



EMPOWERING
CARE

EUROPEAN COMPARATIVE REPORT

EMPOWERING CARE. Empowering girls in residential care
against violence against women.

July 2013





Funded by the European Union



Empowering Care. Empowering girls in residential care against violence against women.
JUST/2012/DAP/AG/3078

December 2013

Report written by Núria Francolí Sanglas with the collaboration of Mar Camarasa Casals, on the basis of the national research reports written by the rest of the partnership.



OULUN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY of OULU



Disclaimer: This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

INDEX

INTRODUCTION	5
I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	7
1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROJECT	7
2. GENDER AND AGE AS STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY RELATIONS.....	10
2.1 GENDER RELATIONS AND THE PATRIARCHAL SYSTEM.....	10
2.2 AGE: THE CHILDHOOD AND THE ADOLESCENCE	11
3. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	13
3.1 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AS A STRUCTURAL PHENOMENON	13
3.2 THE CONSEQUENCES OF VAW.....	16
3.3 VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN	16
4. RESIDENTIAL CARE INSTITUTIONS	17
4.1 INTRODUCTION ON RESIDENTIAL CARE INSTITUTIONS	17
4.2 GENDER AND RESIDENTIAL CARE INSTITUTIONS	19
5. EMPOWERMENT AND CAPABILITY APPROACH.....	20
5.1 DEFINING WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT.....	20
5.2 KEY ELEMENTS TO KNOW ABOUT EMPOWERMENT.....	21
5.3 EMPOWERMENT AND CAPABILITY APPROACH.....	22
II. LEGAL AND POLITICAL FRAMEWORK.....	24
1. INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK	24
2. EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK.....	25
3. LEGAL AND POLITICAL FRAMEWORKS AT A COUNTRY LEVEL.....	27

III. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK	33
1. TARGET GROUPS, SELECTION CRITERIA AND ETHICAL ISSUES.....	33
1.1. MINOR GIRLS LIVING IN RESIDENTIAL CARE CENTERS.....	33
1.2. PROFESSIONALS WORKING WITH MINOR GIRLS IN RESIDENTIAL CARE INSTITUTIONS.....	34
2. AIMS OF THE RESEARCH	33
3. METHODS AND RESEARCH TECHNIQUES	35
4. OVERVIEW OF THE FIELDWORK IN PARTNER COUNTRIES	36
IV. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE FIELDWORK	39
1. GIRLS	39
1.1. RESIDENTIAL CARE EXPERIENCES: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ELEMENTS.....	39
1.2. SOCIAL AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS.....	41
1.3. GENDER ROLES AND PERCEPTIONS.....	43
1.4. DEFINITIONS, OWN EXPERIENCES AND LEGITIMATION OF VIOLENCE	44
2. PROFESSIONALS.....	48
2.1. PROFESSIONALS' VIEWS, NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES.....	48
V. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS	50
BIBLIOGRAPHY	52

INTRODUCTION

Empowering Care. Empowering girls in residential care against violence against women is a 2 year European project funded by the Daphne III Program of the European Commission lasting from January 2013 till December 2014. Empowering Care is developed, under the coordination of SURT. Fundació de Dones (Catalonia), by a multidisciplinary and transnational partnership comprising organisations from Bulgaria (Animus Association), Cyprus (Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies), Finland (University of Oulu) and Italy (Tampep).

Empowering care project aims, on the one hand, at increasing knowledge on the prevalence and characteristics of experiences of violence and abused against girls aged 14-18 in residential care and under the legal responsibility of public authorities in 5 EU Member States: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, Italy and Catalonia/Spain. On the other hand, the project aims at empowering young girls in residential care to protect and prevent themselves and their peers from violence.

In order to reach these aims, first of all, the partnership of the project carried out a qualitative research on the experiences of violence and abuse, perceptions of gender roles and intimate relationships of 14-18 aged girls in residential care in Catalonia, Bulgaria, Italy, Finland and Cyprus. Secondly, and on the basis of the comparative research results, an empowerment program will be elaborated and pilot tested with girls in residential care centres in the partner countries. As a result of these activities, a Manual for professionals will be published and disseminated among professionals.

As said, the first activity of the Empowering Care project has been the conduction of a EU-wide qualitative research on the prevalence and characteristics of experiences of different types of violence and abuse against girls in residential care, both before and after entering care institutions, as well as their beliefs regarding gender roles and stereotypes, and sexual and affective relationships. Each partner of the consortium has carried out the research in its country. With the results obtained with the analysis of the fieldwork, each organisation elaborated a country research report. The reports are available, both in English and in each national language (Bulgarian, Catalan, Greek, Finnish and Italian), in the website of the project (www.empoweringcare.eu). This Comparative report has been elaborated on the basis of the country research reports and constitutes the EU-wide product of this first project activity.

The first chapter of the Comparative report includes the Theoretical Framework of the project and it sets the key definitions and approach to Empowering Care topics.

The second chapter on the Legal and Political Framework describes the legal and policy contexts concerning VAW and children's rights at international, European and country levels.

The third chapter presents the methodological framework set up by the partnership and used during the research. In this third chapter the feminist approach of the Empowering Care research is defined. Moreover, the target groups, the selection criteria as well as the ethical issues that were taken into



Funded by the European Union



account are also explained¹. Finally, chapter 3 also describes the methods and techniques used in the research as well as the fieldwork process in each country.

The fourth chapter contains the Comparative Analysis of the fieldwork carried out in the partner countries with girls in residential care centres and with professionals.

Finally, there is a last chapter that summarises the main findings of the research.

¹ The methodological section contained in this Comparative report is a reduced version of the Methodological Framework elaborated by the partnership. The full version of the document is available in the project website.

I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROJECT

The Conceptual Framework aims at providing definitions of key concepts that will be used all along the Empowering Care project. To this end, the concepts child and girl child, residential care and violence against women are defined below.

Following the definition provided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) a **child** is “every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”. Within the Empowering Care, the target group is girls aged 14-18 living in residential care institutions. We refer to them using indistinctly the term girl or young woman.

The project focuses on girls (and not boys) because it aims at studying young women’s experiences of violence putting special emphasis on gender-based violence. It is well known that gender-based violence is both an expression of and a way to reinforce male domination. This violence is rooted in power imbalances and structural inequality between men and women (UN, 2006-14). In this way, the gendered dimensions of violence against women are distinct from those of violence against men: while men may certainly be exposed to violence as a result of their socially determined gender roles and norms, the violence they experience rarely, if ever, contributes to or confirm the overall subjugation of men as an entire group of people. There are many other critically important vectors of oppression experienced by subgroups of men, such as race, class, creed and sexuality; but within the prevailing global context of patriarchy, men are the power brokers in terms of gender, and women are the subsidiaries (UNICEF, 2008).

As said before, the focus is on girls living in residential care institutions. While there is not a universally accepted definition of children’s care institutions, the features most of them have in common are the following: round-the-clock care of children who live apart from their families and are supervised by remunerated staff. Size, organisation and activities carried out within these institutions can vary widely (UN, 2006, violence against children around the world).

The reason why the project focuses on girls living in residential care institutions is that they are an extremely vulnerable group which are in a position where multiple risk factors of violence (gender, age, neglect and reclusion) intersect. Gender-based and age-based inequity intersect in such a way as to make this target group essentially invisible in efforts aimed at either addressing violence against women or in addressing violence against children. Indeed, lack of parental care and reclusion add to vulnerability and also to the invisibility of the target group.

Previous research shows that a high number of girls in residential care has experienced violence and abuse before entering care institutions (UNICEF, 2008) and are also more vulnerable to violence inside them (UN, 2006). A 1998 Daphne project on sexually abusive behaviour concluded that 60-90 % of female inhabitants of residential institutions have had a history of sexual abuse (UNICEF, 2008). A research carried out by the Catalan Government (Secretariat of Childhood and Adolescence, 2007) on the profile of girls living in residential care institutions in Catalonia detected that the majority of girls living in residential care institutions have experienced violence and abuse within their families of origin. In this sense, 45% of cases of withdraw of the parental guardianship has been due to violence or sexual

abuses. On the other hand, it also found out a strong pervasiveness of traditional gender roles among girls living in residential care.

The persistence of traditional roles may lead to further violence against women such as intimate partnership violence, prostitution and/or trafficking at a critical stage of sexual and affective development, if left unchecked. In this sense, understanding male violence against women as a structural phenomenon linked to the patriarchal system is important as it explains the links between the different forms of male violence, without placing them on a hierarchical scale, but bringing together commonly-used expressions of sexism and acts of criminal violence. Male violence against women is clearly linked to the general sexism in our societies, coupled with symbolic forms of violence against women such as women's poverty, women's economic dependence, the gender pay gap, women's unequal participation in political life and the lack of parity democracy, women's unequal access to public services and common goods (including health, education, culture, transport, housing, media, etc.), gender stereotyping in the media, etc. (European Women's Lobby, 2010).

Following the definition provided by the CEDAW (1979), **violence against women** needs to be understood as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (CEDAW, 1979). Violence against women has been described as "one of the most universal and unpunished crimes of all (UNIFEM, 2003). This statement is perhaps even more relevant in reference to violence against the girl child: across the world, the double burden of being both female and young relegates millions of girls to the margins of society where, unseen and unheard, their rights are disregarded and their safety is denied (UNICEF, 2008). Girls have a particular vulnerability to many types of violence. For example, girl children across the world are up to three times more likely than boys to experience sexual abuse (Best, 2005). They are also more likely than their male peers to be forced or coerced in to sex by their dating partners (UN, 2006). Violence against girls needs to be understood as part of the structural violence against women in the context of patriarchal societies. Moreover, violence against women needs to be understood as a continuum over all stages of women's lives. Violence against the girl child is fundamentally related to the same gender-discriminatory norms and practices that cause violence against women (UNICEF, 2008).

The project Empowering Care focuses on past and present experiences of violence of girls living in residential care institutions. The project analyses both direct and indirect experience of violence. The project focuses on the following forms of violence (Generalitat de Catalonia, 2008):

- a. **Physical violence:** it covers any act or omission of force against a woman's body, with the result or risk of causing her physical injury or harm.
- b. **Psychological violence:** it covers any behaviour or intentional omission that produces a loss of esteem or suffering in a woman, by means of threats, humiliation, extreme irritation, demands for obedience or submission, verbal coercion, insults, isolation or any other limitation of her sphere of freedom.
- c. **Sexual violence and sexual abuse:** it covers any act of a sexual nature without consent of women, including exhibitionism, observation and imposition, by means of violence, intimidation, taking advantage or emotional manipulation, of sexual relations, independently of

whether the aggressor may be in a relationship of spouse, partner, emotional closeness or family with the woman or minor.

Violence against women can take place in different areas. The project focuses on the following ones (Generalitat de Catalonia, 2008):

- a. **Violence in the sphere of the couple:** it consists of physical, psychological, sexual or economical violence exercised against a woman and perpetrated by the man who is or has been her husband or partner or by the person who has or has had similar affective relations.
- b. **Violence in the family sphere:** it consists of physical, sexual, psychological or economical violence exercised against women and minors in the heart of the family and perpetrated by members of the same family, in the framework of the affective relations and the ties of the family environment. This does not include violence exercised in the sphere of the couple, defined in the first paragraph.
- c. **Violence in the social or community sphere:** it covers the following manifestations:
 - Sexual aggression: constitutes the use of physical and sexual violence exercised against women and minors determined by the premeditated use of sex as a weapon to demonstrate power and abuse it.
 - Sexual harassment.
 - Trafficking of and sexual exploitation of women and children.
 - Female genital mutilation or the risk of suffering it: includes any procedure that involves or could involve a full or partial elimination of female genitals or produces injury there, even if there is express or tacit consent on the woman's part.
 - Forced marriages.

As said before, girls living in residential care are in a delicate position and are more vulnerable to suffer violence. This is a particularly serious issue because girl minors who are under the legal responsibility of public authorities are entitled to protection. However, professionals in care institutions may not have adequate knowledge about violence against women, and even biases against the target group. Patriarchal values existing within society are also present in residential care homes and thus women's specificities and needs may not be taken into account. On the contrary, in general, there is a prevalence of welfare perspective with a male bias. Hence, autonomy of girls is not effectively promoted and their main problems are not solved. All this leads to personal and work situations very precarious, which end up implying marginalisation and social exclusion (Green, 2005).

However, responsibility of governments on guardianship of these girls implies that governments must provide technical and educative support in the areas of labour insertion, education and psychological support, including gender-sensitive affective education and prevention of violence, as well as continuing counselling and economic and legal support, as to provide for their full social and labour insertion in a situation of autonomy and independence. Lack of attention in this area entails serious consequences related to insufficient protection of girl minors.

Neglected needs of the target group also perpetuate the problem into adulthood and promote the reproduction of the cycle of violence. However, specific tailor-made interventions may redress the problem; international organisations have specially stressed the need to develop specific empowerment programmes which foster positive change for young women. Indeed, “empowering girls” is the first strategic priority outlined by the European Commission on the Status of Women in 2006 in their conclusions on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child. Empowering Care aims at conducting research and providing professionals with tools to address this strategic priority.

For all the reasons outlined above, there is a strong need to carry out a research on girl minors in residential care under the legal responsibility of public authorities, in order to increase our knowledge on this invisible subject, getting to know more deeply the target group experiences and how to empower them to prevent further experiences of violence.

