perception of teachers’ support and care dramatically decreases, proportionally to the age of students. Almost all students of the last grades of primary school feel that teachers try to support and encourage them, although relationships which are not related to the subject itself have lower rating.

The students think that teachers communicate classroom rules and consequences of breaking the rules clearly. Four-fifths of primary school students (and slightly less at higher



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levels) confirm that teachers react immediately if someone behaves in an inappropriate way. Despite the general awareness of students about the rules and regulations applicable to them, only two-thirds declare that they agree with them, and nearly half believe that some of the rules are needless.

A large part of teachers are not aware of bullying in their classrooms compared to a large number of students who declared this problem during the research. Teachers gain knowledge on how to deal with aggression and violence mainly over the course of their career: during in-service training, conversations with other teachers and pedagogues and through their own reading; pre-service teacher training is of little significance here.

In-service training is mainly focused on work with difficult students, cyberbullying and problem analysis. Training methodology is rather passive – lecture is the prevailing method. There is a big demand of interactive workshops with discussions, experience exchange simulations, roleplay, and problem solving techniques. Despite the fact that training for teachers is available, pedagogues and school psychologists still consider that there is need of more training for teachers, as this kind of support is the most useful. Pedagogues themselves usually support teachers during individual meetings and conversations, while internal school trainings or workshops for teachers are very rare.

When asked about their needs, most teachers pointed out the issues of more active parent involvement and cooperation with parents, introduction of clear procedures and rules in schools and more support from school pedagogues or psychologists.

1.4. School in the eyes of students. Relationship with teachers and schoolmates and school violence.

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The study was conducted by the Educational Research Institute within a project „Education Quality and Effectiveness Research and Institutionalization of Research Facilities” co-financed by the European Union within the European Social Fund.

The study was a part of a bigger research project on violence. Primarily it was planned as a pilot study for testing and adjustment of research tools on characteristic features of school violence and students’ perception of school climate. However the findings were regarded to be so important and interesting, that a separate report has been published. A qualitative research was conducted in one of the districts of the country in April – May 2014. A group of experts on school violence and bullying performed 12 in-depth interviews with students aged from 7 to 18 and 5 focus group interviews with students aged from 11 to 18. The students came in equal proportion from urban and rural school.

Basic findings

The research showed that school is very important for young people. A lot of emotions and expectations is connected with it. Safe and friendly atmosphere is one of the biggest expectations. Students say that atmosphere depends on their relationships with teachers and peers. They also declare that they need friendly relationships with teachers based on common trust and respect. In almost every interview the students expressed that they need possibility to talk to teachers not only about learning, but also about problems at home and with peers. Unfortunately the students feel that they are not heard by the teachers, who replace dialogues with monologues full of warnings, moralization, instructions and fault-finding.

Disciplinary measures used by teachers were similar in different schools and included shouting or writing records in students’ diaries. These measures are not efficient according to the students, what is more, many of them describe such behaviour as violent and claim that it causes fear and stress. According to the students, some teachers use psychological violence on daily basis. When asked about effective methods of classroom management, the students mentioned classroom rules.



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Almost every student expressed their wish to study in a cooperative and friendly environment without division on subgroups and being able to receive support and acceptance from all classmates. But in reality, the majority of students admitted that their classes were divided on subgroups, while certain students were almost or completely excluded from the groups. Usually, they were students who were somehow different from the rest of the group – either in appearance, socio-economic status of their family or abilities. Shy students with low self-esteem tend to be also excluded from the social life of groups. Excluded students did not automatically become victims of other types of peer violence or bullying. The respondents say that students who “have something” in their behaviour that irritate the rest of a group become victims of bullying.

Most cases of school violence take place within a class. According to the students, physical and psychical violence are the most common. Teenage girls often experience sexual violence. Material violence is rather rare. Cyber violence, which entails many conflicts in the class, is very common among students of secondary schools and it often has a pornographic character.

