

**ALTERNATIVE
REPORT ON THE
STATE OF
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS
IN MACEDONIA –
FROM CHILDREN'S
PERSPECTIVE**

**First Children's Embassy in
the World Megjashi
– Republic of Macedonia**



ALTERNATIVE REPORT ON THE STATE OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN MACEDONIA
– FROM CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVE

Skopje, November 2020

Title

Alternative report on the state of children's rights in Macedonia – from children's perspective

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FOREWORD

The report was written by a team of children, aged 12 to 17, who accepted the First Children's Embassy in the World Megjashi's invitation to participate in this process. These pupils and their schools are part of Children's Embassy Megjashi's activities within the Let's Take the Rights in our Hands Project, Empowering Child's Strengths for Violence Prevention Project and the Peace Education Programme, through which they have previously obtained key knowledge on children's rights.

The preparation of this report was organized into two phases: research phase and report writing phase. During the research phase (May-July 2020), a nationwide survey on the state of the child rights was designed and conducted, providing data on various aspects of children's lives in the country, the problems they face and the things they think should be improved.¹ The survey was disseminated online in both Macedonian and Albanian language, and it was completed by 1077 children aged 12 to 17. Total of thirty pupils from 11 primary and secondary schools in Veles,² Vinica,³ Gostivar,⁴ Debar⁵ and Skopje⁶ participated in the design, piloting and dissemination of the survey. Out of this group of pupils, thirteen decided to participate in the second phase, i.e. the preparation of the report.

Within the second phase (July-October 2020), a number of online meetings and workshops were held, enabling the children to further develop their knowledge on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and learn about the reporting process before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The online meetings provided mentorship and guidance to the children for development of the report itself, including selection

¹ More information about the survey can be found [here](#).

² High school "Kocho Racin" and Vocational high school "Dimitrija Chupovski"

³ High school "Vancho Prke" and Primary school "Slavcho Stojmiski"

⁴ High school "Gostivar" and Vocational high school "Gostivar"

⁵ High school "28 Noemvri" and Primary "Said Najdeni"

⁶ High school "Nikola Karev", High school "Zefljush Marku" and Primary school "Stiv Naumov"

of topics, assigning writing tasks among children, peer-reviewing and editing the texts, as well as working on the design of the report. The children prepared the report taking into account the survey findings, but also their personal and peers' experience.

It has been an absolute privilege for Megjashi's team to mentor this exceptional group of children. This experience has been invaluable not only for our work as child rights advocates, but, even more, for our long-standing commitment to children's participation.

This report contains detailed and in-depth observations of the children regarding the situation with children's rights in the country and provides specific recommendations for overcoming the problems and shortcomings. Therefore, we believe that this is a mandatory reading material for everyone who cares about the well-being of children and furthering their rights.

Jordanka Cherepnalkova-Trajkoska and Vaska Bojadji
First Children's Embassy in the World Megjashi
13 October 2020, Skopje

INTRODUCTION

Authors: Magdalena Petrovska and Julita Postolova

Hello, we are the children from the Children's Embassy Megjashi's team and as participants in this children's rights project implemented by Megjashi and through participation in the research phase we obtained a lot of new knowledge, new experiences and made new friendships.

Before the pandemic, we, the children, had meetings with Megjashi in different cities where we had workshops to obtain better knowledge of children's rights.

We have to admit that our knowledge about children's rights was partial but now we are more aware that children's rights are often violated, deliberately or not. But even during the pandemic we continued to maintain contact with Megjashi through online meetings via the Zoom platform. We actively participated in the design and dissemination of the survey on the state of children's rights in Macedonia.

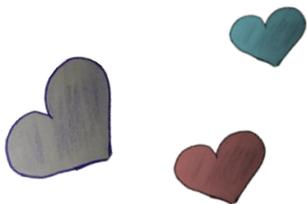
The survey was conducted online between 1 June and 5 July 2020. The following topics were covered:

- KNOWLEDGE OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND RESPECT FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS
- SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT
- FREE TIME, PLAY, SPORTS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES
- HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE
- ENVIRONMENT
- VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

The survey was completed by 1077 children throughout the country, out of which 60.26% are girls and 38.94% are boys (0.78% of the children didn't provide valid data regarding their gender). 85% of the respondents are Macedonians, while the remaining percentage are part of other ethnic communities. The age of the children who participated in the survey ranges from 12 to 17 years of age. In terms of place of

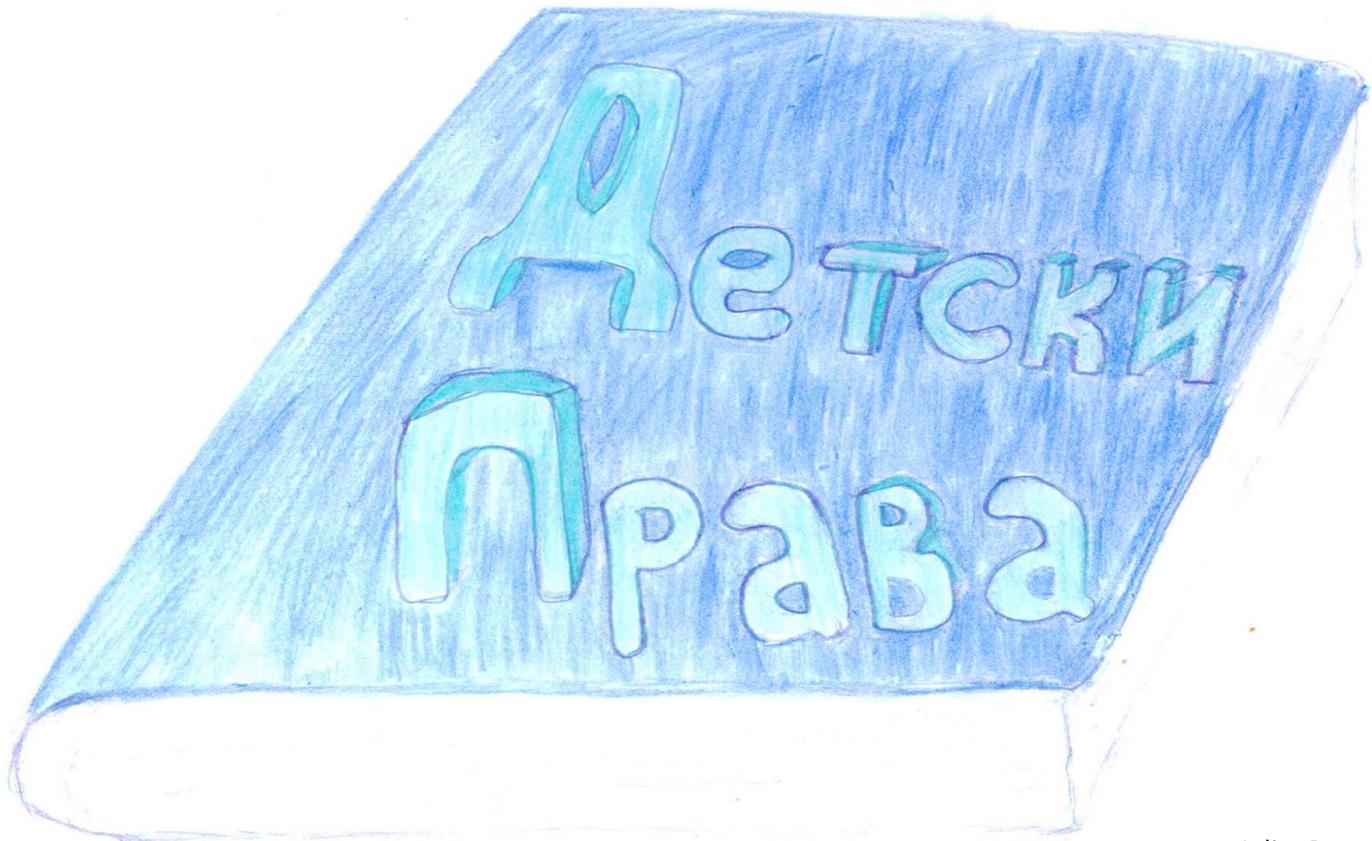
living, 63% of the children live in a city, 37% in a village, and 43% are in primary school, while 57% attend high school.

This report was prepared by us, children, because we wanted to notify the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child about the state of our rights in Macedonia from our perspective and give recommendations for improving the situation. The report that follows is based on the survey data, but it also contains our own observations.



TOPIC 1

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND RESPECT FOR CHILDREN'S



TOPIC 1: KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CHILD RIGHTS AND RESPECT FOR CHILDREN’S RIGHTS

Authors: Teuta Ziberi and Erza Capa

Children’s rights are human rights with special focus on the rights to protection and special care given to minors. The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines the child as “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.”

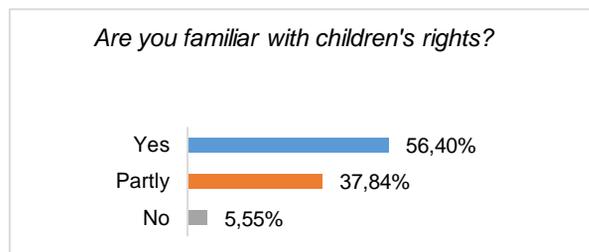
Both children and youth have same general human rights as the adults but also specific rights which are recognized by their distinctive needs. Children are not property of their parents nor powerless property for charity goals. They are human beings and they have rights.

The children’s rights also include their right to being cared by their family and parents, the right to identity, as well as the rights to physical protection, food, universal education, healthcare and criminal laws appropriate to the age and development of the child, equal protection of the civil rights of the child and freedom against discrimination based on race, sex, sexual orientation of the child, gender identity, national origin, religion, disability, colour, ethnicity and other characteristics.

How much do the children know their rights?

According to the survey, most children (62.8%) have heard about the Convention on the Rights of the Child but only small portion (2.85%) have read it. One third of the children has not heard of the Convention of the Rights of the Child at all.

More than half of the children (56.4%) believe that they know their rights, and they mostly obtain the information on their rights in school (92.33%), from the Internet (55.83%) and their homes (51.91%).