2. GENDER AND AGE AS STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY RELATIONS

2.1 Gender relations and the patriarchal system

The concept of patriarchy is indispensable for an analysis of gender inequality and for explaining women’s subordination in contemporary societies. The concept and theory of patriarchy is essential to capture the depth, pervasiveness and interconnectedness of different aspects of women’s subordination, and can be developed in such a way as to take account of the different forms of gender inequality over time, class and ethnic group (Walby, 1990).

Patriarchal system is the social, political and economic organisation where men are dominant over women in wealth, status and power. The hegemonic gender system organises the society on the basis of a gender hierarchy in such a way that male values and practices are the norm. Male dominance generates inequalities among women and men in terms of power and access to resources. Following Walby’s definition, patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women (Walby, 1990). As the same author explains, the use of the term social structure is important since it clearly implies rejection of both biological determinism, and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one.

Within the patriarchal system and in order to understand its functioning mechanisms, it is important to distinguish between sex and gender. Sex refers to the distinction between the biological characteristics of men and women². Sex does not determine behaviours, attitudes or values. Instead, gender refers to the distinction between the socially constructed categories of masculine and feminine. As Butler (1990) states, gender is a bodily, personal and experiential concept, which is defined and socially produced by social, historical and cultural practices and norms. Gender is learned, internalised and reproduced by women and men throughout the lifetime. Childhood and adolescence are key moments of identity building. From early childhood, girls and boys interiorise, comprehend and accept the gendered norms and values that regulate the society within which they are living. Gender socialisation foster those values, attitudes and behaviours that are socially accepted for women and men, and bands those others

² The definitions of sex as biological and gender as social/cultural are valid since they help to understand and organise the reality in a pragmatic way. However, the dichotomy cannot be taken for granted and needs to be questioned. Sex is also socially and culturally constructed. (Fausto-Sterling, 2006)

that are out of the gendered norms. In doing so, gender socialisation reproduces gender traditional roles and stereotypes that ensure the persistence of the patriarchal system.

Gender stereotypes refer to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriated for men and women. To put it in another way: ‘male’ and ‘female’ are sex categories, while ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ are gender categories. Aspects of sex will not vary substantially between different human societies, while aspects of gender may vary greatly³.

Gender stereotypes influence the behaviours of the people who belong to a defined group. Gender stereotypes are learned from early childhood and, are normally followed and thus reproduced during the life time of women and men. They are detrimental, limit one’s autonomy and freedom and reproduce structural gender inequalities.

As stated before, patriarchal societies are organised on the basis of structural inequalities that generate discrimination, oppression and violence against women. Gender relations are, probably, the most important factor explaining the hierarchy, the inequalities and the discrimination suffered by women. However, gender does not operate in an isolated way. On the contrary, gender is in constant intersection with other social constructs such as age and ethnicity, among others. It is only looking at the intersection of all these elements and its outcomes and terms of power that some can understand how discrimination and oppression dynamics operate. Empowering care project focuses its attention mainly in the intersection of gender and age relations.

2.2 Age: the childhood and the adolescence

Age is a period of human life, measured by years from birth, usually marked by a certain stage or degree of mental or physical development and involving legal responsibility and capacity. Moreover, age is also a social variable through which society is organised. In this sense, categories such as childhood and youth, among others, are created and used to define specific life-time periods that are different in diverse socio-cultural contexts.

Childhood is the age span ranging from birth to adolescence. As stated in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) a child is every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Over the last decade or so childhood studies have become a recognised area of research and analysis. A growing body of literature points to the importance of childhood as a conceptual category and as a social position for the study of a previously overlooked or marginalised group, children. Different disciplines have developed different ways of approaching the study of children, using different research methods driven by far from coherent set of research questions (Kehily, 2004). In this sense, the disciplines of psychology and sociology have made a significant contribution to contemporary understandings of childhood. In general, psychological research has focused upon the individual child, while sociological research has been interested in children as a social group.

³ <http://www.who.int/en/>

In the early 20th century, developmental psychology became established as the dominant paradigm for studying children. Developmental psychology documented the stages and transitions of western childhood. Within this framework, childhood is seen as an apprenticeship for adulthood that can be charted through stages relating to age, physical development and cognitive ability. The progressions from child to adult involves children in a developmental process wherein they embark upon a path to rational subjectivity (Kehily, 2004).

On the other hand, sociological approaches have been concerned with the issues of socialisation; ways of exploring how children learn and become members of the society in which they live. Within this sociological and constructivist approach, it is understood that childhood is an adult construction that changes over time and places (Gittins, 1998). Moreover, it is also suggested that the concept of childhood serves to disguise differences between children, especially in relation to social categories such as gender, ethnicity and social class. In this sense, it is recognised that there may be different ways of being a child and thus different kinds of childhood. Thus, childhood is not universal; rather it is product of cultures and as such varies across time and places (Gittins, 1998).

Besides the psychological and sociological approaches, other voices within children's studies have drawn attention to childhood as a gendered experience (Kehily, 2005). As stated by UNICEF⁴, it is generally accepted that early gender socialisation is one of the most pertinent issues in early childhood, affecting both boys and girls.

Gender socialisation is a process of learning cultural roles according to one's sex that continues throughout the life cycle. Right from the beginning, boys and girls are treated differently by the members of their own environment, and learn the differences between boys and girls, women and men. Parental and societal expectations from boys and girls, their selection of gender-specific toys, and/or giving gender based assignments seem to define a differentiating socialisation process. Gender socialisation is the process by which people learn to behave in a certain way, as dictated by societal beliefs, values, attitudes and examples. Early gender socialisation starts at birth, or even before it. Gender socialisation begins as early as when a woman becomes pregnant and people start making judgments about the value of males over females. These stereotypes are perpetuated by family members, teachers and others by having different expectations for males and females. Children start facing norms that define "masculine" and "feminine" from an early age. Boys are told not to cry, not to fear, not to be forgiving and instead to be assertive, and strong. Girls, on the other hand, are asked not to be demanding, to be forgiving and accommodating and "ladylike". These gender roles and expectations have large scale ramifications⁵.

Equality (or inequality) between women and men begins with the girl child and gender relations between girls and boys in the early stages of lives are a precursor to gender relations in other phases of the life cycle. Girls and women of all ages are part of the same continuum; the differences for many girls and young women are their additional limited power to resist the constraints of gender inequality and

⁴ UNICEF website on early childhood : http://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/index_40749.html

⁵ UNICEF website on early childhood : http://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/index_40749.html

correspondingly to negotiate the terms and conditions of gender equality in all areas of life (European Women's Lobby, 2007).

While the term 'adolescence' is not mentioned in international conventions, declarations or treaties, all adolescents have rights under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD) cover children up to the age of 18, and adolescent girls beyond this age are further protected under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action (UNICEF).

Youth or adolescence is usually determined by the start of puberty. The adolescence brings various physical, psychological and behavioural changes in the child. In this sense, adolescence is maybe one of the most complex transitions of life. Adolescents mature sexually and develop the capacity to reason in more abstract way, to explore concepts of right and wrong, to develop hypotheses and think about the future. As they move out into the world, adolescents take on additional responsibilities, experiment with new ways of doing things and push for independence. They start to question themselves and others and begin to see the complexities and nuances of life. During adolescence, young people establish their emotional and psychological independence, learn to understand and manage their sexuality and consider their future role in society. The process is gradual, emotional and sometimes unsettling (UNICEF, 2002).

Adolescence is one of life's fascinating and perhaps most complex stages, a time when young people search for identity, learn to apply values acquired in early childhood and develop skills that will help them become caring and responsible adults. When adolescents are supported and encouraged by caring adults, they thrive in unimaginable ways, becoming resourceful and contributing members of families and communities. Bursting with energy, curiosity and spirit that are not easily extinguished, young people have the potential to change negative societal patterns of behaviour and break cycles of violence and discrimination that pass from one generation to the next. With their creativity, energy and enthusiasm, young people can change the world in astonishing ways, making it a better place not only for themselves but for everyone (UNICEF, 2002).

3. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

3.1 Violence against women as a structural phenomenon

The Platform for Action of Beijing (1995) defined violence against women (VAW) as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

The Council of Europe Recommendation on the protection of women against violence (2002), states that VAW includes, but it is not limited to, the following:

- a. *violence occurring in the family or domestic unit*, including, *inter alia*, physical and mental aggression, emotional and psychological abuse, rape and sexual abuse, incest, rape between spouses, regular or occasional partners, crimes committed in the name of honour, female

- genital and sexual mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, such as forced marriages;
- b. *violence occurring within the general community, including, inter alia, rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in institutions or elsewhere trafficking in women for the purposes of sexual exploitation and economic exploitation and sex tourism;*
 - c. *violence perpetrated or condoned by the state or its officials;*
 - d. *violation of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict, in particular the taking of hostages, forced displacement, systematic rape, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and economic exploitation;*

VAW is a structural phenomenon rooted in the unequal power relations between women and men in the framework of the patriarchal society. As stated by the feminist Carol Sheffield (1997), violence against women is an expression of male power and it is used by men to reproduce and maintain their relative status and authority over women. Both violence and fear are functional and instrumental to the patriarchal system. Without power to intimidate and punish women (sexually), the domination of women in all spheres of society (political, social, and economic) could not exist." VAW is both a cause and a consequence of women's oppression. Within this context, VAW becomes an indispensable mechanism of the patriarchal system. As Kate Millet said in her book *Sexual Politics* (1969) "we are not accustomed to associate patriarchy with force. So perfect is its system of socialisation, so complete the general assent to its values, so long and so universally has it prevailed in human society that it scarcely seems to require violent implementation. (...) And yet, just as under other total ideologies control in patriarchal society would be imperfect, even inoperable, unless it has the rule of force to rely upon, both in emergencies and as an ever-present instrument of intimidation". Male VAW is the most brutal expression of the discrimination and subordination of women in the patriarchal social organisation. Violence is not only an emergency resource to be used in extreme situations, but it is a constant instrument of control, coercion and threat. VAW is, as stated before, both a cause and a consequence of the existence of unequal power relationships between women and men. Men have the exclusive control of violence and the unequal power relation between women and men allows men to exert it over women.

VAW is a structural historical phenomenon resulting from patriarchal societies characterised by the imbalance of power existing between women and men. It is often thought that VAW is acts of a few men upon a few women. Male violence is widely considered to be individually motivated and with few social consequences. However, male VAW is structural and needs to be understood within the patriarchal system (Walby, 1990).

As stated by the European Women's Lobby (2010a), despite progress over the last decades on many aspects related to equality between women and men, there is not a single country in the world where women are free from male violence, and there is not a single area in any woman's life where she is not exposed to the threat or realisation of acts of male violence. When all forms of VAW are taken into account, 45% of all women in Europe have suffered from men's violence. Moreover, it is estimated that every fifth woman has been subjected to intimate partnership violence, which remains a major cause of death amongst women (European Women's Lobby, 2010b). Looking at this reality, VAW is to be considered the most widespread violation of human rights. Specifically, VAW nullifies the fundamental

rights of life, security, freedom, dignity and physical and emotional integrity, the prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment and the right to private life.

Apart from the brutality and the serious prevalence of VAW, it is often highly tolerated, legitimated and even trivialised. As stated by Patrizia Romito (2008) there are several mechanisms through which society denies, legitimises, normalises and minimises VAW worldwide. In the framework of the patriarchal system, there are many false assumptions surrounding VAW that enhance this atmosphere of legitimacy. Some of these false myths are for example that women themselves may be partly responsible for violence; that women choose to be subject to violence by their partners if they remain in the relationship or in the family home; that jealousy and control are the signs of love; that women enjoy sexual harassment; or that sensitivity towards traditional practices should outweigh the wellbeing and rights of women in some minority communities. All these false myths carry the risk of society condoning violence, making reporting and conviction even more difficult and revictimising women. Moreover, these myths around male VAW allow perpetrators to act with impunity and give legitimacy to unsafe environments where violence is tolerated. Furthermore, the broad lack of understanding about the dynamics of VAW contributes to the isolation and entrapment of its victims.

The occultation of VAW is also a widespread phenomenon. This strategy of making VAW invisible leads to second victimisation since women are not believed or are often considered co-responsible for the violence suffered. In some other cases, VAW is naturalised and it is conceived as something inherent to women's identity.

Why VAW is so strongly legitimated by society? Why do men feel entitled to exert it? The answer to all these questions is not simple, but rather complex and linked to a variety of factors.

As stated before, it is through the process of socialisation that men and women interiorise, comprehend and accept the patriarchal norms and the values that rule society. Boys and girls become men and women through a process that fosters those attitudes that are socially adequate for each sex and bands those others that are out of the socially accepted gender norms. The sexist socialisation process that takes place within the patriarchal system discriminates and oppresses women. It is with the process of socialisation that gender roles are transmitted, learned and interiorised as something natural. On the basis of this process, men are associated to a masculine role. Society expects from them to be strong, active, independent and brave. By opposition, women are associated to the feminine role, with lower social prestige. It is expected from them to be sentimental, passive, dependent and fearful. The current sex-gender system establishes a hierarchy that structures unequal power relations between women and men that result in an unequal distribution of knowledge, property, income, responsibilities and rights. However, due to the naturalisation of gender roles, these inequalities are broadly accepted and not always questioned⁶. In this scenario, male VAW is also understood as something that men have the right to, as something natural and legitimated. The false superiority of men over women leads to the false thought that women are properties of men; that men have absolute control of women's bodies and that they are entitled to exert violence against them.

⁶ It is important to state that feminism has been questioning the patriarchal order and has been working towards an equal society free of violence for centuries.

