

**ENOC Position Statement
on Ending Corporal Punishment of Children in Europe
2001**

The European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC) seeks an end to all corporal punishment of children in Europe

The European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC) urges the governments of all European countries, the European Union, the Council of Europe and other European institutions and non-governmental organisations concerned with children to work collectively and individually towards ending all corporal punishment of children.

As spokespeople for the children of Europe, we believe that eliminating violent and humiliating forms of discipline is a vital strategy for improving children's status as people, and reducing child abuse and all other forms of violence in European societies. This is a long overdue reform, with huge potential for improving the quality of lives and family relationships.

Hitting children is disrespectful and dangerous. Children deserve at least the same protection from violence that we as adults take for granted for ourselves.

While almost all European countries have eliminated corporal punishment from their schools and other institutions for children, it remains common and legally and socially accepted in the family home in most countries. Many States have laws which explicitly defend the rights of parents and other carers to use "reasonable" or "moderate" corporal punishment. Where the law is silent, corporal punishment tends to be accepted in practice.

In a growing minority of countries across Europe, all corporal punishment has been prohibited, often as part of a statement of parents' responsibilities. The purpose of these reforms is not to prosecute more parents, but to send out a clear signal that hitting children is no more acceptable than hitting anyone else.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by all European states, requires legal, educational and other action to protect children from "all forms of physical or mental violence" while in the care of parents and others. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the international committee of experts responsible for monitoring implementation, has stated that no level of corporal punishment is compatible with the Convention and has formally recommended prohibition, coupled with education programmes, to eliminate it.

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, in a series of recommendations, has condemned corporal punishment and recommended legal reform (see in particular Recommendations R85/4; R90/2 and R93/2).

We urge Governments without delay to introduce legislation prohibiting all corporal punishment, and initiate/support education programmes in positive, non-violent forms of discipline. We commit ourselves, as offices committed to improving the lives of all children in Europe, to work actively on this fundamental human rights issue.

ENOC, formed in June 1997, is an independent voice for children in Europe. Through the Network, independent offices set up to promote children's rights and interests aim to work together, sharing strategies and collective approaches, and encouraging the fullest possible implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.