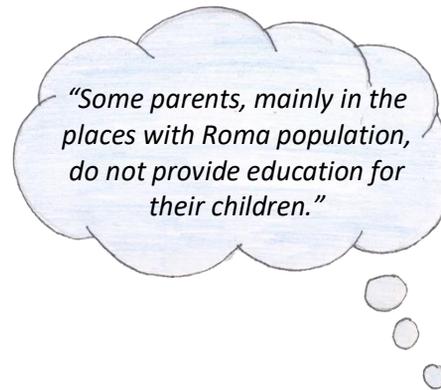
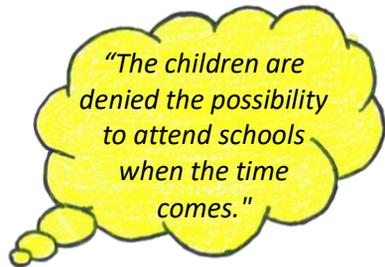
How much are children’s rights respected?

The survey showed that children's rights are generally respected, although not at a proper level. Children’s rights are human rights and they cannot be left just on paper as such.

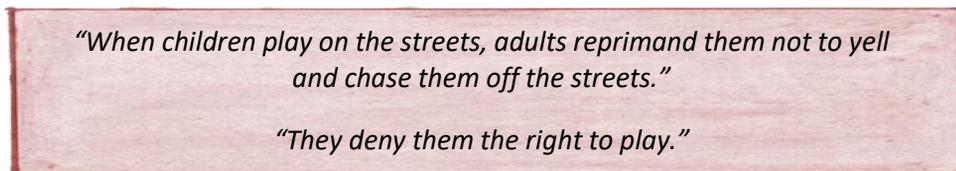
Do you consider that people around you respect children’s rights?			
	Yes, they always entirely respect all rights	They partly respect (some rights are respects, others are not)	They do not respect them at all.
In the home	56.84%	41.51%	1.64%
In school	37.32%	59.67%	3.01%
In the place of living	28.19%	67.43%	4.38%

According to the statements made by the children, we come to conclusion that the following rights are mostly not respected:

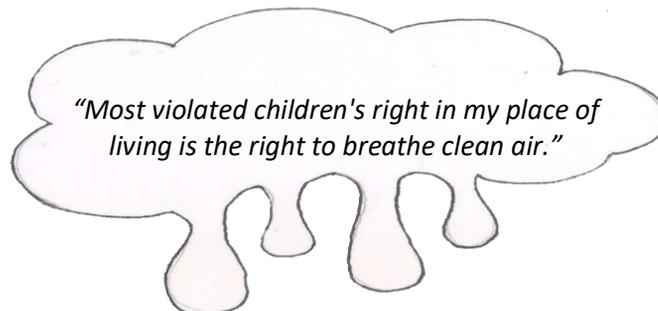
Right to education



Right to play



Right to clean environment



Right to own opinion and expression

"When children are not capable to convey what is good and important to them, the parents are the ones responsible for them but they do not ask their children, instead they decide on their own."

"There were many occasions in school where our opinion was not completely heard. These occasions are usually followed by the phrase: "You got a lot of living to do." This does not mean that we do not have our opinion as children; everyone builds their own character and has their own opinion. Maybe not everyone agrees with our opinions but I believe that they should be heard."

"For example, in a situation where children are "ordered" to be silent because their opinion is considered as child's thinking."

Unequal treatment due to their ethnicity and religion

"When the students are making fun of other student/s due to racial or religious differences or they call them ugly words."

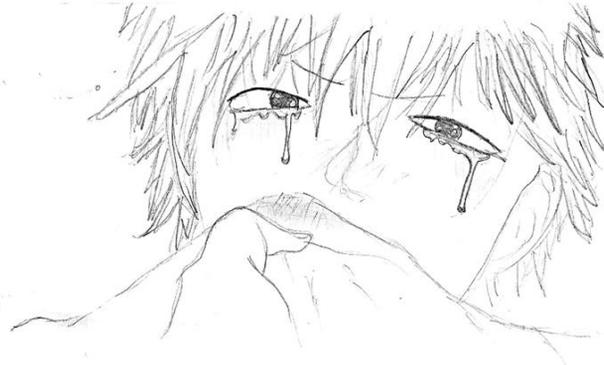
"When the children are rejected in some cases due to their ethnicity or religion; when due to the same reason they get rejected to be offered assistance by the state institutions."

TOPIC 2

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN



Draw some kidss
life...



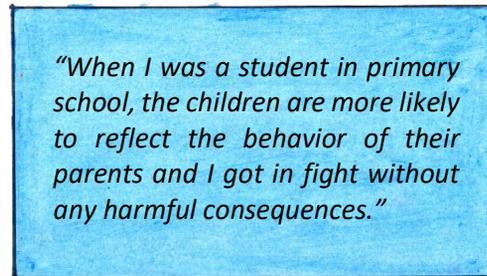
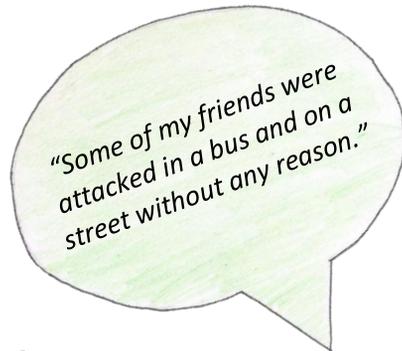
and draw some other
kids life...



TOPIC 2: VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Authors: Evgenija Dzabirska, Monika Jordanovska, Aleksandar Stojanovski, Julita Postolova, Teuta Ziberi, Mia Djambas, Erza Capa, Klara Kostadinovska and Magdalena Petrovska

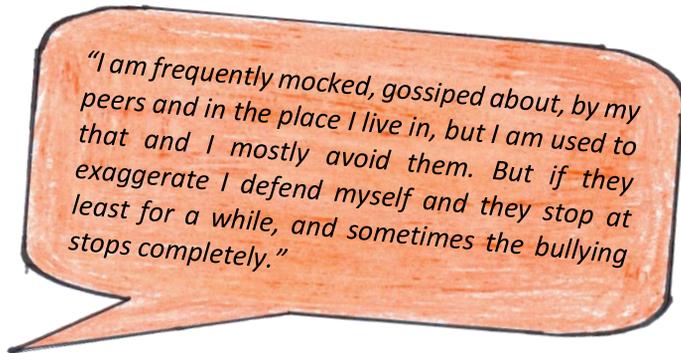
There are more types of violence children can fall victims to, including physical, psychological, sexual, economic, family, gender based violence, bullying and cyberbullying. According to our survey, 10% of the children were victim of violence and more than 20% know someone who was a victim of violence, while 13% of the children stated that they found themselves in a situation to hurt someone, mostly in self-defence or to defend a friend, and when they were nervous or angry and did not know how to control their feelings, but also there were situations when they hurt somebody verbally and unintentionally.



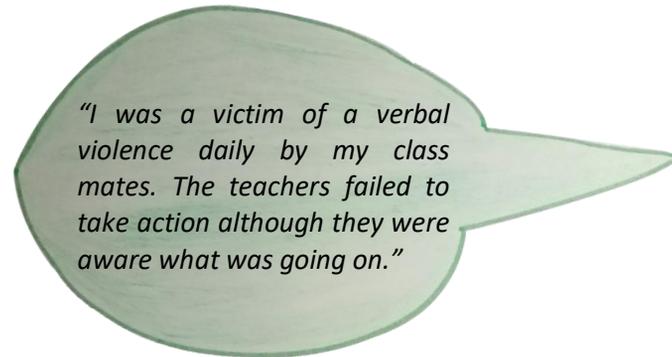
2.1 BULLYING

Children most often are victims of bullying. Bullying is not one-time incident which will not happen again, a friendly argument or disagreement, unintentionally causing pain or friendly poking. It is a form of aggressive behaviour which lasts for a long time, i.e. when the student is permanently and often exposed to negative actions by one or more students who intentionally want to hurt, humiliate or make fun of them.

Here are some examples how some children perceive bullying:



"I am frequently mocked, gossiped about, by my peers and in the place I live in, but I am used to that and I mostly avoid them. But if they exaggerate I defend myself and they stop at least for a while, and sometimes the bullying stops completely."



"I was a victim of a verbal violence daily by my class mates. The teachers failed to take action although they were aware what was going on."

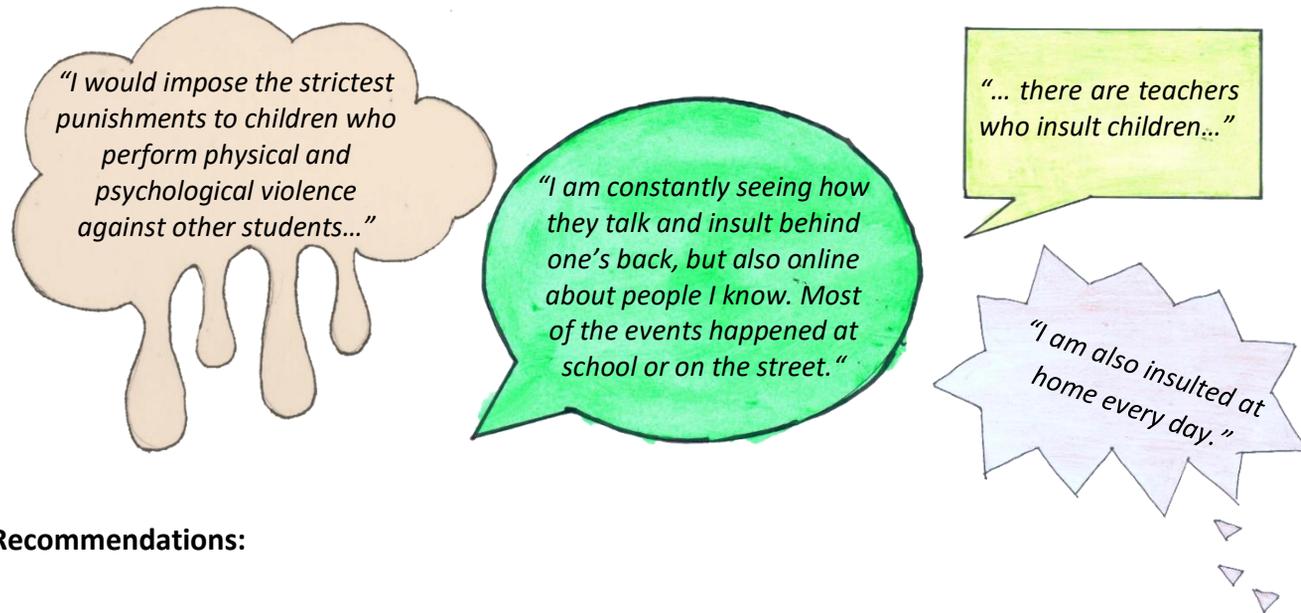
Recommendations:

Our recommendations to prevent bullying are **NOT TO BE PASSIVE OBSERVERS**. If we are witnesses of any type of bullying, we should immediately engage and react. To notify the services in the school as well as the parents of the children. If we just observe and fail to react, that means that we are accomplices. We, the children, require proactive engagement of the teachers and other services in the school. The teachers, besides teaching the curriculum, should have informal conversations with the students in order to find out and prevent any type of peer violence. Also, the parents should pay attention in the upbringing of their children in terms of how they behave outside and at school.