3.2 The consequences of VAW

VAW has consequences for both the society and the women themselves. In this sense, the main consequence of VAW is the perpetuation of the system that allows violence to take place. VAW impedes to overcome women's oppression and perpetuates gender inequality. Moreover, VAW shapes women's place in society since violence and the threat of violence keep women in a subordinated position, while violating their right of freedom and security (European Women's Lobby, 2010a).

Furthermore, VAW has consequences in all spheres of women's lives. As stated by Camarasa (2008) "suffering such a brutal phenomenon has consequences at diverse spheres of women's life, such as health, labour, relationships and social life, housing, economic issues and legal aspects. In this way, VAW has an unquestionable impact on the quality of life of women, reducing their capacities of development and well-being, and impeding them to live in safety. (...) Thus, VAW becomes a mainstreamed factor crossing and affecting all dimensions of women's life, increasing their vulnerability in society where women are already in a situation of inequality when compared to men".

3.3 Violence against girls and young women

As recognised in the Convention for the Right of the Child (1989), all children have fundamental rights. Therefore, violence against children, whether it is physical, psychological or sexual, is a gross violation of their human rights.

The UN study on Violence against Children (2006) reiterates the pervasiveness of this type of violence against boys and girls as a global phenomenon (perpetrated too often by those close to them) occurring in a range of settings which should be protecting them (in their homes, schools, communities, place of care, among others). The key messages of this study are that all violence against children is preventable, that no violence against children is justifiable and that violence must stop.

The same study recognises that all forms of violence against children are linked to entrenched gender roles and inequalities, and that the violation of the rights of children is closely linked to the status of women in the society. The study also makes it clear that at home, in the community, at school and in institutional and work settings girls are often exposed to violence simply by virtue of being girls.

The European Parliament Resolution "Towards an EU strategy on the rights of the child" (2007) stresses that violence against children remains a problem within the EU and that girls and women are often victims of legal, social and economic inequalities.

The UN Secretary - General's study on 'Violence against Women' (2006) identifies girls as one of the subgroups of women most prone to being targeted for violence. Within this framework, violence against girls is understood as a gendered phenomenon rooted in the patriarchal system that organises societies. As stated before, VAW is both an expression of and a way to reinforce male domination, not just over individual women, but women as a whole class of people. In this sense, violence against girls is fundamentally related to the same gender-discriminatory norms and practices that cause VAW. Those norms confer males more power, control and resources than females in every setting and in every culture across the globe.

The particularly vulnerabilities of girls, however, are not only related to gender-based discrimination. While gender is one of the chief factors around the world in the perpetration of VAW, it is not the only factor. Examples of additional precipitants to VAW include class, race, poverty, ethnicity and age. Where gender discrimination intersects with these grounds of discrimination, levels of violence are likely to be compounded. Such is the situation of girls around the world. Doubly marginalised by virtue of being both females and children, they are at risk of being exposed to some of the world's most pervasive and pernicious forms of discrimination and violence, whether in the home, in the community, at school, at work or even in protective-care institutions. For instance, given vulnerabilities associated with their age and lack of negotiating power, it is likely that adolescent girls are among the highest of all risk groups for sexual violence perpetrated against them by members of their community (UNICEF,2008).

As well as in the cases of violence against women, most of the situations of violence against children remain invisible. As said by the Council of Europe (2006), this is due to the fact that children are afraid to speak up and when they do, adults do not always follow up on and report cases adequately.

4. RESIDENTIAL CARE INSTITUTIONS⁷

4.1 Introduction on residential care institutions

From their earliest inception, institutions created to take in children were essentially set up as centres for the “unwanted”. As well as being a charitable work, the children’s homes were a way of removing neglected and abandoned children from the streets and making the problem invisible to society. Institutions for children grew with industrialisation. As slums, unemployment and crime proliferated in the early industrialisation, the idea of “rescuing” poor children from their families and protecting them in residential institutions was also more and more accepted. However, as understanding about child development grew, some countries began to cut back on the use of residential care institutions. Beginning in the second half of the 20th century, it became recognised that large and closed institutions could not support physical, social, emotional and cognitive development in any way comparable to that in a family setting.

Today, social policy best practices, reflecting the Convention for the Rights of the Child (1989) and other human rights conventions and obligations, aim to provide as many children as possible with an upbringing in a family, and access to a mainstream school and community life. However, the process of de-institutionalisation, and recognition of the damaging effect of institutionalisation of children, is at different stages around the world and across Europe.

As stated in the UN World Report on Violence against Children Around the world (2006), millions of girls and boys grow up for substantial periods not in their own or alternative families, but under the control and supervision of care authorities. Despite the lack of data, and following the Eurochild National Survey on Children in Alternative Care (2006) it can be roughly estimated that around 1% of children are taken into public care across the EU (approximately 1 million children). This proportion varies between countries. Although most countries recognise placement in an institution as the solution of last resort

⁷ The information provided in this part of the theoretical framework is mainly taken from Chapter 5, "Violence against children in care and justice institutions", UN World Report on Violence against Children Around the world (2006) - <http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/reports.html>

after family support services and family-based care, the number of children in institutions is stable or rising in several EU countries.

Residential care institutions they live in have many names, including orphanages, children's homes and care homes, among others. They may be open or closed, and may be run by governments, private companies or individuals, or by non-governmental or faith-based organisations. Many are large-scale, and children who enter them can live prolonged periods of their lives inside. Contemporary children's homes also tend to be located within community based settings, rarely geographically or visually typifying their isolated monolithic orphanage and workhouse predecessors (Berridge and Brodie 1998, in Green 2005). However, they still can clearly be understood within Goffman's ideal-type of a total institution⁸ in most other respects (Goffman 1961, in Green 2005).

There is not a common understanding of what constitutes foster care, guardianship, kinship care, or other forms of alternative care. However, whatever their name and the type of care provided, these institutions govern the day-to-day lives, personal development and future life chances of a very large number of children across the EU.

Children are institutionalised for a variety of reasons. Some are placed in residential care institutions because they have lost their parents and have no extended or surrogate family to go to. However, today relatively few children are placed in residential care because they have no parents. Most commonly, children are placed in care because of disability, family disintegration, violence in the home (including neglect, and psychological, physical and sexual violence), lack of social support systems and poor social and economic conditions, including poverty.

While there is not a universally accepted definition of children's care institutions, the features most have in common are round-the-clock care of children who live apart from their families and are supervised by remunerated staff. Size, organisation and activities carried out within these institutions can vary widely. In the most closed and isolated institutions, the child's entire life (education, health services and work, leisure and sleep) takes place there.

Some broad categories of institutional care include:

- **Long term residential or institutional care:** institutions that take care of children's needs and development during prolonged periods of time. The number of children living in individual institutions may range from a few dozen to several hundred.
- **Emergency shelter care:** facilities that provide services to meet children's basic needs for safety, food, shelter and education on a short-term basis.
- **Group homes or home shelter:** personalised residential care, provided by one or more staff in a house that is not their own, looking after a group of children in a less formal, more home-like environment

⁸ A total institution, a concept developed by Erving Goffman in his paper "On the Characteristics of Total Institutions" (1957), is an isolated, enclosed social system whose primary purpose is to control most aspects of its participants' lives.

Residential care settings are located within the intermediate zone between public and private spheres, as they both represent a home for children and are a part of the public world of work and organisations (Stacey and Davies 1983, in Green 2005). Because of this, public and private rules are blurred but public sphere rules tend to predominate (Parkin, 1989; Parking and Green, 1997, in Green 2005).

Although these institutions are established to provide care, guidance, support and protection to children, the boys and girls who live in them may be at heightened risk of violence compared to children whose care and protection is governed by parents and teachers. In addition, isolation and often de-socialisation that results from these institutionalised responses place boys and girls at much greater risk of being exposed to further violence. Moreover, the statistics available provide clear evidence that children who have been in care (and particular in residential care settings) are more likely to end up homeless, to commit crimes, to have children before the age of 20 themselves, and to have their own children taken into care. The transition to independent living is noted by many as a particularly sensitive period of change for the young person, when high quality, individualised preparation and on-going support is crucial for the individual to become independent. Notwithstanding the overriding evidence of negative outcomes for children with care experience, there are too few studies to show the circumstances under which successful outcomes can be achieved for such children (Eurochild, 2009).

4.2 Gender and residential care institutions

Residential care institutions present themselves as non-gendered and asexual entities but, in spite of this, gender is a key determinant of how organisations, and thus residential organisations, operate (O’Neill 2008).

There are almost equal numbers of boys and girls “looked after” by local authorities, so it is surprising that so little is known about the different gender needs of girls and boys. Traditionally, boys have been in the majority and there has been little recognition that the needs of girls may be different or that alternative policies and strategies may be necessary to respond to them (Berridge and Brodie 1998; Farmer and Polloc 1998; O’Neill 2001, in O’Neill 2008).

The few studies that have evaluated gender differences within these settings suggest that males and females involved in residential care differ across a variety of domains (e.g. family, education, and behaviour). For example, prior to entering residential care, females present more risk factors than males and are more often reported to have multiple family problems, out-of-home placements, eating disorders, and experiences with physical and/or sexual abuse. While in care, females are often perceived as being more difficult to work with than males, and are reported to have higher levels of internalizing behaviours, externalizing behaviours jointly with emotional problems. Researchers and practitioners have suggested that these gender differences have an impact before, during and after treatment, and thus, may affect services and programmes offered during care and after departure. It has been recommended that one-size-fits-all approaches to residential care are not appropriated to meet the needs of all youth who display problems behaviour, and that interventions need to be designed specifically for males and females in order to meet their unique needs (Griffith, 2009).

Despite all that, it is rare to find gender analysis in child welfare: policies, practice, guidance and most academic literature either misrepresent or completely omit gender issues. However, in the context of

residential care, gender is of tremendous importance to understand the configuration and reproduction of traditional gender roles and stereotypes both among children themselves and among staff and the implication of that in children's lives (Green, 2005).

5. EMPOWERMENT AND CAPABILITY APPROACH

5.1 Defining women's empowerment

Empowerment is a term widely used today by many different people, including activists, feminists, policy makers and researchers, among others. Empowerment is indeed used by a wide range of social actors with significantly different ideological and political positions to denote a variety of different meanings (Wee, Viviane et al., 2008; Sardenberg, M.B. Cecília, 2008). Also within feminism there are several perspectives regarding women's empowerment. Despite this diversity, Sardenberg distinguishes two basic approaches to conceptualising women's empowerment. The first, which the author names "liberal empowerment", regards women's empowerment as an instrument. Consistent with liberal ideas, the focus of this approach is on individual growth, but in an atomistic way, that is, the notion of rational action of social actors based on individual interest (Romano, 2002 in Sardenberg, M.B. Cecília, 2008). It is an approach which, as Sardenberg states, de-politicises the process of empowerment by taking "power" out of the equation. Instead, the focus is on technical and instrumental aspects which can supposedly be taught in special training courses, for example (Sardenberg, M.B. Cecília, 2008).

In contrast to this approach, the author presents what she calls "liberating empowerment" where power relations are the central issue. From this approach, women's empowerment is perceived as desirable both as the process by which women conquer autonomy or self-determination, as well as instrumentally for the eradication of patriarchal relations. Thus, empowerment is simultaneously an instrument for social transformation and an end of itself, as it entails women's liberation from gender oppression.

Following Sardenberg ideas, Wee (Wee, Viviane et al. 2008) states that it is logical that any examination of empowerment should entail some analysis of the power dynamics that are explicit in all social, economic, cultural and political relations. To de-linking empowerment processes from existing power relations and the reluctance to address the power structures which women inhabit is a serious blind spot that hinders efforts to support women's empowerment. That is to say, for example, to increase schooling may enhance women's status but that these cannot directly empower women if the power relations in their everyday lives disempower them in ways that prevent them from exercising autonomy and decisions making. Without fundamentally restructuring relations of power, the mere amelioration of conditions only reshapes the milieu of existing power relations, allowing them to persist in other guises (Wee, Viviane et al. 2008). Thus, in this feminist perspective the major objective of women's empowerment is to question, destabilise and eventually transform the gender order of patriarchal domination (Sardenberg, M.B. Cecília, 2008).

The Empowering Care project approach is closer to the second definition of empowerment. It is understood that to challenge gender power relations is essential for young women living in residential care institutions to be empowered. If gender structures and relations are not taken into account and are

not questioned, the final aim of the empowering process, i.e. enabling girls to engage in positive relationships based on gender equality and providing them with tools to face future challenges in terms of interpersonal relationships, cannot be achieved.

Having stated the standpoint of the project regarding empowerment, the following lines will provide key definitions of the concept empowerment. A general definition of empowerment is provided by Wee, who understands empowerment as an increased capacity to make autonomous decisions that transform unfavourable power relations (Wee, Viviane et al. 2008). Looking at a more concrete definition of women's empowerment, it can be understood as the increased ability to question, challenge and eventually transform unfavourable gendered power relations often legitimated. Empowerment needs to be understood as women's capacity to think as free agents, able to make autonomous decisions that transform unfavourable power relations (Sardenberg, M.B. Cecília, 2008). To complement this definition it is interesting to use Malena De Montis' proposals as well. She considers empowerment to be the "process through which women become conscious of their personal, private and public subordination, of their rights and of the need to organise to transform the situation and establish new power relations among people (De Montis, Malena 2006, in Sardenberg, M.B. Cecília, 2008).

5.2 Key elements to know about empowerment

Following the definitions provided above, there are several key elements that need to be taken into account when talking about women's empowerment.