Several important aspects were commented by the report. First of all, students tend to perceive violent behaviour of a group as a joke. It seems that such misinterpretations of young people are caused by a strong fear of being rejected by a peer group and the need to be accepted.

Secondly, the respondents generally think that they have to deal with school violence themselves by building coalitions that would help a victim take revenge on an abuser. Some of them would seek help from parents and only a few students would ask teachers for help. The common opinion was that teachers are reluctant to notice school violence, not even mentioning help in conflict situations.

Thirdly, not many respondents declared their readiness to try to stop abusers. Usually, they would either join perpetrators or do nothing. Informing teachers about the acts of school



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violence was regarded as betrayal, especially among students of secondary schools. They expressed general opinion that people have to deal with their problems on their own. What is important, teachers' reaction on students' attempts to inform them about acts of school violence, was exactly the same.

Reflective commentary

The phenomenon of school violence has been thoroughly studied from several different perspectives in Poland over recent years. That was possible due to the project „Education Quality and Effectiveness Research and Institutionalization of Research Facilities”, which is also known as “Enthusiasts of Education”. The project was co-financed by the European Union within the European Social Fund under the Human Capital Operational Programme and implemented by the Educational Research Institute from April 2009 till June 2015. The project was aimed at strengthening the system of education in the field of research and its implementation in educational process and educational management. In this period 79 different researchers were conducted in 6 spheres, and school violence was studied from the perspective of social and legal aspects of educational policy.

From a social perspective, violent behavior is an adaptive response youths make to a particular social context. Social contacts play an important role in generating and shaping attitudes, beliefs and behavior. Individual backgrounds and personalities are diverse and it is difficult to have a relevant direct personal influence on each individual within the formal system of education. But it is possible to approach the issue from a different perspective, because it is possible to influence the social context of school learning and to create classroom environment that is unfavorable for aggressive and violent behaviour, an environment where students feel safe.

Information presented in the researches showed that there are several factors that are important in addressing violence in schools. First of all it is **teacher's support and respect**.



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According to the research results, students at schools with respectful and supportive teachers feel better, more willing to participate in the community service projects, while the level of violence in such schools is lower. Second important factor is **clear school rules** which are well known and respected by everyone – students and teachers. However, the rules are less efficient and usually neglected when they are communicated to students by teachers. At the same time there is evidence that students pay more attention to school rules if they can communicate their needs and are actively involved in the in the process of their development. This finding is closely linked with another important preventive factor which is working in **partnership with students**, which means sharing roles and responsibilities in learning, planning, decision making and other processes that take place in a school. The three above mentioned factors combined together will give another important component that prevent school violence, which is **positive interactions between students and teachers**.

Next important factor is **positive interaction among students** which is rather the result of common activities and collaborative methods of learning from one hand and development of conflict resolution skills from the other hand. The results of the researches point out that a special attention should be paid to interaction between younger and older students. School, where older students were engaged in actions or projects that supported younger students were among the least violent in researches. Schools, where younger students were traditionally subordinated to older students appeared to be in the group of the most violent schools. Although positive interactions between students and teachers and among students themselves were already pointed out, there is one more factor – **a sense of community** – that should be discussed separately. It is a feeling of belonging, a feeling that school members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared trust that needs of each member of a school community will be met through their commitment to be together.

Behaviour of bystanders is a factor that can make a real difference. If students take resolute actions when they witness violent behaviour of their peers, they can have even a



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bigger impact on bullying than teachers or parents. The less support abusers receive from their peers, the lowest is the level of violence at school. In this respect the researches also provide information on the development areas: students perception of informing adults about cases of bullying should be changed and student should be trained how to behave when they see the acts of violence.