2.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

Everything that includes humiliation, threats, and insults and like is considered violence with consequences, some of them being low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, lack of will to attend school, withdrawing and self-harm.

The examples cited by children in the survey show that sometimes psychological violence can be perpetrated by children, but sometimes it also comes from teachers or family members.



Recommendations:

- Part of the education to be dedicated to anti-bullying and how to handle it.
- To have employed people which will be in charge of a certain area (schools, streets etc.) where they will walk around and make sure that there is no violence; if it comes to that, the bully to be provided with quality psychologist (quality psychologists to be employed) where they will attend sessions until every trauma which causes the violence is cleaned.
- Teachers to attend trainings on how to properly behave with children, and if they fail to show such behaviour, certain measures to be implemented against the teachers.
- Workshops/trainings on love and empathy among people to be organized.



2.3 CYBERBULLYING

In the era of advanced technology, the online bullying of minors or by peers is more common. This type of violence is known as cyberbullying and may include upsetting someone, false identity, sharing personal or other information online etc.

Peers who are not someone's favourites to be in the same company are bullied. Also children from other religion and poorer children are bullied. "Nerds" or children who achieve better results in school are also bullied. This means that all participants in our society can be subject to cyberbullying. It is dangerous because this means sharing content with a purpose of hurting someone. Fast sharing also implies large audience, i.e. many people may see and share the content in a short period of time, without knowing the story behind the violence. The spreading is fast and easy because the authorities fail to take proper measures and sanctions against cyber bullies. Cyber bullies are usually anonymous or have false identity and cause upset, humiliation, sadness, worry and anger in victims of cyberbullying.

Unfortunately, larger number of cyberbullying victims withdraw and become depressed when they find out that are cyber bullied. They usually will not tell that they are cyber bullied because they are ashamed. But there are also victims who can handle it and tell their family, school, police, friends or the municipality and resolve the problem. But unfortunately that number of cyberbullying victims is very small.

In our survey, almost 1/4 of the children stated that they know a peer whose data, photo or video were shared online without their consent, while 8% experienced this for themselves. If someone is bullying them online or abuses their personal data, larger part of the children would turn to their family or police while 1/3 would turn to the Agency for Protection of Personal Data.

Recommendations to the children:

Do not let to be victims of cyberbullying. Do not be ashamed and withdraw. Turn to a place where you think you would be safe and secure because now, in this “new” world and with this "new" generation’s violence, upset, humiliation, sadness, problems and worry can arise from one small conflict. In order to prevent being cyberbullying victims, never share personal information online; never tell your password to someone except your parents; if someone sent you disturbing message do not react, show it to an adult who you trust; never send a message to someone you do not know; do not send messages if you are angry with someone because you will regret it etc. But REMEMBER that we, the children, might know more about technology and virtual world but the adults know more about the real world.

2.4 PAEDOPHILIA



Paedophilia means sexual abuse of children. This type of violence is increasingly happening in Macedonia over the years and this number is not decreasing.

All of us can become victims of paedophilia regardless of our gender, age, ethnicity and place of living. But most common victims of paedophilia are young girls who enter puberty or have already entered, but there are cases of even younger girls. Paedophilia may be carried out by some unknown adult man on the street, but in most cases this is done by our closest such as family members, friends, neighbours, acquaintances and others.

If a girl ever experiences to be a victim of paedophilia, she will be flooded with prejudice from her environment and she will be accused for that event without someone hearing her how that happened. Everyone will be judging her, saying "She was looking for it" or " She must have been drunk so she let that happen". In these cases, the parent should be the child's biggest support and to encourage them that

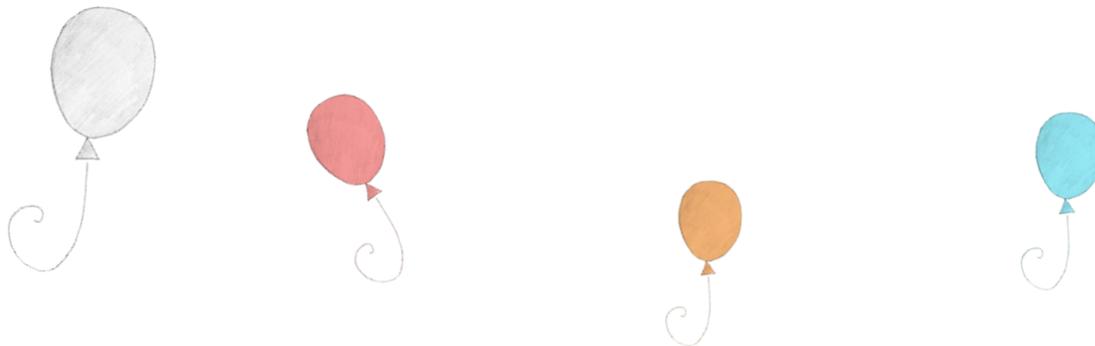
regardless of everything the life continues and that they always will be their biggest support; they also should encourage them that this happens often and that it is not their fault.

Recommendations:

Our recommendations to protect ourselves from this type of violence are providing proper education on how should the children protect themselves and how to act if they fall victims to this kind of violence. Starting from preschool to high school, children need to be educated about their sexuality, how to protect themselves from paedophilia and how to act if they become victims. But parents also need this kind of education in order to know how to counsel their children on how to protect themselves and how to act if their child falls victim. This kind of education is not present in Macedonia but if ever introduced it should be increasingly present starting from kindergarten to the end of secondary education. The child who fell victim to this kind of violence should see a psychologist who would help them to stabilise the entire situation and would provide proper advices on how to reconcile with this event and how to act when someone they know also falls victim.

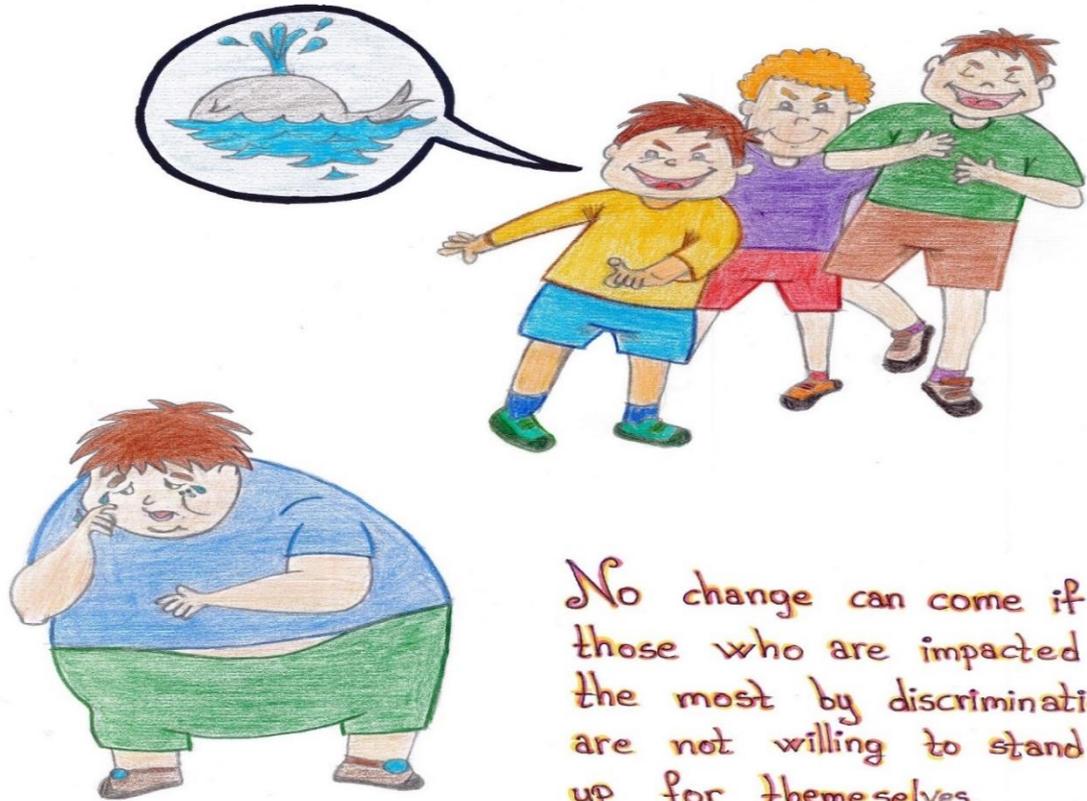
The journalists who sometimes report on the new online platforms about paedophiles, in no case must not provide personal information about the person who fell victim to violence. This also goes for the parents; they also must not share that their child was a victim of paedophilia unless the child agrees to that.

No one ever should be a victim of this type of violence; we all should protect ourselves from this type of violence because we are stronger together; it is always better when we are united in resolving some problem or when it comes to mutual protection.