On the one hand, it is important to state that women can be empowered only through their own agency, through decision and actions undertaken as subjects of their own empowerment. In any empowerment process, there is a need of self-consciousness so that women themselves can reject the power relations that disempower them. Without their subjective rejections of power relations, even when existing relations and structures are altered or eliminated by external force, unfavourable power relations can be easily reproduced, including by some women who internalised these as legitimate social order (Wee, Viviane et al. 2008). Consciousness-raising contributes to the process of deconstruction of interiorised subordinations (Bruera and Gonzalez, 2006, in Sardenberg, M.B. Cecília, 2008).

On the other hand, it needs to be stressed that empowerment is not necessarily a linear progression. Instead it may unroll in a spiral form, as the individuals involved act upon changing consciousness, identifying areas to target for change, planning strategies, acting for change, and analysing action and outcomes, which lead into higher levels of consciousness and more finely honed and better executed strategies (Batliwala, 1994 in Sardenberg, M.B. Cecília, 2008).

Needless to say, the process does not unravel without conflict. On the contrary, as Romano (2002 in Sardenberg, M.B. Cecília, 2008) emphasises, empowerment is both a relational as well as a conflicting and contentious process. It is relational because it always involves links with other actors, and the power relations in which a given person is involved. Furthermore, the empowerment process is about changes in the structure of these relations, at individual as well as a group level, and thus cannot proceed without conflict. Indeed, conflict and coalition must be considered as part of the process of empowerment, particularly when thinking in terms of women's empowerment.

5.3 Empowerment and capability approach

Empowerment can be seen as taking ones whole range of capabilities in use (Townsend et al. 1999). In this sense, it would be justifiable to adapt Nussbaum’s capability approach into empowerment processes.

Nussbaum’s capability approach focuses on each person as an end, not asking only a total or average well-being, but asking the opportunities available to each person. This approach focuses on people’s own choices and freedom and points out the obligation of the society to promote equal opportunities to each person. It also respects the definition that each person has on power. Nussbaum’s capability approach is concerned with the entrenched social injustice and inequality, and especially the capability failures that are the outcome of the discrimination and marginalization (Nussbaum 2011).

Violence against women prevents every major capability in women’s lives to get in used. In this sense, Nussbaum’s capability approach can help to describe the damage done by violence and make the most recommendations of dealing with. Nussbaum’s capability approach gives arguments against a cultural relativism and offers context-sensitive universalism (Nussbaum 2005). The following table contains the threshold levels of ten Central Capabilities in Nussbaum’s Capability Approach (Nussbaum 2011):

1. Life: Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one’s life is so reduced as to be not worth living.
2. Bodily health: Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.
3. Bodily integrity: Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.
4. Senses, imagination, and thought: Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason—and to do these things in a “truly human” way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one’s own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one’s mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression, respecting political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-beneficial pain.
5. Emotions: Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one’s emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development.)
6. Practical reason: Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one’s life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance.)
7. Affiliation: Being able to live with and toward others, to recognized and show concern for other

human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation, being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination on basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.

8. Other species: Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.

9. Play: Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

10. Control over one's environment:

- Political: Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association
- Material: Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.

II. LEGAL AND POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

The first two sections of this chapter provide a brief introduction to the International and the European legal and political frameworks on children's rights, described from a feminist perspective.

1. International Framework

The global agenda on children rights is based on standards derived from treaties and policy documents such as the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women - CEDAW (1979), the Convention on the Rights of Child (1989), the Declaration of the World Summit for Children (1990), the Beijing Platform for Action of the 4th World Conference on Women (1995) and the Millennium Declaration leading the Millennium Development Goals (2000).

All these treaties and policy documents could make a contribution in responding to the issues of discrimination and violence against children and the girl child. In this sense, for example, the Convention on the Rights of Child is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. In conjunction with its two optional protocols it contains a comprehensive set of legally binding international standards for the promotion and protection of children's rights. However, an examination of these major international human rights instruments reveals that the girl child, and specifically, the discrimination and acts of violence against girl children are not addressed explicitly. Girl children are addressed within the generic category of "children", "women" or "disadvantaged groups" who suffer discrimination. Standards in the instruments that specifically refer to children are gender-neutral and assumed to cover both boys and girls. For instance, the CEDAW (1979) refers to "children" rather than girls in its provision on the illegality of underage betrothal and marriage. On the other hand, Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC) sets the standards of all rights for all children "without discrimination of any kind", including discrimination on the ground of the sex of the child or the child's parents or legal guardians, within a wide range of other forms of discrimination. The provision thus links discrimination to be against children, rather than focusing on discrimination against women and the girl child. The provisions on violence and discrimination in the Convention on the Rights of Child do not specifically refer to the situation of the girl child. Articles in the Convention on the Rights of Child use the words "he or she", thus reinforcing the gender neutrality of these norms.

As stated in the Background paper for the Expert Group Meeting for the elaboration of the document on "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child" (2006), this gender-neutral approach in normative standards contrast with the one used in global policy agreements reached by the international community in the 1990s and 2000s which link non-discrimination against the girl child and adult women in a "life cycle" approach to the elimination of discrimination on the ground of sex. The World Summit for Children (1990) reflected CRC's emphasis on realizing the rights of all children and giving priority to them in the development agenda. The World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action focused on achieving equality for women as an intrinsic dimension of both development and improving the situation of children. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference of Human Rights (1993) stated that the human rights of women and of the girl child are an "inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights". The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) adopted a life cycle approach, linking the elimination of discrimination against women and the

situation of the girl child. The Beijing Platform of Action specifically focused on the situation of the girl child as a distinct “critical area of concern” for action which contains a comprehensive range of proposals and recommendations for law reforms, policies, programmes and advocacy.

The Commission on the Status of Women, which is the inter-governmental body in charge of monitoring implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, has kept the theme of the girl child alive on its agenda in the post-Beijing period. The outcome of the 2005 World Summit and resolutions of the General Assembly have reinforced the importance of considering elimination of discrimination against girls and violence as a critical issue of concern. On the other hand, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the treaty body in charge of monitoring the implementation of the CEDAW convention, has addressed the issue of discrimination and violence against the girl child in its concluding and general recommendations and the Committee has consistently referred to the specific situation of the girl children.

Regarding the Committee on the Rights of the Child, its general comments refer to the importance of eliminating discrimination and violence against the girl child, but its concluding observations adopt a gender neutral approach and refer to the situation of the girl children as another dimension of “disparity reduction” relevant to disadvantages or vulnerable groups. The 2000 World Summit Declaration on Children reflects a similar perspective.

Again, as stated in the Background paper for the Expert Group Meeting for the elaboration of the document on “The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child” (2006), during the last years, there has been a shift away from a specific focus on the girl rights discourse as well as policy interventions. This is most noticeable in the traditional protection areas relating to child sexual abuse and trafficking, child soldiers, and child labour. Data and discussions have focused on the various forms of violence and the infringement of protection rights of both boys and girls, without addressing the specific issue of violence and exploitation perpetrated against girls because of gender inequality.

Despite gender neutral approach being almost the norm, it is stated that it is extremely important to address the situation of girl child as a major issue of global concern. The inclusion of gender perspective rather than the adoption of gender neutral approached to child rights will contribute to giving visibility to the discrimination faced by girl children and help achieve progress in addressing such discrimination.

2. European Framework

As stated by the European Women’s Lobby, children are gendered human beings, and therefore girl-children have specific experiences and needs. However, in general, European policies addressing children’s rights take a gender blind approach. Children’s rights are considered within different European policies and programmes. Yet, the neutral term “children” is used in European policies reinforces the invisibility of the girl-child and the particular concerns that she is faced with, including sex-based discrimination and stereotyping, and a higher risk of sexual and labour exploitation, trafficking and violence.

Within the EU, the right to protection and respect and the promotion of the principle of the child’s best interests are recognised in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which gained the

same legal status as the EU Treaties with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009. The Charter uses the neutral term “child” throughout with minimal reference to gender. In its point 3 the Charter refers to “his or her”: ‘every child shall have the right to maintain on a regular basis a personal relationship and direct contact with either his or her parents, unless is contrary to his or her interest’, but there is no direct reference to girl-children.

Since 2004, no legislation has been adopted at EU level affecting the rights of girl-children. However, other initiatives, actions and documents on children’s rights have been developed. Yet, in most of the cases, they do not take gender perspective into account, even when they concern issues strongly connected to the rights of the girl child such as violence, sexual exploitation and child pornography or use of the internet and other communication technologies.

The 2006 European Strategy on the Rights of Child considers the situation of children in Europe, but it does not include a gender-sensitive perspective. Issues such as female genital mutilation, coercive sexual relations, forced marriages and HIV infections are addressed, but without paying attention to the specificity of their gender dimension.

It is important to point out that, in 2008, the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union analysed and developed the first ever indicators for the girl child in the EU . These indicators cover three areas: a) sexual and reproductive health looking at sex and relationship education; b) media and cultural attitudes and practices looking at body self-image; and c) educational accomplishments in mathematics and science.

The EC Communication on “An EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child” (2011) it is one of the last documents issued by the EU on this matter. In it, the EC reinforces the idea that the promotion and the protection of the rights of the child is one of the objectives of the EU. It also states that it is now time to move up a gear on the rights of the child and to transform policy objectives into action. With this Communication the EC aims at reaffirming the strong commitment of all EU institutions and all Member States to promoting, protecting and fulfilling the right of the child in all relevant EU policies and to turn it into concrete results. The agenda focuses on a number of concrete actions, fighting against violence against children being one of them. However, once again, gender perspective is absent, a gender blind approach is used and no references to the specificities of the girl child when facing violence are taken into account.

As stated by the EWL, the European legal documents, policies, programmes and actions for the protection of children have a poor record when it comes to incorporating a gender perspective. The distinctive needs and problems of the girl child are ignored as the general term “children’s rights” is constantly used when analysing and developing policies. This situation is exacerbated by a tendency to think that the rights of the girl child are predominately a matter concerning developing countries.

3. Legal and political frameworks at a country level

After having revised the international and EU political and legal frameworks concerning VAW and children's rights, this section provides a brief summary of the legislative and political measures in force in each partner country⁹.

BULGARIA

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- Law on the Protection against discrimination (2004): it prohibits all forms of discrimination based on age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, education, family status and property status.
- Law on countering trafficking in human beings (2004): it states that the State is responsible for ensuring the implementation of programmes aimed at the prevention of and protection against domestic violence, as well as providing assistance to the victims.
- Law on Protection against domestic violence (2005): intended to ensure co-operation and co-ordination between the bodies of state and the municipalities, as well as between them and the non-governmental organisations (NGOs), with a view to preventing and defying trafficking in human beings, and developing the national policy in that area.
- Regulation on the Enforcement of the Protection against Domestic Violence Act (2010). It specifies the application of measures for protection against domestic violence, the interaction between the state bodies and non-governmental organisations working in the field of protection against domestic violence, as well as the annual funding from the budget of the Ministry of Justice for NGO programs for prevention and protection against domestic violence and for assistance to victims.

CHILDREN PROTECTION AND RIGHTS

- The regulation of the social relations concerning the child protection in Bulgaria is based on the principles as set out by the Bulgarian Constitution. The Child Protection Act adopted in 2000 sets child protection at the focus of the state's policy and regulates the rights, principles and measures for child protection, defines the role of the central and local authorities and how they interact when implementing child protection measures and regulates the participation of non-profit organisations and individuals in such activities. A new philosophy is underlying this Act, namely the consideration of the child as a holder of rights and not as a passive subject of state and society care. With the adoption of this Act a new system of child protection starts developing in Bulgaria, covering all legal fields concerned with minors.
- National Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse (2012-2014): it aims at improving the effectiveness in cases of child abuse signals, for implementation of procedures and operating principles among partnering institutions in cases of child abuse, and for the adoption of standardized methods for gathering information. The plan deals with the problems of abuse, the necessary measures to fight it, and the general framework for the prevention of abuse through the provision of information, support and services. The lack of implementation of the programmes is compounded by a lack of adequate funding.

⁹ More information on the legal and political frameworks of each country can be found in the country Research reports, available in the Project website in English and country languages.

- National Strategy for the Child for the period 2008-2018 adopted by the Bulgarian Parliament
- “Vision for the Deinstitutionalisation of the Children in the Republic of Bulgaria” accepted by Council of Ministers. This document is presenting significant political will to substitute the inherited system of childcare with new types of care ensuring best quality and protection of the child’s rights.

CATALONIA/SPAIN

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- Organic Law 11/2003, of 29 September, of Concrete Measures in Citizen Security, Domestic Violence and Social Integration of Foreigners was the first legal measure that dealt with domestic violence. It changed some provisions of the Penal Code for covering domestic violence crimes.
- Law 27/2003, of 31 July, regulating the Protection Order for Domestic Violence Victims, which unified all protection instruments for the victim foreseen in the legal system with the need of a unique request form.
- Organic Law 01/2004 on Integrated protection against gender-based violence was approved. The law introduces new measures for the protection, prevention, support and recuperation of the victims of gender-based violence.
- At a Catalan level, the Parliament of Catalonia approved the Law 05/2008, of 24th April, on the right of women to eradicate male-based violence. As stated in the legal text, this law is founded on the premise that women’s rights are human rights.