Another factor that plays an important role in addressing violence at schools is **governance of schools** that, in its own turn influences **interactions among** teachers and other representatives of **school staff**. Behaviours in these spheres do not only influence the level of satisfaction and attitudes represented by adults, they are also examples and models of behaviour for students. The most harmful in this respect are: authoritarian leadership style, coteries and coalitions among teachers, poor information management, lack of trust and lack of support in difficult situations. On the contrary, teachers who collaborate with their colleagues in a positive and respectful environment, give support to each other and receive support from the school principal are more engaged in all aspects of school life, less influenced by professional burnout and feel more empowered. Since organization of work and interaction among employees influence the level of school violence, it becomes evident that the role of a school principal is critical here.

The reflection over the basic finding of researches and reports on the issue of school violence that were conducted in Poland in the years 2011 – 2015, were the inspiration to develop a list of factors that are important in addressing violence in schools. They are presented in no particular order:

1. Teachers' support and respect
2. Clear school rules
3. Partnership with students
4. Positive interactions between students and teachers
5. Positive interactions among students



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6. Positive interactions among school staff
7. Sense of community
8. Bystander intervention
9. Democratic governance of schools

If to deliberate on the coherent ways and methods of practical implementation of the above mentioned success factors into the everyday school practice, an EDC/HRE concept, approach and methodology seems to be the most effective and efficient.

The concept of Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) is a holistic educational approach that offers possible solutions to major problems in the contemporary societies. School violence and violence in general being one of them. The distinctive feature of the approach, which brings positive changes to all spheres of social (and school, which is the mirror of a society) life is a strong focus on a school as a model of a society and significant changes inside each particular schools. Reflection over all processes that take part in a school and changing the ones, which are based on authoritarian and violent approaches that are adapted, reproduced and practiced by students at classrooms (to start with). Of course, school processes are only the part of a bigger picture, involving processes in a family and the whole society, but this is also a sphere, where the change can start. The change that is a result of a democratic intercourse and common efforts of all school stakeholders, the change, in which methods, achievements and the process itself are equally important. The change that will be inspired by a vision of a school, where all processes are based on the core values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law and a change that starts with understanding that school democratic culture cannot be developed and created from the outside, that it depends on responsibility of the whole school community.

A wide range of education materials developed by the auspices of the Council of Europe during the last ten years contain valuable pedagogical know-hows and practical methods that advise how to start and develop this work.



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The chart below suggests how publications “Democratic Governance of Schools” (CoE, 2007) and “How all teachers can support citizenship and human rights education” (CoE, 2009) can support schools in addressing violence.

Factors that prevent violence	EDC/HRE
Teachers’ support and respect	Teachers competence 1, 7
Clear school rules	Teachers’ competence 7
Partnership with students	Teachers’ competence 5, 9, 13 Governance key areas 1, 2, 3, 4
Positive interaction between students and teachers	Teachers’ competence 1, 5, 7, 8
Positive interaction among students	Teachers’ competence 5, 7, 8, 14 Governance key area 4
Positive interaction among school staff	Teachers’ competence 14 Governance key areas 1, 2, 3
Sense of community	Teachers’ competence 11 Governance key areas 1, 2, 3, 4
Bystander intervention	Teachers’ competence 8, 12 Governance key area 4
Democratic governance of schools	Governance key areas 1, 2, 3, 4

This approach does not mean finding additional hours for the activities. It suggests to change a perspective on the everyday work of teachers, who feel big pressure to ensure academic achievements and safety at school. It seems that teachers put lot of effort and time into traditional methods and approaches that were introduced in schools more than a hundred years. These methods were relevant and efficient at certain sociohistorical context. However, with the development of societies, new contexts and new challenges, there is a need of more



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effective and relevant approaches which are based on the latest developments of educational sciences.

The main advantage of EDC/HRE over other approaches is that it is holistic and encompasses all aspects of a school life. What is more, it is flexible and adaptable to every context and school, which has been proved during last six years of testing the materials within the Summer Academy *Democracy at School*, organized in cooperation between the Council of Europe, the European Wergeland centre and the Governments of Poland and Montenegro.

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