TOPIC 3

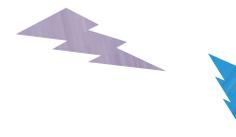
DISCRIMINATION



No change can come if those who are impacted the most by discrimination are not willing to stand up for themselves.

Discrimination is a disease.

TOPIC 3: DISCRIMINATION

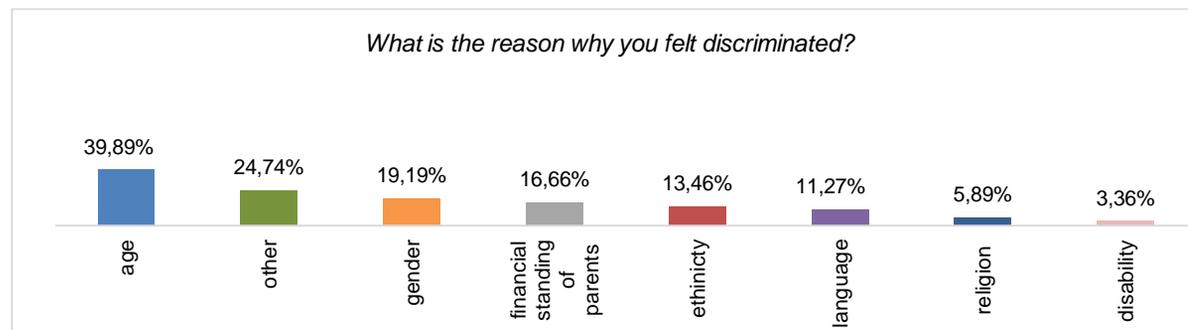


Authors: Evgenija Dzabirska, Teuta Ziberi, Julita Postolska, Matea Eftimovska, Antonija Teovska, Edina Miftaroska, Klara Kostadinovska, Sara Duka and Magdalena Petrovska

Discrimination means every action which causes unequal treatment, which is not legitimate and proportionally based on a manner that certain person or a specific group is excluded, limited or given an advantage to enjoy the basic rights and freedoms based on certain personal features. Discrimination occurs when people are being treated differently on the basis of personal features or belonging to a certain group. There are different types of discrimination in the world such as discrimination against: sex, gender, language, race, skin colour, ethnicity, nationality, religion, political affiliation, health condition, age, education, family and marital status, personal or social statuses, family origin, property status, belonging to a marginalized group.

What are the most common reasons for discrimination against children?

According to the survey, 42.24% of the children felt discriminated in a certain situation, mostly because of their age, sex, financial standing of their family, ethnicity. The children stated that they are also discriminated against their look, body weight and skin colour, place of living, how they dress or what music they listen to.



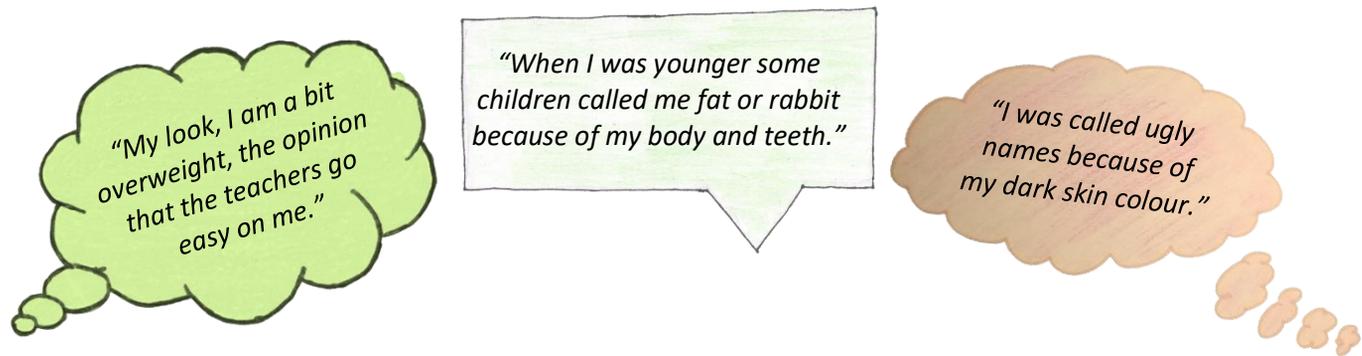
In a given event, more than 1/3 of the children were witnesses to discrimination, 34.26% of whom stated that they confronted the person who discriminated them against or they just reported this to an adult. 6% of the children stated that they discriminated someone.

The discrimination is dangerous because it causes unequal approach and practicing of the human rights and freedoms of children. Anyone may fall victim to discrimination just like anyone can potentially discriminate against, and discrimination may occur in every sphere of life or society.

3.1 DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The discrimination against the physical appearance means dividing people with different appearance from others, for example due to skin colour, weight, height, wearing glasses, shape of ears, hair style etc.

Part of the children that participated in the survey gave personal examples of discrimination against physical features:



This type of discrimination may emotionally hurt children and force them to make wrong choice and self-harm. No one would like to be mocked and underestimated by certain group in front of their friends.

3.2 DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ETHNICITY

Discrimination against ethnicity is a serious form of discrimination and it is very common in different societies. Roma population is example for this type of discrimination in our society, who, as the most vulnerable minority, are often socially isolated and many prejudices are linked to them. The Roma population was targeted by the Nazi even in the Second World War with intention to be exterminated but their battle against the discriminatory attitudes of the people and society is still ongoing.

The discriminatory behaviour of the institutions and people influence the development of Roma children since young age. Roma children very often do not know the Macedonian language because they are only surrounded by Roma population, and they experience difficulties in the educational process when they start school. The Roma population often suffers from different illnesses, the access to healthcare is hard for them and the complaints about the discriminatory behaviour of medical personnel against the Roma population are frequently recorded. Roma people often hear racist comments about them and this is how their vulnerability as an ethnic community increases.

The children avoid to share the problem that they are discriminated against in the environment where they live, and their parents are not educated about their rights and obligations.



3.3 DISCRIMINATION AGAINST LANGUAGE

According to the survey data, 11.27% of the students stated that they are discriminated against their language. The Turkish and Roma population in the eastern part of the country are discriminated against their language because they attend Macedonian schools and their language is not taught, so they are forced to learn Macedonian. While in the western part of the country, this type of discrimination appears among the Macedonian and Albanian students where certain students simply do not want to socialize with others due to the language they speak. Also, we can take the students and teachers who speak on their dialect as an example. But we can also take Sweden as an example, because regardless of your nationality, there a

language courses for every mother tongue. We recommend the municipalities to introduce this kind of courses for every language.

3.4 DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ECONOMIC STANDING

The wealth, family budget, economic and financial standing of the family largely determine how many members of that family will be able to completely enjoy their rights (education, healthcare, cultural life etc.), and often they are also victims to social isolation. Very often people formulate wrong attitudes, prejudices or stereotypes of poor citizens which indicates high degree of economic discrimination against these people.

The economic discrimination of children is noticeable in all spheres of life. Large number of children in Macedonia do not have quality life as well as access to quality education, cultural life, healthcare etc. due to the economic status of their parents or guardians. Some children, despite their intellect and desire to widen their knowledge, are not able to take courses, attend cultural events etc., so their education is brought down to primary education. Even now during the pandemic, large number of children were deprived of the new educational system, or remote learning due to the lack of basic communication means.

The economic discrimination is highly present among the children in the everyday communication. The children with lower economic status are everyday victims to mocking by their peers. They are often mocked and insulted because of their place of living, how they dress meaning the inability to buy designer clothes and shoes, expensive school supplies, expensive mobile phones etc. They are out-casted by their peers and they are often socially isolated due to this kind of behaviour towards the children with lower economic status.

We can conclude that today the basic purpose of financial means is wrongly understood. Namely, instead of something which enables normal life, today the finances are indicator for power, domination and taking

advantage of. Due to this reason, the children of wealthier parents are headed in wrong direction in life, by mocking and discriminating against people poorer than them.

3.5 GENDER DISCRIMINATION

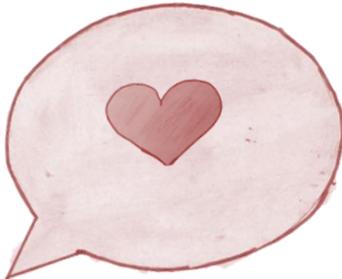
Gender discrimination occurs when certain person is unevenly treated by others on the basis of their gender. There are numerous examples of gender discrimination throughout history, which is more expressed against the female than the male gender. Even today when the awareness of the people is on higher level, we are witnessing gender discrimination against women, but though in less cases, men are not exempted.

Gender discrimination against children is present in the rural and economically less developed areas as well as within the traditional families and families with lower economic status. Just as with adults, gender discrimination against children of female gender, i.e. girls is more present. On the other hand, the gender discrimination against children is present in the everyday communication, firstly due to the division of games to "male" or "female" which leads to social distance between boys and girls.

Recommendations:

- Socialization of the discriminated groups of children, home and educational networking and integration of all children are needed immediately and without delays.
- Mandatory organization of anonymous humanitarian events for children at financial risk.
- Mandatory discrimination education of the adults (especially of those who did not experienced it yet).
- The teachers would have key influence and significant role if they relentlessly engage in the process of equal inclusion of all children in the educational process. That is possible to be carried out if they get involved in every project.

- Mandatory education of both children and adults in terms of the role and meaning of financial means in life. It is necessary everyone, regardless of their financial power, to understand and accept the frames that the normal living set out, to talk and educate, to understand what is allowed, and what is not and to differentiate and separate the positive practices from negative vices which are among us.
- It is necessary the institutions to promote gender equality of both girls and boys, from birth to adolescence within one society. This is especially important in the rural and economically less developed areas, thus the raising of awareness in terms of gender discrimination should be influenced by implementing different activities.
- Ethics as a school subject should be implemented, immediately and without delay, in the entire educational process, not just in a certain grade.