CHILDREN PROTECTION AND RIGHTS

- Organic Law 1/1996, from 15th January, on the Protection of the minors, establishes a legal framework in line with the principle that minors are subject of rights and that have the progressive capacity to exercise them.
- At a Catalan level:
- Law 37/1991, 30 December, on the protection of neglected minors.
 - Law 8/1995, 27 July, on the attention and protection of children and adolescents.
 - Law 14/2010, 27th May, on the rights and opportunities of children and adolescents, aiming at having a unique norm that includes neglected or at risk children and that, at the same time, recognises children and adolescents as subjects of rights. In this sense, the Law 14/2010 brings together both regulations: on the one hand, it establishes a legal framework for children and adolescents in general in which the principles and rights of children are stated. On the other hand, it establishes regulations for the protection of children and adolescents that find themselves in a situation of risk. Moreover, this new legislation is in line with new demands and social circumstances raised during the last years in Catalonia, i.e. recognition of diversity, intensification of action against violence and maltreatment and promotion of children and adolescents’ social participation.

FINLAND

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- Section 6 of the Constitution of Finland contains provisions on equality and the prohibition of discrimination, while section 6 subsection 1 includes the requirement that both the legislature and those who apply the law uphold human legal equality. Section 6 subsection 2 of the Constitution contains a comprehensive prohibition of discrimination, which states that no one shall, without acceptable reason, be differently treated on the basis of gender, age, origin, language, religion, conviction, opinion, health, disability or any other personal characteristic.
- Section 7 of the Constitution guarantees everyone the right to life, personal liberty, integrity, and security; while section 22 states that public authorities shall guarantee the application of civil liberties and human rights.
- The Act on equality between men and women (609/1986) aims to prevent gender discrimination and to promote gender equality.
- In recent years, the criminal law has undergone a number of changes in provisions concerning domestic violence and sexual assault. In January 2011, a change in chapter 21, section 16 of the Criminal Code entered into force (1082/2010), according to which petty assault in a close relationship became subject to public prosecution. In June 2011, a change in chapter 20, section 1.2 of the Criminal Code entered into force (495/2011), as a result of which sexual intercourse with a defenceless person is defined as rape, regardless of whether the state of defencelessness is self-inflicted or whether it is temporary or permanent. At the same time, a change in the Criminal Code entered into force (540/2011) by which provision concerning sexual offenses against children were made more stringent, and the range of punishable offenses was extended.
- The Act on the Restraining Order (898/1998) allows for the imposition of a restraining order in situations where there is reason to believe that the person against whom the prohibition is sought might commit a crime against the life, health, liberty or peace of the person who feels threatened, or otherwise seriously harass them.

CHILDREN PROTECTION AND RIGHTS

Provisions concerning the situation and rights of children in Finnish legislation are contained in the following laws:

- Constitution of Finland (731/1999): The basic rights declared in the Finnish Constitution concern children as well as adults. Children's rights to be treated equally as individuals is emphasised in Section 6 of the Constitution, dealing with equality. According to the third subsection of the section children are to be treated equally and as individuals and they shall be allowed to influence matters pertaining to themselves to a degree corresponding to their level of development. Equality is to be guaranteed both among children and between children and adults.
- Child Custody and Rights of Access Act (361/1983): The aim of child custody is to guarantee the balanced development and welfare of children in accordance with their individual needs and wishes. Custody is to ensure positive and close relationships particularly between children and their parents.
- Child Welfare Act (417/2007): The Child Welfare Act states that children have the right to a safe and stimulating growing environment, balanced and varied development and with priority given to their welfare. Attention is given in the act primarily to the interests of the child.
- Youth Act (72/2006): The purpose of the Act is to support young people's up bringing and becoming independent, promote the active citizenship of young people, strengthen the socialisation of young people and improve the conditions in which they live and are brought up. There are also provisions in the Act concerning the participation of young people and for them to be heard. The term "youth" in the

Act means below the age of 29.

ITALY

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- Law No. 66 on Norms against sexual violence (1996): This law was a significant legislative innovation because it defines violence against women as an offence against the person and no longer as an offence against public morality.
- Law No. 154 on Measures against intra-family violence (2001): it specifically addresses domestic violence. It introduces a provision that allowed for the removal of the victim of violence from the home, in order to ensure his or her safety.
- Law No. 154 tried to reduce the risk of physical harm to those victims cohabiting with their aggressor by providing external protection shelters. To support this, the 2006 National Budget established a National Fund Against Sexual and Gender Violence.
- Law No. 38 on Urgent measures regarding sexual violence (2009). It modified the Italian Criminal Law (art. 612bis), through the introduction of the crime of stalking and an increase of jail sentences for rape. Moreover it provided for free legal counsel to victims of sexual violence. The decree also reserves 3 million € to support non-governmental organizations working in support of victims of violence (such as anti-violence centres, women centres, shelters).

CHILDREN PROTECTION AND RIGHTS

- Law No. 328 on Framework law for the implementation of the integrated system of interventions and social services (2000): it creates an integrated system of interventions and social services through policies and coordinated services for the various aspects of one's social needs. The measures to support women and children in difficulty fall within the basic level of social benefits, but the characteristics and requirements are set out not only at the national level, but also regionally and locally, and in any case, these services are limited to the care economic resources provided by the National fund for Social Policy.
- Law No. 451/97 provided for the establishment of the Centre for Research and Survey on Childhood and Adolescence. The Centre represented a remarkable step forward in recognising the right of the child in Italy. The Law also established the Osservatorio nazionale per l'infanzia (National Monitoring Centre for Children) under the Welfare Minister's Office.
- In 1997 the Italian Government's first Piano Nazionale per l'Infanzia e l'Adolescenza (National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents), based on the CRC, was adopted.
- Law No. 285 on Disposizioni per la promozione di diritti ed opportunità per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza/Provisions to Promote Rights and Opportunities for Children and Adolescents (1997) was passed by the Italian Parliament as the principal legal instrument to implement the National Plan of Action for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The first National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents (1997) combined two major facets of the CFCs, namely the new policies for children and the new policies for cities, creating a clear institutional framework for the existing experience of Italian CFCs and also contemplating possible future developments.

- On August 14, 2013 legislative decree no. 93 entered into force. It includes 13 articles dedicated to security issues, 5 of which deal specifically with gender violence. This new law closely examines the individual offenses of abuse, sexual violence and stalking. It also dedicates special attention to prevention and to specific aspects of the related criminal proceedings.

CYPRUS

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- The current law that addresses domestic violence in Cyprus is Law 119(I)/2000 and 212(I)/2004 on Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims).
- The Cyprus law on domestic violence has been widely assessed to be adequate and its broad scope has been cited as an example of best practice. However, the 'family violence' framework has been widely criticized by experts on violence against women as this results in public policies that aim to combat domestic violence from a gender blind perspective, without consideration of the gendered power relations at stake in violence against women.
- Adoption by the Council of Ministers of a National Action Plan on Prevention and Combating Violence in the Family (2010-2015). The aim of the NAP is to monitor the extent of violence in the family in Cyprus.
- The National Action Plan on Equality between Men and Women (2007-2013) includes violence against women among its main priorities.¹⁰

CHILDREN PROTECTION AND RIGHTS

- In brief, the laws that relate to the family and/or the child are as follows:
 - [The Parent-Child Relations Laws of 1990 to 1998](#)
 - [\[Law 187/1991\] - The Children \(Relatives and Legal Status\)](#)
 - [\[Κ.Δ.Π. 262/2011\] - The Children's \(Day Care Centres\) Order of 2011](#)
 - [\[Law 46\(I\)/1996\] - The Guardianship and other ways of Treatment Law](#)
 - [\[Law 83\(I\)/1999\] - The Children \(Amendment\) Law](#)
 - [\[Law 5\(III\)/2000\] - Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
 - [\[Law 119\(I\)/2000\] - Law which provides for the Prevention of Violence in the Family and Protection of Victim](#)
 - [\[Law 143\(I\) 2002\] - The Children \(Amendment\) Law](#)
 - [\[Law 165\(I\)/2002\] - Law on the provision of free legal aid](#)
 - [\[Law 190\(I\)2002\] - The Parent-Child Relations \(Amendment\) Law](#)
 - [\[Law 203\(I\)/2004\] - The Parent-Child Relations \(Amendment\) Law](#)
 - [\[Law 47\(I\)/2012\] - The Parental Leave and Leave on Grounds of Force Majeure Law of 2012](#)
 - [\[Law 87\(I\)/2007\] - Anti-trafficking Law of 2007](#)
- The majority of the laws mentioned above outline the various rights of children and the

¹⁰ National Action Plan on Equality between Men and Women (2007-2013), Cyprus Ministry of Justice and Public Order, Nicosia, 2008

acceptable guidelines for the behaviour of parents and/or relatives and/or guardians. The Law which provides for the Prevention of Violence in the Family and Protection of Victim- [Law119(I)/2000] defines the meaning of violence and includes a specific clause that addresses the point that an act committed in the presence of a minor shall be considered as an act of violence against the said minor due to the psychological effects on that minor (i.e. the minor as a witness to violence being considered a victim of said violence).

- Cyprus has signed the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), which is backed up by the [Law5(III)/2000] - Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Cyprus has not yet ratified the *Convention on the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse* (Lanzarote Convention), which was signed on 25th October 2007.
- On 15 November 2011 the Council of the European Union adopted the Directive 2011/92/EU (presented by the European Commission in 2010), aimed at combating sexual abuse and exploitation of children as well as child pornography, with the aim of replacing the Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA. Cyprus has yet to fully transpose the Directive into national legislation.

III. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

At the beginning of the project the partnership set up a common methodological framework to guide the research and the fieldwork to be carried out by each national research team. This chapter contains the core elements of the methodological approach followed by the partnership.

1. AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The Empowering Care research aims to obtain information from both girls minors in residential care and the professionals working with this target group on the prevalence and characteristics of their past or present experiences of violence and abuse, as well as their perceptions about gender roles and sexual and affective relationships.

Depending on the target group and method used, the research has specific and complementary aims:

- Interviews with minor girls (from 14 to 18 years old) living in residential care institutions and under the legal responsibility of public authorities: to find out about their past or present experiences of violence and abuse, and their characteristics.
- Focus groups with minor girls (from 14 to 18 years old) living in residential care institutions and under the legal responsibility of public authorities: to get to know their beliefs and patterns of behaviours regarding gender roles and intimate relationships.
- Focus groups with professionals: to gather information on several issues:
 - The scope and traits of girl minors in residential care regarding experiences of violence and abuse, gender roles and intimate relationships, as well as their needs and difficulties.
 - Gender roles of professionals.
 - Professionals' profile, needs and constraints in tackling gender violence issues with this target group in their daily practice.

2. TARGET GROUPS, SELECTION CRITERIA AND ETHICAL ISSUES

The target groups of the research are, on the one hand, minor girls in residential care and, on the other hand, professionals working with minor girls living in residential care institutions. Below, both groups are presented.

2.1. Minor girls living in residential care centres

Minor girls (from 14 to 18 years old) living in residential care institutions and under the legal responsibility of public authorities in the partner countries. Within this target groups there are 2 subgroups:

- a) Minors girls living in residential care who have experienced violence will participate in the individual interviews

b) Minor girls living in residential care who have not necessarily experienced violence will participate in the focus groups

The criteria for the selection of the girls were as follows:

- To be a minor girl from 14 to 18
- To be living in a residential care institution
- Not to be under a stressful or delicate life situation. In this sense, the professionals working in the residential care institution will accompany the selection process with the researchers
- For the girls participating in the individual interviews, to have suffered violence in their life-time

The ethical issues regarding the participation of minor girls in residential care in the research are the following ones:

- Participation will be voluntary and based on informed consent of legal guardians
- Prior to giving consent, girls and guardians will be informed about:
 - The project and its scope
 - The voluntary nature of their participation
 - The possibility to leave the project at any time
 - The use of data
- In interviews and focus group an atmosphere of trust and safety will be created
- The safety, rights and wellbeing of girls will always be guaranteed
- Research interviews and focus groups will be recorded. Records will be confidential and anonymous.

It was highly recommended that before starting the interviews, the research team created a specific psychological and mental support plan to be used if needed. The aim of this plan was to ensure that if certain post-traumatic feelings arise, the girls would have a supportive environment around them to help them dealing with these feelings.

2.2. Professionals working with minor girls living in residential care institutions

Professionals working with minor girls living in residential care institutions such as psychologists, social workers, social educators, among others.

The criteria for the selection of the professionals are as follow:

- To be a professional working with minor girls living in residential care institutions.
- To have experience working with minor girls living in residential care institutions.

Ethical issues regarding the work with professionals are the ones presented below:

- Participation will be voluntary.
- Professional can leave the project at any time.
- Prior to giving consent, the professionals will be informed about:
 - The project and its scope
 - The voluntary nature of their participation
 - The use of data
- Research records will be confidential.

3. METHODS AND RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

The methodology was based on qualitative research methods since they are more suitable in capturing the subjective experiences of women. Moreover, qualitative methods provide a confidential and intimate atmosphere especially adequate to conduct research with minors, and especially those with institutional backgrounds, who may be reluctant to collaborate in more formal quantitative survey formats.

The research techniques used in the research were semi-structured interviews and focus groups. All research activities were recorded, transcribed and analysed. Following, each research method is explained:

a) Semi-structured interviews with young women living in residential care institutions and having suffered violence

The aim of the individual interview was to gather information about personal life stories of violence of girls living in residential care institutions. Each research team carried out between 8 and 15 interviews with girls.

During the interview the main idea was to get into the girl's mind and memories through their own words and descriptions, without using the researcher's expressions and pre-established categories. It was suggested to start by asking girls to free storytelling their lives/experiences. In order to facilitate the conversation, the interviewer had a list of topics to be tackled during the interview:

- Ice-breaking and introductory questions (socio-demographical information, stay in residential care, etc. ...).
- Gender roles and perceptions: perceived differences between women and men in terms of autonomy, spaces, activities, etc. Gender stereotypes.
- Social and intimate relationships: types of relations, balance/unbalance of power, gender differences, satisfaction towards them. Special focus on intimate relationships.
- Residential care experience: feelings, positive and negative aspects.
- Violence experiences: forms¹¹ of violence, spheres¹² where violence takes place, perpetrators of violence and effects on women's lives.

¹¹ According to the definition included in the Catalan law on VAW 5/2008, violence can take the following forms: physical, psychological, sexual and economic.

¹² According to the definition included in the Catalan law on VAW 5/2008, violence can take place in the following spheres: partnership, family, employment and social or community.

B. Focus groups

a) Focus groups with minor girls living in residential care institutions

The aim of the focus groups with minor girls was to discuss and share issues around gender roles and gender stereotypes as well as patterns of behaviour in intimate relationships. Each partner organised 1-3 focus groups with 7-8 girls in each one. The researchers' role in the focus group of professionals was to support and facilitate the discussion by asking specific questions and to conduct the discussion actively. The topics listed below were covered during the focus groups:

- Introduction of the research and participants. Rules of the group.
- Gender roles and stereotypes: differences between men and women, experiences of gender norms/restrictions in daily lives.
- Close relationships and intimate relationships. Gender roles within them.

b) Focus groups with professionals working in residential care institutions with minor girls

The aim of the focus groups with professionals was to gather professionals' perceptions, contributions and experience of working with girls. Perceptions, opinions and experiences of professionals provided extremely valuable information on the cope and traits of girls' experiences of violence and abuse, gender roles and intimate relationships, as well as their own needs and difficulties as professionals in dealing and tackling with all that. Moreover, these focus groups also provided an insight on the profile of professionals working with the target group, their preparation, needs and constraints in tackling gender violence issues in their daily practice. The researchers' role in the focus group of professionals was to support and facilitate the discussion by asking specific questions and to conduct the discussion actively.

Topics of the focus groups

The focus groups may be organised as either 1 or 2 sessions. This decision is up to each organisation. In any case, the topics listed below should be tackled:

- Introduction: presentation of the research and participants
- Gender roles and perceptions: stereotypes and gender differences in the centres
- Violence experiences of girls in residential care: perceptions of professionals around violence, forms and spheres of violence suffered by the girls, impacts of the violence on girls' lives, dealing with violence in residential care centres, needs and difficulties experienced by girls.
- Professionals' situation and needs: main needs, tools and needs when dealing with VAW and gender issues in their daily work, skills needed and difficulties encountered.

4. OVERVIEW OF THE FIELDWORK IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

This section provides information on how the fieldwork took place in each country.

In **Bulgaria** the fieldwork lasted for one month (from May to June 2013) and it took place in one single centre that has capacity for 60 children. It is a facility for children aged 7-18. The mission of the centre is to take care for and protect children in its care. It provides shelter and access to educational and vocational programmes, promoting the child's full integration into society. Before the research started, a cooperation contract was signed with the Director of the institution. A beneficial premise for the

research was that the Bulgarian team had already worked with the centre and some of the girls already knew some of the professionals of the research team. This facilitated the creation of an environment of trust and the interviews were carried out in a relaxed setting. In Bulgaria 14 girls were interviewed and 9 girls participated in the focus groups. Regarding the professionals, 4 professionals were interviewed. The main difficulties the Bulgarian team encountered when carrying out the research are connected with the need to rephrase some of the question in order to make them understandable for the girls.

In **Catalonia** the fieldwork lasted for a month (from May to June 2013). The research took place in 5 different residential care centres around Catalonia. In order to get in contact with the residential care centres and to have the permission to interview both the girls and the professionals, the Catalan team established contact with the General Directorate for the Attention to Childhood and Adolescence from the Catalan Government. All the participating centres are female centres. 3 out of the 5 centres are horizontal centres, meaning that they have only girls from a specific age interval (from 13 to 18 years old) living. The other 2 centres were vertical; one of them has girls from 6 to 18 years old, and the other one, young women from 16 years old onwards. Regarding the size of the centres participating in the research, the smaller one had capacity for 8 girls and the biggest one for 24. The organisation dynamics were diverse from one centre to another. However, it is important to state that specifically three of them were thought to be a place to foster girls' autonomy. All residential care centres were secular except one that was catholic. A total of 17 girls aged 13-18 were interviewed and 10 girls (2 groups of 5) participated in the focus discussion groups. Some of the girls were 13 years old but they turn to 14 this year and were willing to participate in the research. Thus, they were included in the sample. Moreover, 4 professionals were interviewed. In general, the development of the fieldwork was very smooth. The contact with the centres was easy and the professionals working there kindly opened the doors to the research team. The girls who participated were brave young women who decided to generously share part of their lives with the team.

In **Finland** the fieldwork place took place during May 2013 in two different residential care institutions. A total of 11 girls took part of individual interviews, 13 participated in 3 different focus groups and 7 professionals participated in a focus group. The main difficulty encountered in the research process was to find organisation with which to cooperate. Finally, two of the institutions accepted to participate. To ensure the successful interviews, the researcher spent some time in the centres and chose the appropriate time for the interviews. Even some difficulties regarding the participation of the girls and the involvement of the professionals, the research team developed strategies that allowed them to carry out the research and to obtain the information needed.

In **Italy** the fieldwork lasted 3 months, from April to June 2013. The fieldwork involved 11 residential communities in Piedmont (Italian region). A total of 15 girls were interviewed and 14 participated in 2 focus groups. In order to get the permission to get inside the communities and to be able to interview the girls, the Italian team got in contact with the Office of Minor Services of the city of Turin. After several meetings and discussion, the research team was finally allowed to carry out the research. In general the interviews with the girls worked ok. At the beginning they showed some fear, but as the conversation continued, the girls began to show greater confidence. Regarding the focus groups, it is important to state that the Italian research team managed to bring together girls from different centres which was really appreciated by the girls participating. Regarding the participation of professionals, the Italian team organised a focus groups with 11 professionals. In general, the participation in the



Funded by the European Union



discussion and the commitment to the project was very high. The feedback that the research team received was really positive.

In **Cyprus** the fieldwork was delayed due to technical issues. However, support was finally given for the qualitative part of the project to take place in October 2013 and was executed and completed by December 2013. There is only one state run residential care home in Cyprus and at the time conducting the research six girls were in residence. One girl did not speak English or Greek, three girls spoke only Greek and two girls spoke only English. Therefore, the focus group was conducted simultaneously in English and Greek, since all six girls chose to be present during the focus group session. The five all female staff at the residential care centre also participated in the focus group activity which was conducted in Greek. Individual interviews were not conducted in the Cyprus context.

Adding up all the interviews and focus groups with girls in the 5 countries, a total of **100 girls (57 via interviews and 43 via focus groups) and 52 professionals participated in the research.**

IV. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE FIELDWORK

A comparative analysis of the results obtained in the research carried out in Bulgaria, Catalonia, Italy Finland and Cyprus is presented below. The first part of the comparative analysis focuses on the results obtained from the participation of the girls, covering issues related to girls' daily life in the centres, their social relations, their perceptions on gender roles and their own experiences of violence.

The second part focuses on the voices of the professionals, their views on the girls' lives, the needs they face in their everyday work life as well as the opportunities that their job offer to them.

1. GIRLS

1.1. Residential care experiences: positive and negative elements

The country reports show that the experiences of girls living in residential care centres are diverse and that it is not possible to talk about a sole and unique experience. However, when analysing the national results some common elements can be found. Here below some of these similarities and differences are explained.

To start with, it is important to state that in Bulgaria and in Finland most of the girls expressed that they did not have enough information before entering the centre about the fact that they would indeed live in there. Moreover, especially in Bulgaria, some girls claimed that they did not know the reason why they were living in the centre. This lack of information generated anxiety and disorientation among the girls. In Cyprus, the majority of the girls had entered the residential care home from the children's home and were expected by their careers as by the girls themselves, to remain in the care institution until they would be discharged at eighteen years of age.

Independently of having or not having information about the whole process, girls from the 5 countries stated that the entrance to the centres was experienced as a difficult process and that the first month in the centre had been complicated and problematic. Some of the girls stated that the feelings they had when they entered the centre for the first time were loneliness, sadness, shamefulness and disorientation.

Well ... it was really weird ... I'd never been in one and I don't know ... If for example a new girl came in now, what would you say to her? That she'd feel really bad to start with ... but after a while things would get ... I don't know, she'd start mixing with us ... I'd tell her that to begin with it's really tough, but after a while it's not so bad ... And if she asked you why it was so bad, what would you say? Because you miss your family and the things you used to do there, like ... [...] it was pretty hard also to say goodbye to friends and that. G2, 13 years old. Catalonia.

Girls from Catalonia shared the fact that even if at the beginning it was really hard, the centre was the best place where they could be. In the same direction, most of the girls from Bulgaria and Italy felt that the centre was a place of protection. That was especially relevant for the girls who came from families where they had experienced violence since the centre had been the first place free of violence. Instead, in Finland, most of the girls showed a negative attitude and feeling against the institution. In this sense, most of the Finnish girls had great resistance to the centre and its norms.

Even if the centres were seen as safe places and girls, in general, were pleased to live in them, it is important to state that most of the girls said that they would never choose to live in a centre far from their families and that they wish they never had to live in them. Regarding some negative aspects about the experience of living in the centre, the girls pointed out that just like the centres were spaces of protection, they also were spaces of limitation. Girls from the 5 countries expressed that the most difficult thing about living in the centre was to get used to the norms and the discipline rules of the institution. Linked to that, the lack of freedom to do whatever they wanted to do was one of girls' biggest concerns.

Somehow the restrictions... there is no freedom for people and young people need freedom. Freedom of speech, freedom to be, freedom to go and come as you please. *17 years old, Finland.*

I feel like a prisoner in here, they don't let us outside much, they don't let us free. *15 years, Bulgaria.*

It is interesting to point out that in Italy the feeling of "limitation" was stronger among those girls living in centres where the age gap among girls was bigger than among girls living in centres with no age gap.

Another relevant element pointed out by most of the girls from the 5 countries was how difficult it had been to leave their whole life behind once they entered into the centre. As it will be analysed later on, some girls are indeed able to maintain their social network, but, for some others, to enter the centre means to start over without being able to keep their previous social and family network, i.e. friends and family. In Finland that was especially relevant since the centres were closed institutions and were located in the countryside and far away from the "big cities". Finnish girls explained that they felt isolated from the outside world.

Regarding social relations inside the centre, most of the girls stated that, even though living together with other young women was not always easy, they had good relations with the other housemates. Moreover, most of the girls said that they had also good relations with the professionals, from whom they received support and care.

Finally, it is interesting to point out that girls from the 5 countries pointed out that due to the lack of knowledge about residential care institutions in the society, they could perceive some kind of negative prejudice against them because they were living in a residential care centre. In Cyprus, the girls were surprised to hear that residential care homes existed in their country and that there were other girls living as they were living, since they believed themselves to be the only ones.

1.2. Social and intimate relationships

Another element of analysis in the research was the characteristics of the social and intimate relationships that the girls living in residential care have or not have. As said before, diversity is one of the main elements to take into account which means that each girl's social network is specific and no general patterns can be extracted from the interviews. However, it is true that there are some common elements that are present in the stories of the girls from all the countries. Here below there is a brief analysis of the main characteristics of the social and intimate relationships of the girls, pointing out both common elements but also differences among the countries.

Regarding social relations in general, meaning mainly friendship, in most countries girls claimed that they had few friends. Girls from Bulgaria said that their friendship relations were limited to one or two girls. They expressed that they did not trust many people and that beyond this small circle of friends they were afraid of being betrayed and hurt. In this same line, Italian girls also had problems to trust people, which was an obstacle to build and maintain a stable social network. In Finland, girls explained that they did not have social network and that in general they were not satisfied with their personal relations. Moreover, as stated before, girls from Catalonia and Finland explained that it was really difficult for them to maintain friends they had before entering the centre.

I had lots of friends and so on. But now that I've come here, behind God's back, to this ass place, well... All my friends' parents have started to like, you can't be friends with her, when she's in an institution, she's a total criminal, so that's it, now I've only a couple of friends left back home, when I used to have dozens of them and now there's just a couple left. 14 years old. Finland.

In Catalonia, some of the girls found themselves in the same situation, not having a lot of friends and with no possibilities to maintain old friends. However, other Catalan girls said that they did have a lot of friends with whom they could trust. In some cases, these friends were girls living in the centre and in some other cases from outside, mainly from school.

What was most difficult thing when you entered? Leaving everything behind. I had to leave school, my friends, everything ... G1, 14 years old. Catalonia.

Regarding the relations with the other girls living in the centre and with the professionals working there, most of the girls from the 5 countries ensured that, in general, they had good relation with both the girls and the professionals. They all said that it was not easy to live with others, but that they got used to it quite easily. Concerning the relations with the educators, most of them said that they received help and support from them and that they were referent points for them.

Concerning the relations that girls establish with their family, girls from the 5 countries found themselves in similar situations. Some of the girls explained that had regular contact with their family and some others that the contact was rather sporadic and not regular. Finally, some girls explained that they had not contact with any member of their family.