TOPIC 4

FREE TIME, PLAY, SPORTS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES



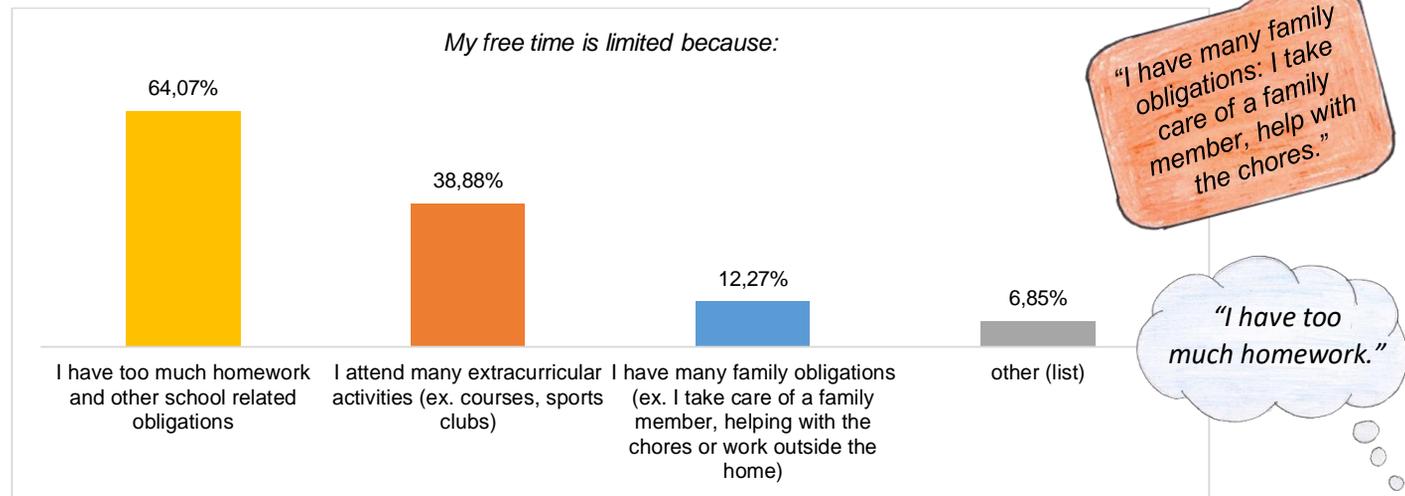
TOPIC 4: FREE TIME, PLAY, SPORTS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Authors: Monika Jordanovska, Erza Capa, Antonija Teovska, Edina Mifatorska, Sara Duka

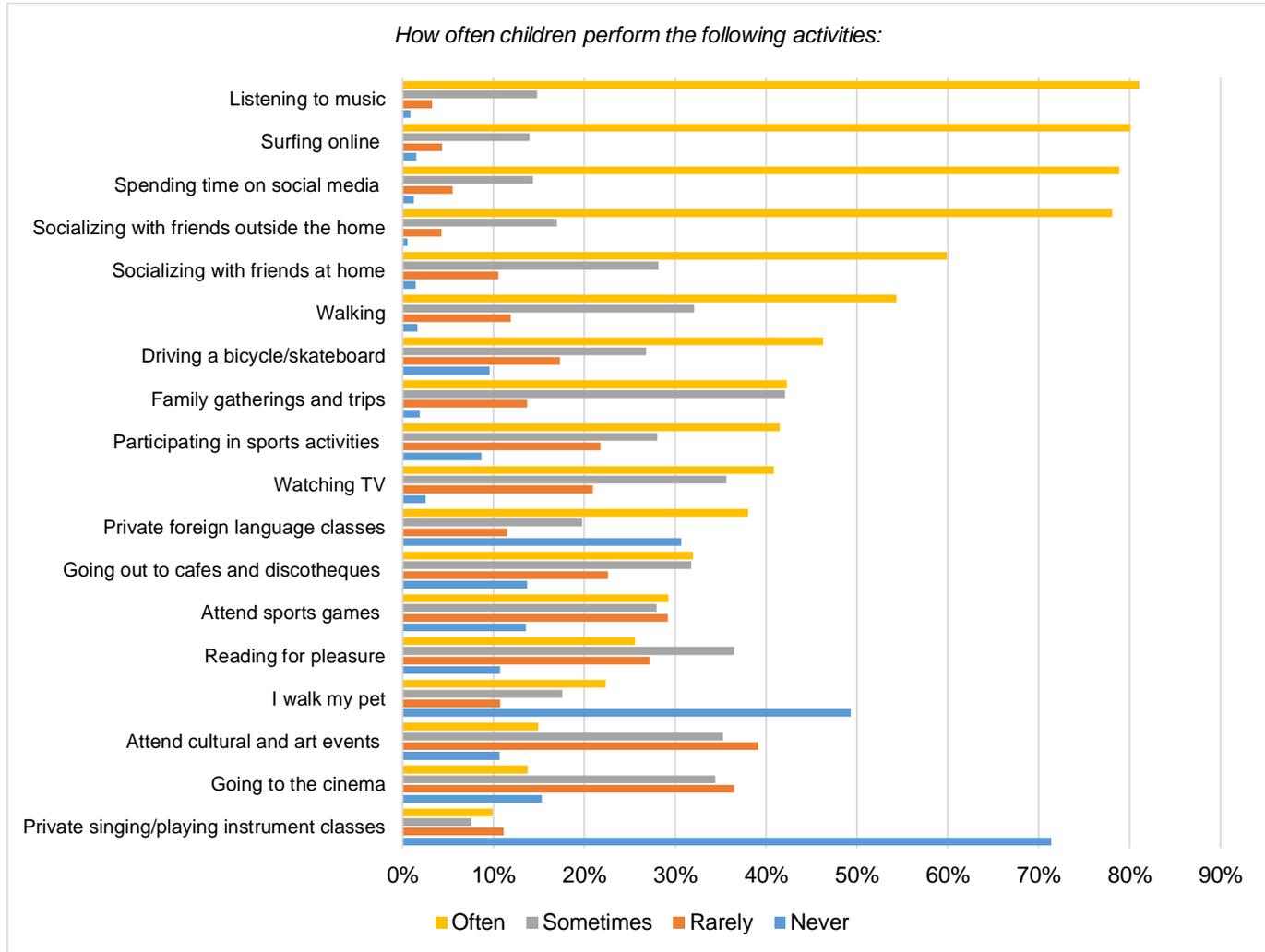
Children’s play and free time is not just a need but also a birthright of every child. Children’s play is essential in the development of the child’s social, emotional and physical abilities. Free time in no way is a waste of time. To the contrary, that is the time we devote to ourselves, time when we satisfy our own needs, like the need to play, have fun, rest and by growing and developing out potential we become better and who we are. Parents and guardians must respect these children's rights.

4.1 FREE TIME

According the data from the survey, half of the students believe that they always have enough free time for the activities they enjoy. However, the biggest part (64.07%) stated that their free time is limited due to too much homework and other school assignments. The table below depicts the reasons that children stated that limit their free time.



For most children, surfing online, including the use of social media and playing computer games are their favourite manner of spending their free time. There is no need for these activities to be forbidden but they should be time limited and supervised.



Recommendations to the parents:

Parents should use the free time for quality and honest conversation with their child (on the way to kindergarten, when they go shopping together, while in the car), to agree on the time which they could spend together that day and carefully listen what their child has to say. The essence of the quality spent free time with their child is not about how much but how they spend the time with them. Older children mostly spend their free time with their peers, outside the home, whom they share common interests with, but here the role of the parents and institutions is crucial in directing the child in the right direction.

Remember, for you as parents play is just a play, but for us, it is a medium through which we learn about ourselves and the world!

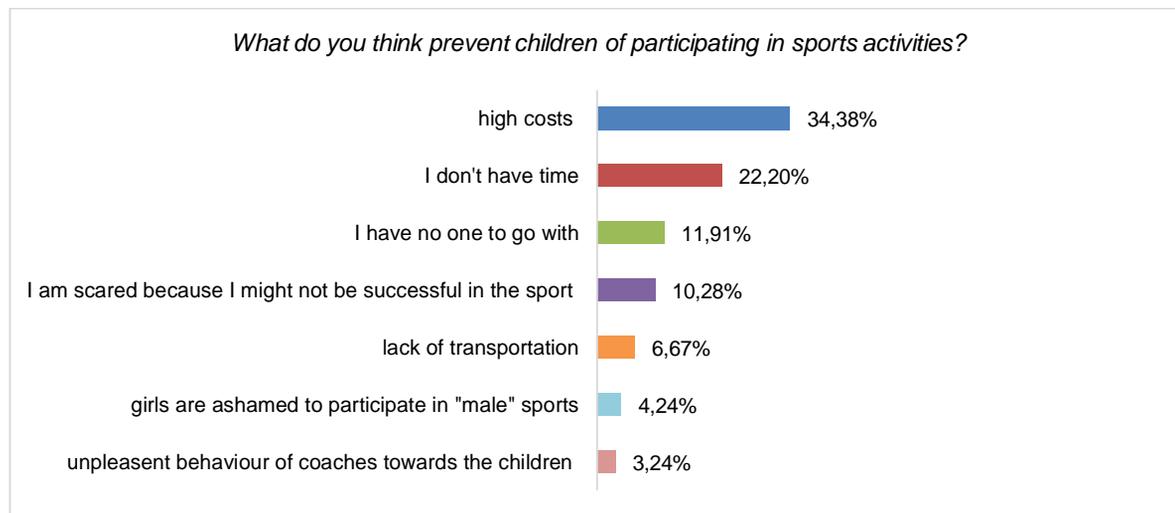
4.2 SPORTS ACTIVITIES

Sport has very important influence on the health and well-being of children by affecting their mental and physical development. Sport influences children in many aspects such as:

- It increases the socialization among children and encourages group work;
- It entertains the children;
- It teaches children to set goals;
- It teaches them how to handle and overcome problems.

Although the sports activities have positive influence on children's life, there are some barriers which take children further from the sport: poor economic conditions in the rural areas where there are no gyms nor sports equipment, but also high prices for participation and membership in sports clubs. As a result of this, participation in sports activities is a privilege just for a certain category of children in our country. The lack of sport terrains is evident even in the urban areas, while in cities where there are natural resources for

development of sport and sports activities, they are not used. The survey shows that 50.09% of the children stated that there are enough sport clubs. The children state that there are several obstacles that prevent them from participating in sport:



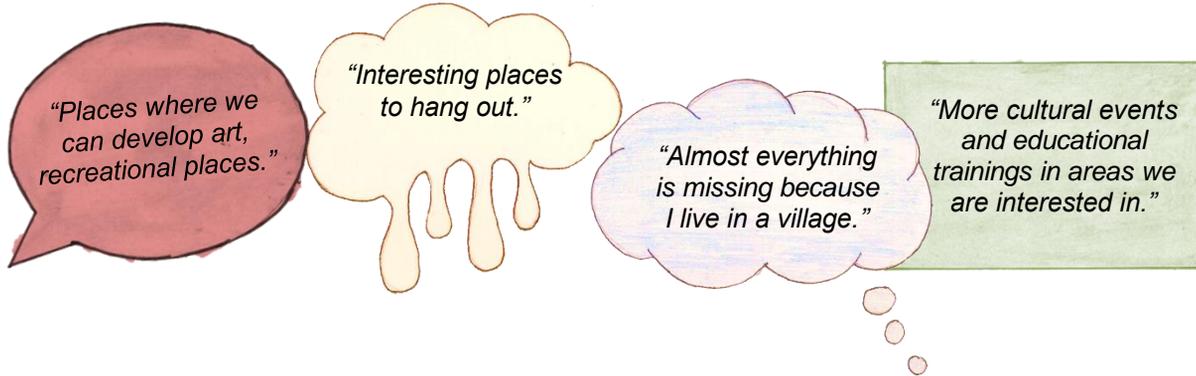
Recommendations to the competent authorities:

- To build sports terrains or playgrounds for children in the rural areas, so the children can spend their free time playing sports.
- The municipalities should be interested to completely or partly cover the costs for participation of children in sports activities.

4.3 CULTURAL, ART AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

Cultural, art and other such activities are important for every child because they enable them to find themselves, to learn more about the world around them, to feel accepted and free. These activities are good for the emotional, mental and physical health.

According to the survey, the percentage of those who attend cultural events is very small (around 15%). The children emphasize that they need more cultural, art, sports and other activities to be organized.



Recommendations:

- Different activities (cultural, sports, art etc.) where children will socialize and have fun to be organized once a week. These activities to be free-of-charge or to have a low price, a price that every child can afford. This to be organized in the rural areas at least once a month.
- To ask children what type of events they would like to be organized once in two months.



TOPIC 5

CHILDREN ON THE STREET



Klara Kostadinovska
Magdalena Petrovska

TOPIC 5: CHILDREN ON THE STREET

Authors: Evgenija Djabirska, Julita Postolova and Matea Eftimovska

Children on street are children without appropriate social, economic and health protection, children without identity and normal living conditions. These children are deprived of their basic human rights; they do not attend school, have no free time and play, cannot be treated when sick, and have no parental love. The sight is concerning, especially in the larger cities where these children are on every corner, in every moment and around every event. They are hurt by their parents who, together with them, are part of the streets; they are bullied and humiliated, discriminated and blackmailed. These children mostly come from families with several children who either ran from somewhere or failed to reach their destination and do not have their own home. Certain part of the children on streets are used by their parents or guardians by forcing them to beg on the streets and spend the money the children earn for their own needs. If the children try to spend part of their earnings, they can be physically abused by their parents or guardians. More attention and care should be devoted to these children.

Large number of these children do not have their own identity (they are not registered in the births register, do not have personal identification numbers), no basic living conditions, they are not socialized and they are not accepted by society. They never gain the right to be students; they are illiterate and do not know their rights nor obligations. These children refuse to cooperate with the competent authorities and refuse the helping hand by the few who would reach out to them. The institutions in charge of these phantoms and children on street, largely unintentionally and due to the lack of capacity to handle these cases, shift the ball and responsibility among themselves. Thus, the problem is increasing, the number of children is increasing, and the other citizens live in fear.

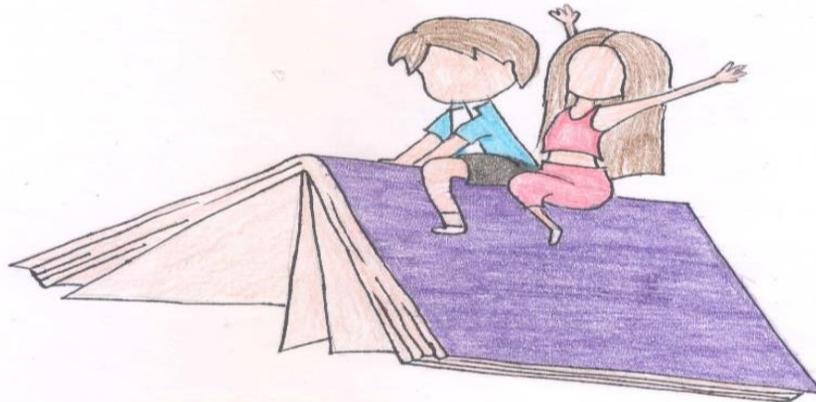
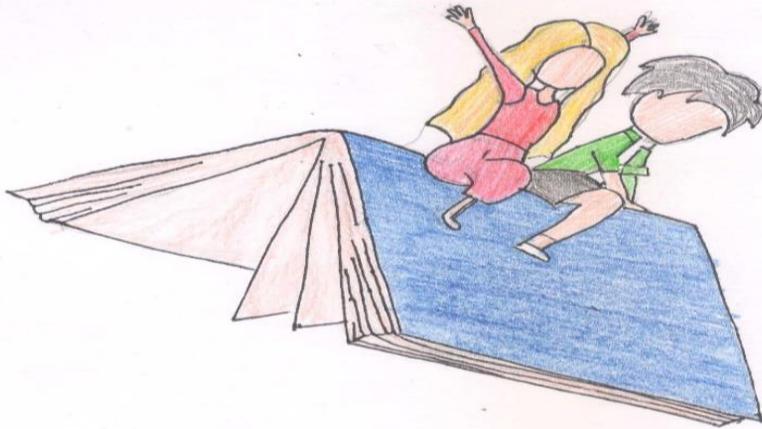
Recommendations:

In order to protect the children of living the traumas they experience on the streets, they should be taken care of by the social services who will foster the children and later send them to a children's home where they will be provided with the necessary education, care and love needed to grow into good persons. Also if these children have parents who used violence, the parents should be deprived to see their child and no longer be legal parents of that child. This will decrease the number of children living on the streets; the streets will be safer and the children would have more peaceful and safer live.



TOPIC 6

EDUCATION





TOPIC 6: EDUCATION

Authors: Monika Jordanovska, Aleksandar Stojanovski, Sara Duka, Mia Djambas and Matea Eftimovska

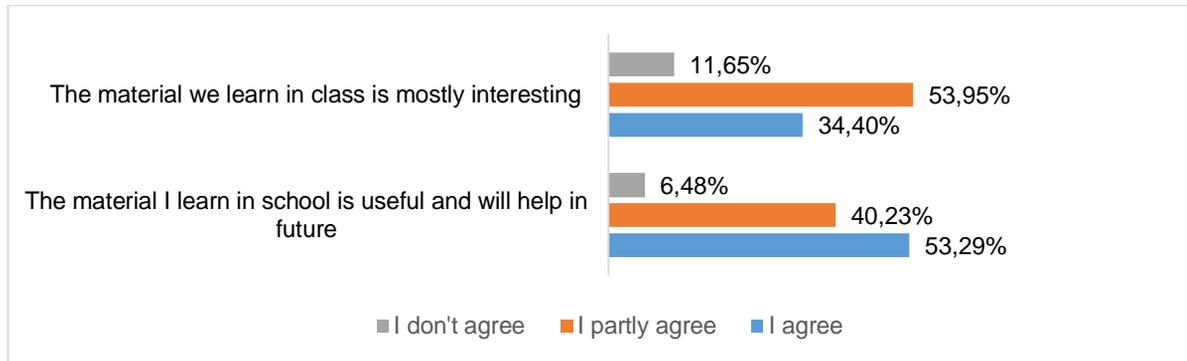
Education plays big role in children's lives. They spend half a day at school and then go home and prepare for school. Half of the education comes from home, and half from school. Today schools are like second home to children. Therefore, we need to put efforts and provide education with the best quality so the future of the mankind to be secured. If we provide education with love, purity, happiness, peace, respect for everyone and by implementing all recommendation given below, we can be sure that the children will grow and become complete and independent individuals in the society.

1. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The possibility to attend school is not the only important thing, but also the contents of what is taught and the school atmosphere. One should possess physical, emotional and psychological health in order to be complete. Schools are obliged to educate us in all of these areas and we expect the schools to nurture them. The school should also prepare children for independency; students should be equipped with solutions for the everyday life problems, and the schools should not create psychological problems to students.

Are the contents taught in school interesting and useful?

More than 1/3 of the children completely agree that the material taught in class is interesting, and more than 1/2 stated that it is useful and will help them in future.



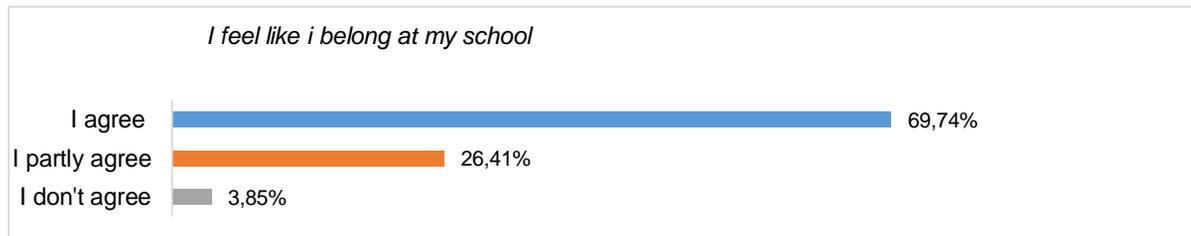
By building more vocational schools with subjects necessary only for that vocation, the children will be able to select what they want and thus enjoy more in class.

There should also be education on topics related to certain areas of everyday life of an individual. For example, some of the students that participated in the survey emphasized that, and one of the children formulated it as follows:

“The children are not educated enough about sexual intercourse, sexual orientation, relationships we build and like.”

What makes children feel nice at school?

Positive part is that most of the children feel that they belong to their school.



The children like that they are safe, that their rights are respected, that learned something interesting and useful for everyday life, they have extracurricular activities which enable them to do what they want, the hygiene and the employees and students.

"I am learning the things I am interested in, some of the professors teach us things which are not related to school, there is friendship."

"I feel filled with positive energy."

What the children would like to change in their schools?

What the children think should be changed is the disrespectful behaviour, broken chairs and desks, the lack of ramps for wheelchairs and gyms, the low hygiene, the teachers' approach, and the lack of extracurricular activities.

These are some of children's answers to question "What do you think should be changed in your school?"

"Some teachers and their approach and pressure on the children that our grades build us as people and the stress they create."

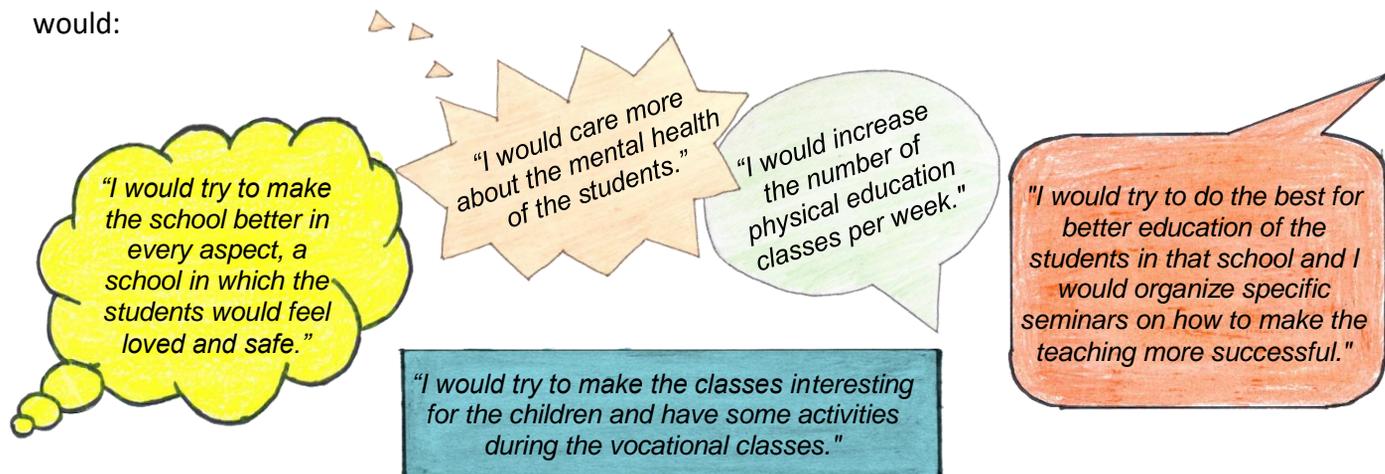
"Students to be heard more about their problems."

"The music classroom to have instrument which the students can play on for fun and relaxation."

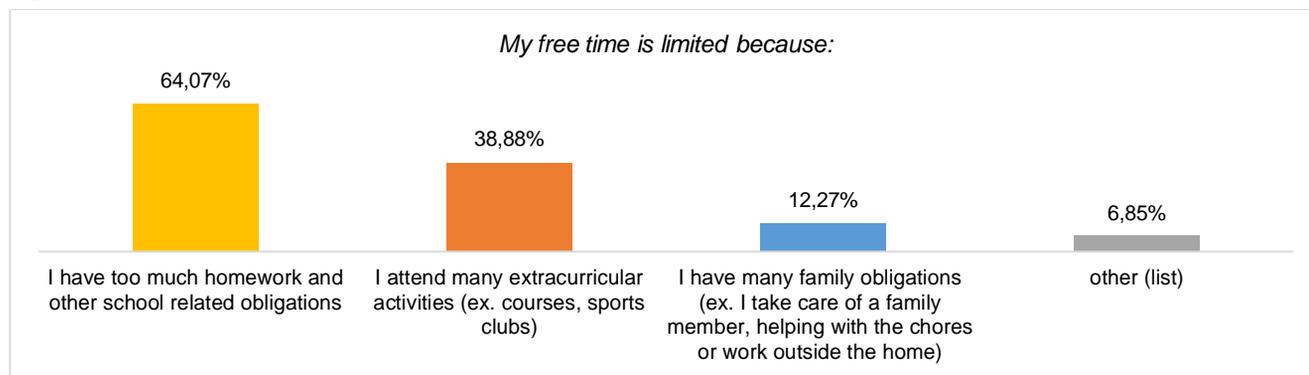
"To improve the conditions for sports and sports activities and to procure more computers."

"More extracurricular activities."

The children have even more ideas about what they would improve if they were school principals. They would:



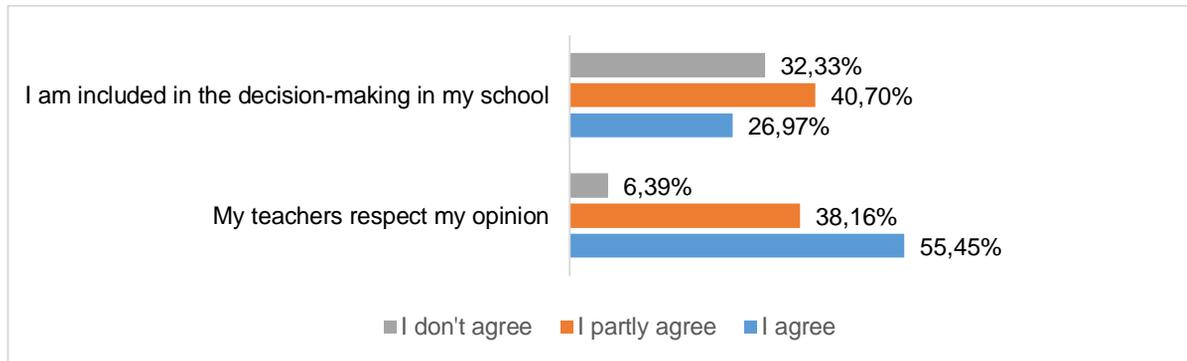
More than 60% of the children believe that they have too much school related obligations which seriously limit their free time. In some of the best educational systems in the world (such as the one in Finland), children are not pressured, they do not have homework (or sometimes only very short ones) and do not have tests (or some short ones) which they are not pressured about and are not set as priority for the students. Free time is important for the physical, psychological and emotional health and every child have right to free time and deserves free time!



Are the opinions and interests of students respected?

Every child has different interests which they request to be respected. Being a member of a group gives you right to express your opinion and to participate in the decision-making because everyone’s opinion should be heard and taken into consideration in the decision-making both at home and in the school environment. In terms of this, according to our survey, we obtained the following data:

Many students see the visiting of psychologist/pedagogue like something one should be ashamed of OR as something bad because they are sent there only if they caused a problem.



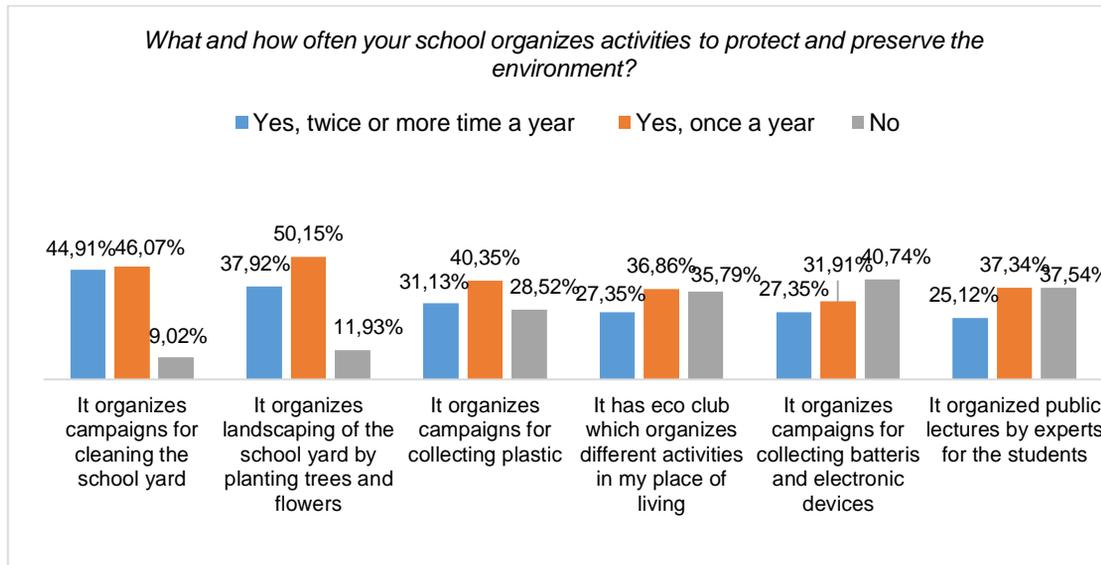
But the children recognize that the pedagogue and the psychologist have much more important role than this.

“Some children really need help but they either do not know where to turn to or they are scared to confide to someone. I think that every child must visit a psychologist at least once a week.”



Do the children learn enough about protection of the environment?

The ecological education in most schools is on a low level. Planting trees and cleaning the yard happens only once a year, and in some schools not even then. Some schools failed to organize events for collecting plastic bottles and batteries and there are no recycling bins but some children still throw garbage everywhere including the school yard.

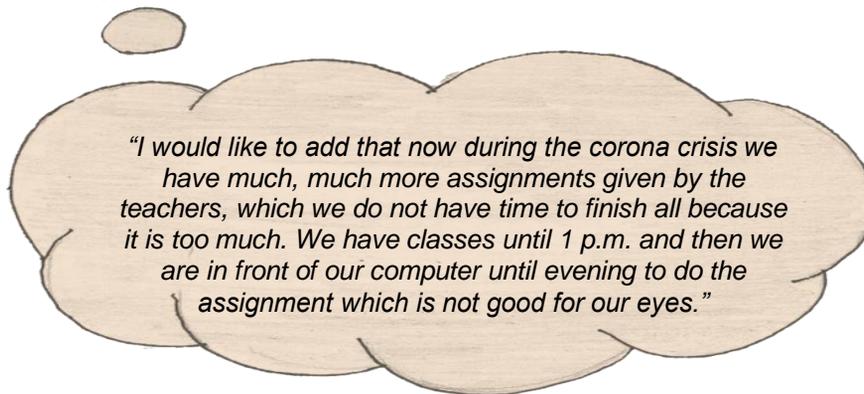


How is the educational process organized since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic?

During the pandemic, this school year (2020/2021) started later, on 01.10.2020. Many students do not have electronic devices and cannot follow the classes, and nothing is done about this at the moment. Schools were told to manage by themselves, schools told this to the teachers, teachers to the students, and the students were left without help. Every school takes different approach (or none at all) to teach the students who do not possess any electronic device: they print plans, work sheets etc. in the schools and then the students go to the school to pick them up and learn on their own; they were told to follow the classes on

TV (which is not right because the student maybe does not have a TV); they are temporarily given small lap tops the school has, which should be returned at the end of the online learning; and of course we should not forget that there are many students for whom nothing has been done...

In terms of the students who followed the online classes at the end of last school year during the pandemics, we can say that some schools were giving many assignments to the students, which was not right, given that the classes were online and the students spent too much time in front of their laptops and other electronic devices (we cannot evaluate this year because it just started). The students request less assignments because that might affect their health (physical – back, eyes, movement is necessary, we need to go outside etc., psychological and emotional (lack of socialization)), we feel like the teachers do not have empathy for us.



Recommendations:

About the curriculum:

- The curricula should be properly designed so that the child can learn as much for 9 months without overloading and without making only the school their priority. Students to have less assignments because they take their entire free time.
- Adding subjects on intuition, importance of love and respect, law of attraction; all myths: that there is not enough, that one can succeed only if they work a lot, life balance, moving towards your goal,

uniqueness, limited believes, meditation, handling depression, to not follow the expectation of the society. To remove subjects which are not important for the students that did not select that specific vocation.

- To build vocational schools for other professions than those we already have, and have classes and subjects focused on everything needed only for that area.
- An activity (practice) to be organized for every vocation at least once a week, which will help them practice it in real life.
- Friendly teachers who would teach only what is necessary.

About respecting children's opinion:

- Teachers' training on respecting the opinion of children and all children equally; how to behave and teach children with disabilities; and to teach them that no grade is worth the sleepless nights and losing one's health. That the grades are not the only way for children to succeed, and therefore to not put pressure on them. If the teachers act contrary to what they have been trained about, they should be penalized.
- To build self-confidence in children to be able to express their opinion through open conversations and informal meetings as well as in classes where there will be discussion and the students will be encouraged to express their opinion without evaluating it.

About the role of the school psychologist:

- Every school should employ quality psychologist who would help the students every time when they see that someone needs help without waiting for that someone to turn to them.
- Every child to have mandatory conversation with the psychologists at least once a month. This would help children gain trust in psychologists and they will be able to seek help on their own later on.

- To make visiting the psychologist normal by discussing about it in class, informal meeting and other additional classes. This should be seen as something usual, and not something one should be ashamed of.

About the education and care for the environment:

- Improving the knowledge and care about the environment by: planting trees at least four times a year, organizing cleaning of the school yard at least twice a year, having a campaign for collecting plastic and batteries throughout the year which will be rewarded at the end, having active eco club in every school and more frequent classes and campaigns for better environment.

About the extracurricular activities:

- Socialization, team building, anti-bullying and how to handle it in schools.
- To have a day in the month during which children from the school could have informal gathering. That gathering to be filled with activities where the children can mix up.

About the online classes:

- Not every child can afford certain technology; every child to be provided with all the necessary technology to follow the online classes.

2. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY

When we talk about children with disabilities, everyone believes that these children are different than us and that they should attend special schools, but they are children just like us. The survey showed that schools do not possess the appropriate assistive material nor appropriate conditions for these children to attend and follow classes without problem.

Thus, 71.33% of the children stated there are no wheelchair ramps in the schools.

80.5% of the students responded that there are no personal assistants in their schools. Also, it is very common for the parents to pay some adult person who will help their child during the classes. But there are many families whose financial standing is not good enough to pay someone to be with their child. Therefore, the schools should employ someone who will assist the children with disabilities to meet their needs.

82.57% of the students responded that their schools do not have textbooks, computers or other technology with Braille system - system indented for the visually impaired. All this would help students with impaired vision to follow classes more easily.

Recommendation:

The state to allocate money for personal assistants, wheelchair ramps, Braille system and other necessary materials for the children with disabilities to easily participate in the classes.

3. LACK OF RESOURCES IN SOME SCHOOLS

In order to have good and successful education, we should have enough resources, but there is lack of them in some schools.

One of the biggest problems is the lack of textbooks. The students receive textbooks used for five or six generations. The school chairs and desks are very big problem too. Students seat on broken chairs.

Some schools do not have access to computers and technology and the schools in the rural areas do not have gyms. Some schools do not have landscaped school yard. Some do not have heating system so they use old heaters and wood burners.

Recommendations:

- Students to receive new books every year.
- Every school to be equipped with special equipment for the children with disabilities so they can feel comfortable.
- To have more resources for entertainment of the children!
- Schools to build gyms if they do not have one.
- Schools to renew the chairs and desks more often (proposal: once in two years).
- Schools to have better heating!
- Schools to have better access to technology!

4. HYGIENE IN THE SCHOOLS

Hygiene is one of the most important things but it is not at the most desirable level in our schools. The survey provided us with the following findings:

- 60.62% of the children only partly agree or do not agree that their school pays enough attention to hygiene.
- 68.23% completely or partly agree that the toilets in their schools are not clean and they avoid using them while in school.
- 69.74% only partly agree or do not agree that the toilets in their schools are clean and have hygiene products.

Recommendations:

- Regular cleaning of the toilets.
- To employ more janitors.
- Schools to receive bigger funding.
- Schools to have soaps and enough toilet paper all the time.
- To provide access to drinking water in places where there isn't.



TOPIC 7

ENVIRONMENT



TOPIC 7: ENVIRONMENT

Authors: Sara Duka and Erza Capa

Environment means everything around us, the place where we live, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the trees that make oxygen and the flowers with their scent. In order to grow healthy, we need these, we need clean environment because it gives us all the necessary elements for life.

Unfortunately, our living environment is gradually being destroyed and we are not trying to protect it, but to the contrary, we often become the reason for pollution by throwing garbage, cutting woods, polluting the drinking water which we very much need.

We as children suffer the most because we are the most vulnerable group and we are still developing. By breathing polluted air and drinking unclean water we risk of entering harmful substances in our body which can negatively influence on our growth and development.

The environment mirrors the humans themselves. This reveals the human life like an open book. From the moment of entering this world until death, humans are in continuous contact with the environment. We receive everything we need from it and it is an inseparable part of our lives. The polluted air problem is a problem for most children in our country.



Here are some of the answers that the children gave to the question "How do you feel when the air is polluted and how does it influence your everyday life?"

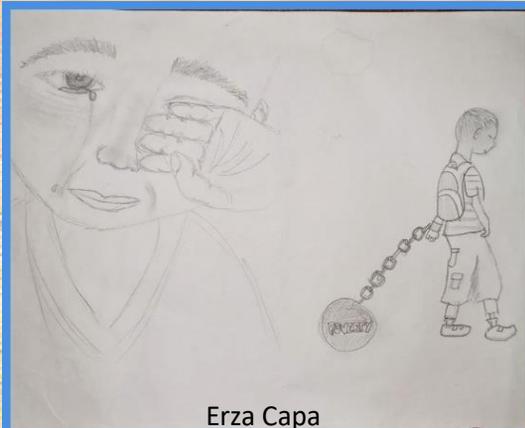


In terms of other problems, children often express dissatisfaction stating that the air and water are polluted, and that the streets are often filled with garbage. We know that things cannot be solved with a magic wand but we have to try! 62.80% claim that they participated in activities for protection of the environment. The protection of the environment should be a comprising part of every developmental process and the schools are the place where the environmental education should be promoted the most. We loudly plead: "Let's unite and contribute for clean environment and healthy life."

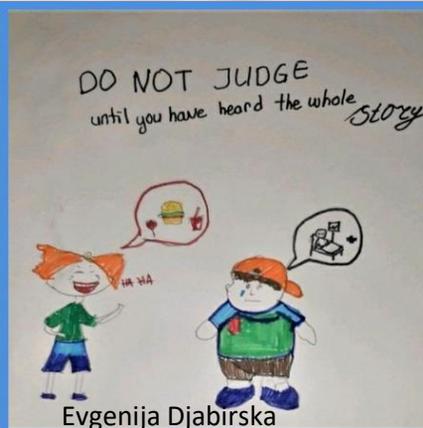
Recommendations:

- Raising the ecological awareness of people.
- Forestation and landscaping of green areas.
- Proper waste management (selection and recycling).
- Decreasing of industrial pollution.





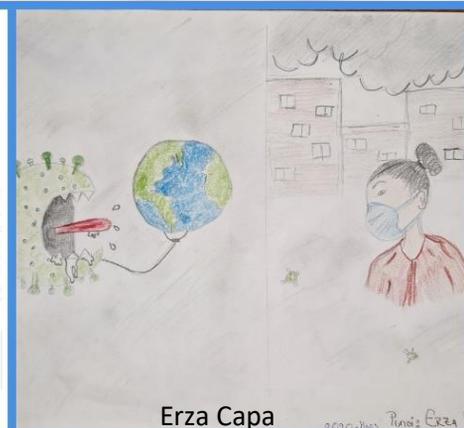
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