And do you have any contact with anyone else in your family? No. I don't see my father at all, I haven't got any grandparents and my mother died. There are some uncles and aunts on my

mother's side who live here but I don't see them. [...] I've also got an uncle on my dad's side, but my dad didn't get on well with him and I don't see him either. *G10, 16 years old. Catalonia.*

I still see my mother sometimes, but it's hard for me to call her mom. I'm used to calling the educators by their names. Sometimes I force myself to call her mom, because I know that she would feel bad. For a mother to be called their first name by her child, because calling her mom is too hard, I think it's an awful thing (...). *Franca, 16 years old. Italy.*

Still regarding the relations that the girls establish with their families, it is interesting to point out that some girls wanted to keep the relation with the family or thought that some family members were the most important persons in their life even though they might have exerted violence against them.

Concerning intimate relations, Bulgarian and Cypriot girls explained that they did not have close intimate relations. By contrast, girls from Catalonia, Finland and Italy ensured that they did have intimate and sexual relations. From what the girls shared with the research teams regarding the relationship they establish with (mostly) boys, it can be said that, in general, those relations are based on unhealthy patterns. In this sense, for example, most of the Catalan girls who were dating were involved in noxious relationships based on emotional dependency and control. Even though some of the girls, especially from Italy and Catalonia, were able to identify alarm signs, i.e. elements that may indicate that the relation is taking a negative shift, they were involved in unequal and even violent relations in which patriarchal romantic love dynamics were reproduced. By romantic love dynamics is understood, for example, the fact of conceiving jealousy as a sign of love and something intrinsic to intimate relationships.

I had a boyfriend that treated me bad too. I was really in love with him. After 7 months, he started really treated me bad, and I started crying, and in the end... we broke up... even though I didn't want to. But I couldn't keep holed up inside feeling bad, not going out... He never beat me, but he was always really mean when he answered me when I said something or when I wanted to do something and he didn't... It was better to leave him than suffer, because he was going to treat me bad for the rest of my life. *Elisa, 17 years old. Italy.*

To understand the fact that the vast majority of the girls are involved in unhealthy relationships, it is necessary to analyse their backgrounds and lives experiences. Their family relationships have been and are still complicated and, in many cases, violent. As a result, the huge lack of affection, the absence of family support and/or the abuse suffered by the girls have a direct impact not only on their emotional state but also on the kind of affective relationships they are able to establish. It is obvious that there are girls in care who, either because of their resilience or the therapeutic recovery work done with them, are able to break this pattern and establish healthy relationships, but unfortunately the great majority of the girls in care reproduce this relationship model. This, then, makes clear the need to work specifically and more exhaustively on promoting equal partner relationships and the prevention of male violence.

1.3. Gender roles and perceptions

Another core aspect being analysed in the 5 countries was whether or not girls living in residential care institutions reproduce traditional gender stereotypes with their narratives. In all countries, girls reproduced to a greater or lesser extent gender roles and stereotypes. In this sense, some girls from Bulgaria, Catalonia and Cyprus, for example, ensured that boys were stronger, naturally more aggressive than girls, as well as more easy going than girls. Moreover, they also claimed that girls were much more complicated and that their lives were more complex and difficult compared to boys' lives. In Finland, some girls interviewed and who participated in the focus groups described the housework and raising the children as essentially female tasks. In Cyprus, the girls in the focus group were adamant that bodyguard; builder; footballer; general building work; plumbers; mechanics and even athletics were jobs only men could do, while babysitting and cleaning could not be done by men because they did not have the 'patience'. Some of the girls ensured that girls are more passionate and more emotional than boys or that, at least, boys do not demonstrate their emotional part as much as girls do. The imagined ideas activated are worrying from a gender point of view. Namely, the expectations the young women project reproduce a system of patriarchal values and put women in a highly sexualized and devalued social position.

- [Women] should be pretty, they should dress nicely. *Desislava, 14 years old, Bulgaria.*
- They should be liked. *Tania, 14 years old, Bulgaria*
- They should coordinate the colour of their clothes. *Nely, 14 years old, Bulgaria.*
- We mustn't act spoilt. *Participant 1, Cyprus.*
- We must be polite. *Participant 2, Cyprus.*

Another example of this common social imaginary is that girls conceptualised differently the same attitude whether it is performed by a girl or by a boy. That is to say that, for example in Catalonia, the fact of being sexually active had positive connotations when it came from a boy, but really negative connotations if it was a girl who was having sex with different boys. This definitely has to do to with a gendered conceptualisation of sexuality, which also appears in Finland.

Most of the girls participating in the research talked about their intimate relations (as seen before, most of them had a partner) and how they understood love and the relation itself. In Catalonia, girls discussed around romantic love myths such as exclusivity and jealousy as signs of love.

Do you think jealousy can be a demonstration of love? A little. Sometimes. When? I don't know. For a guy to tell me something and get a bit jealous is OK. That kind of means I matter to him. G13, 15 years old. Catalonia.

In general, we see that although the majority of the girls do reproduce some of the myths of romantic love especially in subjects related to jealousy and control as a show of love, many others have a discourse that questions these myths. Nevertheless, it would have to be proven that the discourse is actually consistent with their daily relationships. According to the results of the research in Catalonia, Italy and Finland, most of the girls who have or have had a boyfriend are in rather unhealthy dependent relationships in which the myths of romantic love are the order of the day. In many cases, though, some girls from Italy and Catalonia showed great ambivalences between what they thought to be correct and desirable in a relationship and the real relations in which they were involved. In any case, more exhaustive research on this topic would be needed in order to have better knowledge of the characteristics and dynamics of the emotional and sexual relationships of the girls in care.

Despite the widespread presence of sexist stereotypes that reproduce and reinforce a highly patriarchal social picture among girls in residential care in the partner countries, some girls question certain ideas and claim that it is unfair that boys and girls are treated and brought up differently. It is interesting to see that the girls are able to identify how the upbringing and the patterns of socialization that are adopted throughout childhood and adolescence can have (and indeed do have) an impact on future attitudes and actions. In this respect, although in some cases the girls show a certain tendency to accept as normal and natural certain attitudes that are different between boys and girls, in other cases they are clear that it is a case of socially constructed and learnt differences. That is especially relevant for the girls living in Catalonia and in Italy.

1.4. Definitions, own experiences and legitimization of violence

All national reports provide information on the ways girls living in residential care define what violence means to them. Girls from Bulgaria, Catalonia, Finland, Italy and Cyprus provided several definitions of violence. In most of the cases, girls first referred to physical violence and then, with some more reflection, they also made some references to psychological violence. Only in few cases girls referred to sexual violence. In Cyprus in particular when asked generally about ‘bad experiences’, the girls immediately identified those experiences to be rape and were clear that it happened a lot. One possible reason that may explain the fact that sexual violence is not identified straight away in some of the other countries is that it is still taboo, both for girls in care and for society in general, and that there are still many difficulties when mentioning it by name and talking about it. Other girls did not refer to specific types of violence, but they rather provided more general/generic definitions of violence and explained that violence was “when somebody forces you to do something you don’t want to do” or “anything that hurts”.

What do you think violence is? What does it mean to you? Well, [laughs] it's touching other people in a way that hurts... Yeah, touching other people in a way that hurts. So it's just physical? Yeah... 16 years old. Finland.

Violence hurts, it's anything that hurts. Insulting is a form of violence because it hurts. At least to me, I don't know about other people. Insults really hurt. *Italy.*

Violence is also when you have to do things against your will, when someone gropes you, they insult you or they put you down, because no one has the right to disrespect you and I don't know ... *G8, 18 years old. Catalonia.*

- You mean rapes and stuff like that don't you. *Participant 1, Cyprus.*
- Yeah sure...those kind of things. *Researcher*
- They happen frequently... *Participant 1, Cyprus.*
- How frequent would you say ... *Researcher*
- A lot! I hear about it I hear about it all time they tell me and I hear it on the tv, *Participant 1, Cyprus.*

Still related to the definition and identification of violence, it is interesting to point out that while some girls did identify as violence some situations of discrimination against women, others did not and even naturalised or justified certain behaviours such as control or jealousy.

As explained in the methodological framework, one of the criteria for the selection of the girls to be interviewed was that they had experienced violence. Thus, all girls that participated in the individual interviews had suffered some kind of violence. However, not all of them recognised or explained it during the interview. In Bulgaria, for example, some of the girls denied having suffered violence. These girls identified violence only in its extreme forms, and claimed not having been in these situations. In this sense, some of these girls understood violence as something normal and as an intrinsic part of their lives. As some of the Bulgarian girls, girls from other countries also showed some reluctance to talk about their own stories of violence, which was completely understood and respected.

Other girls did talk about their experiences and shared with the research teams their stories. Girls from all countries had suffered physical, psychological and sexual violence. In most of the cases, girls explained that they had experienced all different kinds of violence, i.e. physical and psychological aggressions, sexual abuse, humiliation and being neglected. Some of the girls lived through one story of violence and others had been victims (and survivors) of different situations of violence. In most of the cases girls explained that the perpetrator was a family member or somebody they knew. It is precisely the fact that the perpetrator was a family member what generated more confusion, disorientation and distress among the girls. In this sense, in most of the cases violence took place at the family home. Apart from the experiences of violence taking place within the family unit, other girls also shared stories of intimate partnership violence, school bullying and trafficking of human beings for sexual exploitation.

Can you remember a violent situation you've been in? Yes ... lots. What kinds? All sorts. If I came here to the centre it was because of that. I'm one of those who've experienced it at first hand ... I don't know, that my mother came home one day and next thing she was hitting me, she grabbed me and threw me and knocked me out, you know? G4, 13 years old. Catalonia.

Well, I've even had it from a knife and...well that's the worst that's happened and... Then what happens quite often nowadays, at least in these circles, is that you get punched, that's from the guys pretty much, because if a women starts to tell them off, it's easy to give it back. And when a man comes to hit you, there's nothing you can do about it. 16 years old. Finland

I'm here [in the centre] because my stepfather abused me. He took my virginity when I was 12 and he carried on and on and on ... he lied every year so that I wouldn't report him, every year he made up a new story. G9, 16 years old. Catalonia.

Girls also shared which were their feelings when they were immersed in the situation of violence, which in some cases lasted for a long time (months and even years). Girls from the 5 countries expressed that during the violent episodes they felt completely disoriented and without knowing what to do or to whom ask for help. Most of the girls explained that they could not tell anybody that they were suffering violence and that made them feel really alone. In some cases when the girls explained to a family member that, for example, they were being abused by another family member, they did not find the support and trust expected. That generated frustration, disorientation, loneliness and mistrust towards adults among the girls.

It is also interesting to point out that some girls from Bulgaria, Catalonia and Finland normalised or belittled the violence that they were suffering, especially when it was exerted by a close family member (father or mother, for example). Depending on the age, it may be possible that the reality lived at home is the only reality known and thus, somebody may understand that the use of violence in human relations is the “normal” way to proceed. Some girls explained that they realised that there was something wrong in their home when they got to see other families and other realities.

The impacts of the violence suffered were strong and diverse. In some cases girls felt guilty for the violence suffered and for being placed in the centre. Whereas some of the girls felt somehow responsible for everything that had happened to them, others verbalised that what they had been through was not at all their responsibility. Girls explained that during the episodes of violence they felt sad, ashamed, disoriented and lost. Most of them had low self-esteem and had great difficulties to establish healthy and trustful relations with others, especially with adults and with men (in cases of sexual abuse). Moreover, some of the girls had physical and psychological health problems due to the violence suffered.

Sadness, you need to cut yourself off. You aren't ... you know you say, "I'm just going out for a walk", no, you want to wait more. Cut off. I was like that when I came in here. It was more ... I didn't go out at all. Just the opposite, they made me go out. I didn't go out. It was very much "I want to be alone". You haven't got any confidence, you know? [...]. Or when they raise their voice to you, you expect the worst...*G5, 18 years old. Catalonia.*

Another important issue that was discussed during the individual interviews was if the girls would ever justify the use of violence. In front of this question, suggested directly or indirectly, the answers of the girls from the 5 countries were diverse. Some of the girls from Finland and Catalonia, for example, had normalised violence and they themselves were using it towards others. Some others girls from Catalonia manifested to be against the use of violence but explained that there were some occasions that violence could be justified. Other girls from Bulgaria said that they had a desire of revenge and that they would beat other people if they could. The girls in Cyprus talked about 'slamming' others to the floor if the need came to defend a younger brother or sister, seeing this as a legitimate way to protect the ones they care for. Finally, there was another group of girls from Catalonia and Italy that stated that violence was never a legitimated or justified answer.

All girls, of course, wished that they had not experienced violence in their lives. However, most of them ensured that having been through such hard and serious experiences had made them stronger and able to overcome any further obstacle that they may encounter in their life. In this sense, even the emotional

fragility in which most of the girls find themselves, they all had developed resilience strategies that allowed them to survive and have a new life to live.

I've acquired a characteristic, and now I'm stronger, I feel I am stronger. [...] With what has happened to me, I've learned to be stronger and not crumble if things happen. This has happened to me and it's now ... something worse that could happen to me? I don't know, well, my whole family dying ... I can't think of anything else that could make me suffer more.
G9, 16 years old. Catalonia.

2. PROFESSIONALS

2.1. Professionals' views, needs and opportunities

In order to have a complete and comprehensive picture of the life of the girls living in residential care institutions, professionals working with the girls participated in the field work either via individual interviews or focus groups. The results of this part of the field work are presented here below.

First of all, the professionals stated that it was impossible to talk about general characteristics of girls living in residential care institutions. As already said, each girl has her own reality and it is not possible to establish a common profile. However, it is true that the great majority of the girls share some common elements such as having suffered violence (psychological, physical and/or sexual) and/or having been neglected by their family. Several professionals in Catalonia stated that around 80-90% of girls living in the centre had been victims of some kind of violence during their short life. These same professionals ensured that lately they had identified an increase of cases of sexual abuse, which they ensured it was really worrying and that it required specific intervention.

Professionals from the 5 countries ensured that it was not always easy to work with the girls and to talk about their stories of violence. Girls did not always want to talk about it either because they were afraid of being judged or wounded, or because the trauma was too recent and not elaborated. Indeed, professionals from the 5 countries ensured that it was difficult for them to create trusting bonds that enable good communication and the possibility to work on the trauma. Most of the professionals stated that to create strong trustful ties is the basis for a good intervention with the girls. Indeed in Cyprus, the professionals often felt that the girls were very protective of their pasts and would become defensive and difficult if they felt intruded on. Moreover, some professionals stated that in some cases an external professional was required. Professionals from Catalonia, Finland and Italy stated that they had this kind of support and professionals from Bulgaria said they had it, but not as much as it was required. The professionals in Cyprus expressed a desire for much more collaboration with expert groups who could support the work they do on a daily basis. The idea of cooperation among existing resources was highly recommended and supported among professionals of the 5 countries.

Linked to the importance of creating stable and trustful links between the girls and the professionals, some professionals ensured that it was really important to carefully define the professionals' role. They shared that sometimes, especially in front of hard cases of violence and abuse, the professionals may feel helpless and unable to help. However, if the roles, tasks and limits are well set, the professionals will be able to tackle the situation.

The centres need to be spaces of protection and care and, thus, professionals working there need to be prepared to offer that to the girls. In this sense, most of the professionals who participated in the field work ensured that they felt capable of working where they worked. However, extra training would be a bonus and would help them to offer a better attention to the girls. Professionals from Finland and Catalonia, for example, stated that it would be interesting to receive training on violence.

Finally, it is interesting to point out that the centres of the 5 countries share that they do not implement specific programmes for the prevention of violence and on the promotion of gender equality. Even though some of the professionals showed some concern on the fact that most of the relations in which girls were involved were no healthy relations and that the role models which girls had been in contact with were not good ones, no specific work on gender equality was done. It is true that some professionals, especially in Catalonia, pointed out that the prevention of violence was done in their daily activities. However, the research shed light on the need to work on gender mainstreaming within residential care centres.

Linked with the lack of gender-based programmes, it is important to say that most of the professionals from Bulgaria, Italy and Catalonia could not find really big differences between boys and girls. Some of the professionals who did find some difference referred to the fact that “boys are more physical and girls more emotional” or that it was “easier to work with boys than with girls” or the other way around. However, no gender analysis of the differences between boys and girls was done. On the other hand, professionals from Finland did consider that there were great difference between boys and girls. In both cases, sensitisation on gender issues would be necessary since in any case there was a gender analysis of the difference encountered or not encountered.

Another interesting food for thought which was discussed in the professional’s focus group in Italy concerns gender differences among professionals working in the residential care. It was highlighted that in most of the case professionals were women and that therefore there was a gendered issue that needed to be discussed and analysed. In Cyprus, the residential care home is run in a way as to emulate a family environment. However, with the lack of male staff member to provide a balance and healthy alternative role model to the invariably dysfunctional one the girls may have known up to that point, makes the challenge more difficult.

Most of the professionals showed great admiration for the work they were doing. All of them agreed that it was a really challenging and complex job. They were aware of the responsibility they had being in the educators and, probably, the main referent figures of adolescent girls. However, most of the professionals ensured they enjoyed their work.

V. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The aim of these final considerations is to sum up of some of the most relevant results of the comparative research.

Regarding the profile of the girls living in the residential care centres, it is important to state that it is not possible to identify a common unique profile. Girls living in the centres are diverse as it is their past experiences and their lives in the centres.

For all the girls, the entrance into the care centre was very difficult, above all at the beginning, when they felt disoriented, alone and lost. Most of them ensure that it is not at all easy to understand why they are in the centre and how to get used to the norms and the routine of the institution. However, it is important to state that most of them recognised that the centre was a place of protection and the great majority felt that it is a good place to live. They ensured it was not ideal to be in the centre, but still they believed it was a good place to be.

According to girls from the 5 countries, one of the difficulties related to living in the centre was the need to get used to and adapt to the rules of the institution. In this sense, one of the aspects that was claimed by some girls was the lack of freedom, derived from an excess of protection towards them. Although they reckoned that protection was good for them, they were concerned about the lack of freedom they felt. Another negative aspect pointed out by many girls was the fact that the entrance into the centre meant leaving behind their former life (friends, school, family, etc.).

Girls expressed that even though it was not always easy to live with others, in general they had good relations with both the other girls and the educators working in the centre. Some of the girls had a great group of friend with whom they could trust. Others said that their group of friends was really small and that they had problem trusting people. Finally, others girls said that they did not have any friend. As said, some girls ensured that once in the centre, it was really difficult to keep old friendships.

Regarding the relations that the girls establish with their families, there was a myriad of situations. Some of the girls had regular contact with some family members, other girls had only spontaneous relation and some other had not contact at all. It is important to state that, in some cases, girls were still having some kind of relation with family members that had exerted violence against them.

Concerning intimate partnership relations, most of the girls except for Bulgaria and Cyprus had or had had a partner. In most of the cases, those relations were not healthy love relations and were based on romantic love myths, meaning that, for example, control and jealousy were understood as signs of love. In some cases, girls were involved in violent partnership relations. Therefore, the research findings put on the table the need to work specifically and more exhaustively on promoting equal partner relationships and the prevention of male violence.

With regards to girls' perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes, it is important to state that most of the girls reproduced traditional gender patterns, which reproduce and reinforce a patriarchal model. It is interesting to point out that, in some cases, there was a *decalage* between the way girls imagined what

was desirable to be and their real lives. That is to say that some of the girls had a non-sexist discourse but then in their real life they reproduced traditional gender roles, especially regarding intimate partnership relations.

In relation to the topic of violence, it is interesting to highlight that some of the girls, when asked about their definition of violence, referred to specific types of violence (physical, psychological and /or sexual) whereas others used more generic definitions such as “anything that hurts”.

All girls who were interviewed had suffered some kind of violence. However, not all of them recognised it during the interviews or wanted to talk about it with the research teams. In some cases there was a normalisation of the violence suffered and thus, it was not recognised as such. In some other cases, the girl just did not want to share her experience with the interviewer.

Girls had suffered all types of violence: physical, psychological and sexual violence. Some of the girls lived through one story of violence and others had been victims (and survivors) of different situations of violence. In most of the cases, violence had been exerted by a family member or by somebody they knew. It is precisely the fact that the perpetrator was a family member or somebody known what generated more confusion, disorientation and distress among the girls.

Apart from the experiences of violence taking place within the family unit, other girls also shared stories of intimate partnership violence, school bullying and trafficking of human beings for sexual exploitation.

During the episodes of violence, girls felt disoriented, lonely, sad and ashamed. Most of them did not know what to do and they did not know where to look for help.

The impacts of having suffered violence are strong and diverse among girls. Most of the girls had psychological consequences as well as relational problems due to the violence and the trauma experienced. All girls, of course, wished that they had not experienced violence in their lives. However, most of them ensured that having been through such hard and serious experiences had made them stronger and able to overcome any further obstacle that they may encounter in their life. In this sense, even the emotional fragility in which most of the girls find and have found themselves, they all had developed resilience strategies that allowed them to survive and have a new life to live.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Begara, A. et al (2006) *Los hombres, la igualdad y las nuevas masculinidades*. EMAKUNDE, Instituto Vasco de la Mujer. Vitoria-Gasteiz.
- Best, K. (2005) "Non consensual Sex Undermines Sexual Health". *Family Health International*. Vol 23 No4
- Bruera, S. and González, M. (2006) *Las Mujeres y el Poder: Aprendiendo de las Prácticas Políticas de las Mujeres*, Montevideo: Red de Educación Popular Entre Mujeres (REPEM), <http://www.repem.org.uy/?q=node/235>
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York (N.Y.): Routledge.
- Camarasa Casals, M. (2008) *GVEI. Gender Violence Effects Indicators. Proposal of new indicators to measure the effects of gender violence*. Barcelona: Surt. Fundació de dones. Fundació privada.
- Cohen, L. & Manion, L. (1994). *Research Methods In Education*. London & New York: Routledge.
- De Montis, M. (2006) 'Género, Empoderamento e Microfinanças', PowerPoint presentation at the I Seminário Empoderamento das Mulheres na América Latina, NEIM/UFBA, Salvador Bahia, May 2006.
- Eurochild (2010) *Children in alternative care - National Surveys-2nd Edition January 2010*
- European Women's Lobby (2007) Position paper "Elimination of all forms of Discrimination and Violence against the Girl Child".
- European Women's Lobby (2010a) Position paper "[Towards a Europe Free from All Forms of Male Violence against Women](#)".
- European Womens Lobby (2010b). *From Beijing to Brussels. An unfinished journey. The European women's lobby Beijing +15 report on the activities of the European Union*. Brussels: European Women's Lobby.
- Fausto-Sterling, Anne (2006) *Cuerpos sexuados. La política de género y la construcción de la sexualidad*, Editorial Melusina: Barcelona
- Gittins, D (1998) *The Child in Question*. Macmillan Press.
- Green, L (2005) "Theorising sexuality, sexual abuse and residential children's homes: adding gender to the equation". *British Journal of Social Work* (2005) 35, 453-481
- Griffith, A et al. (2009) *Youth Departing from Residential Care: A Gender Comparison*. J Child FAM Stud 18:31-38. Springer Science+Business Media, LLC
- Kehily, M.J. (2004) Understanding childhood: an introduction to some key themes and issues, in M. J. Kehily (ed.) *An Introduction to Childhood Studies*, Maidenhead: Open University Press/McGraw Hill, ISBN 0-335-21267-0.

Kehily, M.J. (2005) From the margins to the centre: childhood as a gendered experience, 'Gendered Childhoods' special issue of *Gender and Education*, 17, (5), pp. 463-71).

Lee, J. (2008). *Survivors of Gendered Violence in the Feminist Classroom*. *Violence against women* 2008 14:1451-1464.

López, R (2001) *El sexe de l'Àngels. Recursos per a l'educació amb perspectiva de gènere i LGTB (lesbiana, gai, transsexual, bisexual)*. Ajuntament de Barcelona. Direcció de Drets Civils, Barcelona.

McCarry, M. (2005). Conducting social research with young people: ethical considerations. In: Skinner, T., Hester, M. & Malos, E. (Eds.) *Researching Gender Violence. Feminist methodology in action*(87-104). Willan Publishing.

Millet, Kate (1969). *Sexual Politics*. New York: Equinox Books- Avon.

Nussbaum, Martha C. (2000). *Women and Human development. The capabilities approach*. Cambridge University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha C. (2005). *Women's Bodies: Violence, Security, Capability*. *Journal of Human development*. Vol. 6, No. 2, July 2005.

Nussbaum, Martha C. (2011). *Creating Capabilities: the human development approach*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Mass.

Oinas, E. (2004). *Haastattelu: kokemuksiä, kohtaamisia, kerrontaa*. Teoksessa: Liljeström, M. (Toim.). *Feministinen tietäminen. Keskustelua metodologiasta* (s. 209 – 227). Tampere: Vastapaino.

O'Neill, T (2008) *Gender matters in residential child care*. In A. Kendrick (Ed.), *Residential child care: Prospects and challenges*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Romano, J.O. (2002) 'Empoderamento: Recuperando a Questão do Poder no Combate à Pobreza', in J. Romano and M. Antunes, *Empoderamento e Direitos no Combate à Pobreza*, Rio de Janeiro: ActionAid

Romito, Patrizia (2008) *A Deafening Silence: Hidden Violence Against Women and Children*. Bristol: Policy press. University of Bristol.

Salem, Richard. "Empathic Listening." *Beyond Intractability*. Eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. Posted: July 2003 <<http://www.beyondintractability.org/bi-essay/empathic-listening>>.

Sardenberg, M.B. Cecília, 2008 "Liberal vs Libertating Empowerment: conceptualising women's empowerment form a Latin American feminist perspective" *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 39, Num.6, December 2008. Institute of Development Studies.

Sheffield, Carole. "Sexual Terrorism". In: O'Toole, L., et al. (Eds.), *Gender violence. Interdisciplinary perspectives*. New York: New York University Press.



Funded by the European Union



Siekkinen, K. (2007). Syvähaastattelu. Teoksessa: Aaltola, J. & Valli, R. (Toim.) Ikkunoita tutkimusmetodeihin I (s. 44 – 59). Jyväskylä: PS-Kustannus.

Townsend, J., Zapata, E., Rowlands, J. Alberti, P. & Mercado, M. (1999). Women and Power. Fighting Patriarches & Poverty. London & New York: Zed Books.

UNICEF (2002) Adolescence. A time that matters. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), New York.

UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children, 2006

UNICEF (2008) From invisible to indivisible, promoting and protection the right of the girl child to be free from violence.

UN Development Fund for Women (2003). Not a Minute More: Ending Violence against Women.

Walby, S. (1992): Theorising Patriarchy. Blackwell Pub. Oxford.

Wee, Viviane et al. (2008) Women empowering themselves. A framework that interrogates and transforms. The Research Programme Consortium on Women's Empowerment in Muslim Contexts: gender, poverty and democratisation from the inside out, Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong