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# **Children's rights in Macedonia – from children's perspective**

**SKOPJE, NOVEMBER 2009**

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# Prologue

*For those who want to know more about how this report was prepared and what is the idea behind it.*

In front of you is the Optional Report or the so called Shadow Report prepared by the children involved in the Project “Building a culture of children's participation”. This is the first time in Macedonia that children prepare their report and advocate for it before the Committee on Children’s Rights at the United Nations (UN). Very few countries in the world have ever been presented to the Committee with an alternative report on the situation with children’s rights prepared by children.

The Convention on Children’s Rights was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989. The rights set out in this Convention define the universal principles and norms on the status of the child. Republic of Macedonia joined the Convention in November 1993. The first report on the situation with children’s rights should be submitted by the endorsing country no later than two years after the ratification of the Convention. Furthermore, reports are required on each five years, with a possibility for additional interim reports, if that is needed. In 2007, the Republic of Macedonia submitted the second periodic report for the Convention. All reports are reviewed by the Committee on children’s rights of the UN, which meets several times a year in Geneva. Once the Committee receives the state reports, it then requires written information by the nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations. What is particularly important is that the Committee especially appreciates if children submit their report and participate at the meetings (sessions that discuss the reports and seek answers from the government on certain issues). Respecting the opinion of children and participation of children in matters of their interest is of particular importance for any country that aspires to be democratic and tailored to children. Children's participation enables children and young people to be heard, to actively create and to drive positive changes in the community.

For that purpose, despite the nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations, children also begin to unite and prepare their reports, which should help the Committee on Children's Rights to get a clear picture of whether the state reports portray the actual situation of children, to set priorities and identify key issues to the governments.

During the preliminary meeting, the Committee on Children's Rights takes into consideration all relevant information obtained from children and non-governmental organizations and prepares a list of questions which are submitted to the governments. It is required by the governments to respond to these questions in writing. Then, for the plenary session, the Committee invites representatives of the government to respond to certain questions.

In order to adequately address the requirements of the Committee on Children's Rights, in the fall of 2008, the First Children's Embassy in the World Megjashi began implementation of the project "Building a culture of children's participation". The activities were directed towards more active involvement of children and young people in the process of monitoring children's rights, particularly because **the Government of the Republic of Macedonia has still not adopted children's participation as a regular policy in decision making in the area of children's rights. The absence of mechanisms for hearing the voices of children at the national level is the reason why their voices are not being heard and why children are not actively involved in creating and making changes.** Preparation of alternative reports is an important step towards achieving this goal. Therefore, we created a network of 7 NGOs, who formed groups of 10 to 15 children, aged from 10 to 18 years, who were also involved in the research on children's rights in Macedonia, conducted by the children in June 2009. For more information about the survey, please see:

<http://www.childrensembassy.org.mk/?ItemID=DED8E0F2EA1A2B4DB67BFA37D65147EB>.

Aiming to prepare a comprehensive report, Children's Embassy Megjashi teamed up

with another 6 NGOs: Humanitarian Association Mother from Kumanovo; Center for Balkan Cooperation Loja from Tetovo; Council for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency from Kavadarci; Women's Civic Initiative Antiko from Kicevo; Center for Civic initiative from Prilep and Center for Sustainable Development Porta from Strumica. We have organized three trainings and three workshops, made many friendships and did a huge job. This report came as a result of that process.

We express our gratitude to the Delegation of the European Union and UNICEF for their support in the process of preparation of these reports.

Gordana Pirkovska Zmijanac  
Program Manager and Founder  
The First Children's Embassy in the World Megjashi

# I. Introduction

The shadow report, prepared by the children, has an assignment to present data about bigger number of children's rights from the Convention for the rights of the child, in order to present more accurate picture about the level of their obedience in the country.

This shadow report was made by a group of children and youths, members of seven NGO's: Women's Civic Initiative Antico – Kichevo, Humanitarian Association Mother – Kumanovo, Council for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency – Kavadarci, Center for Sustainable Development – Gate (Porta) – Strumica, Center for Balkan Cooperation - Ljoja – Tetovo, Centre for Civic Initiative – Prilep, First Children's Embassy in the World - Megjashi – Skopje.

The group is consisted of 62 children from 7 cities and the same number of civil organizations. Among the members of the group, there are children from primary and secondary education, from various ethnic groups, children with disabilities and children that do not go to school.

The research<sup>1</sup> was made by children from 10 to 18 years of age with a help of a questionnaire, which was created by the children. The survey was conducted in 41 primary and 24 secondary schools in 16 municipalities and 7 cities including: Skopje (10 municipalities), Strumica, Kicevo, Kavadarci, Tetovo, Prilep, Kumanovo.

The survey was conducted on 2234 pupils during the month of June 2009. According to the ethnicity of the surveyed pupils, 1282 (57.4%) are Macedonians, 659 (29.5%) are Albanians, 74 (3.3%) are Roma, 44 (2%) are Serbs, 33 (1.5%) are Bosnians, 31 (1.4%)

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.childrensembassy.org.mk/default-en.asp?ItemID=862D8413F56DC242A8469C4ECF8E95C1>

are Turks, 4 (0.2%) are Vlachs and 19 (0.9%) are others. Some of the respondents ie 88 (3.9%) refused to answer the question on ethnicity.

According to the gender distribution of the respondents, 1034 (46.3%) were males and 1078 (48.3%) were female. 122 (5.5%) respondents refused to answer the question. This report shall review the results according to gender, age and city.

Within the project "Building a culture of children's participation" three trainings on child rights were organized, including workshops and a campaign.

Two of the trainings had the topic "Children's rights and monitoring of children's rights", and the third training was "Children in the process of preparing the shadow report and reporting on the state of children's rights."

We treated these topics and were writing the report on the workshops. Among other things, we participated in the campaign "Education for all".

Being put aside that the above mentioned topics were treated through friendship and cooperation, we, the children, as participants, had the opportunity exactly through this project to influence the introduction of positive changes in our community. With these data, we gave a picture of the children's rights situation in Macedonia, and also offered recommendations which we believe will contribute to their improvement in the future.

The Shadow Report is a part of the project "Building a culture of children's participation," funded by the European Union and co-financed by UNICEF, and created by the First Children's Embassy in the World Megjashi.



## II. Children's familiarity with their rights and the Convention

One of the basic obligations of the States parties which have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child is to widely inform people (adults and children) of its contents (children's rights) on appropriate and active way. That's why the first few questions from our survey are related to how children are informed of their rights (and the existence of the Convention) and where did they get the information from.

The question "What rights of the child you know?" even 73% of the children left it unanswered, which actually testifies to the fact that big part of the children in Macedonia do not know their rights. 27% of children who answered the question cited the following rights:

1.	<b>Right to upbringing and education in mother tongue</b>	<b>43.0%</b>
2.	<b>Right to free thinking, freedom of speech, religion</b>	<b>21.3%</b>
3.	<b>Right to survival and development in peace and freedom</b>	<b>19.7%</b>
4.	<b>Right to love, protection from abuse and maltreatment</b>	<b>9.1%</b>
5.	Unsuitable answers	<b>6.0%</b>
6.	<b>Right to be respected and to respect the others</b>	<b>4.9%</b>
7.	<b>Right to play, free time and recreation</b>	<b>4.1%</b>
8.	<b>Right to home, parents/family</b>	<b>4.1%</b>
9.	<b>Right to health insurance</b>	<b>2.9%</b>
10.	<b>Other</b>	<b>2.6%</b>
11.	<b>Privacy</b>	<b>2.6%</b>
12.	<b>Right to identity</b>	<b>2.1%</b>
13.	<b>Right to free friendship</b>	<b>1.9%</b>
14.	<b>Right to equality (without discrimination)</b>	<b>1.3%</b>
15.	<b>Freedom of choice</b>	<b>1.2%</b>
16.	<b>Right to access appropriate information</b>	<b>0.3%</b>

***We believe that not knowing the law of equality by the children is a serious problem because it is an essential right and a right which is an important feature of any democratic state.***

On the question "According to you, does the rights of the Child include its responsibilities", 82.5% answered affirmative. On the question "What do you believe is the responsibility of the child?" the respondents said that responsibility is

<b>1.</b>	<b>To fulfil its own obligations</b>	<b>63.9%</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>To behave with respect towards the others</b>	<b>61.8%</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>To respect the rights of others</b>	<b>46.8%</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>To advocate for respect of other people's rights</b>	<b>20.2%</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>6.4%</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Unsuitable answer</b>	<b>6.4%</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>To study and complete the responsibilities at school</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>To respect the adults (the parents)</b>	<b>0.6%</b>

This data shows that the respect of the adults and the parents is of at least importance for the children.

***According to us, to change this situation it is necessary the family to start functioning on a more democratic way, in other words, to respect more and to take in consideration the children's thinking when making decisions about the family, which will help establish friendly relationship among the parents and the children, and with that it will bring even more respect.***

On the question "Where did you get information about the rights of the child?", the children gave the following answers:

<b>1.</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>68.9%</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>TV</b>	<b>46.5%</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Home</b>	<b>39.1%</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Internet</b>	<b>28.9%</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Newspaper/Magazine</b>	<b>25.6%</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Relatives/Parents</b>	<b>18.8%</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Non-governmental organizations</b>	<b>10.2%</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Radio</b>	<b>8.0%</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>5.2%</b>
<b>10.</b>	<b>Without answer</b>	<b>3.1%</b>
<b>11.</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>0.1%</b>

*In our opinion, NGOs should make recruitment of new young members (ie to be more widespread among children) and to devote more attention to children's rights and their implementation in our country. Also, this data shows that parents themselves are unaware or do not know children's rights.*

On the question, "Have you heard about the Convention on the Rights of the Child?" 53% of the children said yes, while 38.5% said no. The children found out about the Convention through the same sources that they found out about their rights.

In order to reduce the large percentage of children who are not familiar with their own rights and the Convention, we recommend holding discussions, workshops, seminars and preparation of educational material (posters, flyers) disseminated mainly through schools.

### **III. Participation of children in decision making on issues of their interest**

Respect for children's opinions and participation of children in decision making concerning them, are not only beneficial for children, but also benefit the whole society. This is one way of understanding their real problems, but also a way for their effective solution.

#### **1. Respecting children's opinion in the family**

Most children think that their parents do not impose their views and respect their opinion about the way they dress, what they eat, going out, friendship, learning, personal beliefs and playing.

The data that 24% of children are influenced by their parents about their personal beliefs and 22% on how to use free time should not be ignored.

***But given that children are not fully physically and mentally mature, sometimes these influences by parents may be in their favour. However, this is not acceptable if these imposed attitudes affect negatively on the child.***

#### **2. Respecting children's opinion in the school**

Among other things in our poll we asked the children how much is their opinion respected by the teachers. 40% responded often, 38%, said rarely, and 7% said never. From this we can conclude that the opinion of the child is not respected enough, neither is taken in consideration by teachers.

*It is a violation of a children's right which could have a negative impact on the further development of the student. (It might occur by fear to express their own opinion). It is therefore necessary to better inform the teachers and to raise their awareness of the importance of this right.*

Most children (65%) are aware of the existence of the School Code (rules) of conduct, but some of them (31%) were involved in its adoption and are better acquainted with its contents.

### **3. Children's parliament and other forms of children's association**

Most children respondents are unaware of the existence of a Children's parliament, organization, debate club or other forms of association in their environment, which prevents their involvement in them.

On the question "Is there in your environment a Children's parliament (organization, debate club or other forms of association)?", we received the following responses:

<b>Yes</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>I don't know</b>	<b>47%</b>

Most acquainted with the existence of such forms of association are the children from Kavadarci (34%) and Strumica (50%) where the number of those who answered affirmative to this question is significantly higher compared to other cities.

Of those who know of the existence of the Children's parliament, 16% think that it contributes to the improvement of the children's rights and children's expression of opinion, while 2.5% think that it does not contribute.

*In order to be better acquainted with the Children's parliament and its work, we suggest better promotion, especially within schools.*

#### **4. Are the children powerful enough to make positive changes?**

According to the survey 76% of children think that they are powerful to make positive changes on issues of their interest.

*This is another reason for children to be directly involved in the decision making process for issues that concern them.*

## **IV. Violence against children**

According to the results of the survey questions on violence against children, we classified them within the family, school, the street and among friends and peers.

### **1. FAMILY**

In the families of 64% of respondents there is no violence, while 21% of children reported that there is violence, of which 2.3% responded that it happens every day.

<b>Everyday violence according to cities</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Tetovo</b>	<b>0.9%</b>
<b>Kumanovo</b>	<b>5.4%</b>

<b>Everyday violence by age</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>First year high school</b>	<b>5.2%</b>
<b>Seventh grade</b>	<b>1.1%</b>

“Has it happened to you to personally hit/beat up a member of your family?”

<b>You personally to hit/beat up a member of your family?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>14%</b>

In terms of mental violence, categories that stand out the most are insulting (30%) and mockery (18%). This is more notable among students of third year (45% insulting, 24% mockery). Most likely this happens because there are older children who are physically and mentally more developed and on which parents can not apply physical force. A similar percentage representation is in the opposite situation, when children personally insult or ridicule a family member.

*According to the obtained data, the violations of the children's rights within the family are often made by the sibling (brother/sister), while they are mostly respected by the grandmother / grandfather.*

## **2. SCHOOL**

On the question "Does your school have violence?" even 56% of children (same percentage both boys and girls) have confirmed that their school has violence, and in 14% of cases it is happening everyday. In the high schools the violence is more present by 6% than in the primary schools.

***The most common forms of violence between the teacher and the child are: saying abusive names and nicknames, insults, mockery due to ethnic origin and application of physical violence.***

On the question "Do you know a child that was hit by a teacher / professor?" 57% of the respondents answered affirmative, which represents a higher number than the percentage of children who admitted that they were hit by a professor (14.5%).

<b>Forms of violence</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Slap on the face</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>Stick</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Vulgar words</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Chalk</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>A kick</b>	<b>15%</b>

***According to us, the teachers consider the physical violence as an effective pedagogical measure, so they apply it and think it could be tolerated.***

The questions "Are you informed of a case of violence of student against teacher / professor?" and "In what way did a student attacked a teacher?" 35% of the respondents answered yes, in these forms: with vulgar words 52%, with a slap 29%, with chalk 18%, with kicks and stick 17%.

***Girls and boys use different forms of violence, more common among the girls is the mental violence with a difference of 26% compared to boys, while boys use more physical violence with a difference of 26% compared to girls.***

Among the forms of violence that exist in the school environments, counts in the sexual harassment, of which 9% answered affirmative. We believe that this number is higher



because many children do not know what is meant by sexual harassment (probably because the school has no sexual education), and some of them are ashamed to admit it.

*Most cases of school violence remain invisible because the children are afraid to tell about it. Children should be encouraged to talk about these issues because the silence of the children complicates the solution of the problems.*

## V. Discrimination

The poll shows that 39% of boys and 43% of girls, sometimes, in some situations, felt discriminated (oppressed).

*We believe that one possible reason for these results is due to the fact that the right of equality (no discrimination) is one of the least known rights (2%).*

<b>What was the reason you felt discriminated for?</b>	
<b>age</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>language</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>ethnicity</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>gender</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>religion</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>race</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>other</b>	<b>36,65%</b>

Most age discrimination occurs in the cities Kavadarci and Kicevo (60%) and least in Tetovo and Kumanovo (40%). Every second pupil / student from 7th grade felt discriminated because of age, while the lowest percentage of discrimination is among the eight-graders - every third pupil, which is not a small figure.

The language as a reason for discrimination and is most present among the boys - two times more than among girls. In Kavadarci the percentage of language discrimination is lowest (6%) and highest in Tetovo (29%). This kind of discrimination is most common in the sixth grade (28%) and least occurs in the third year of secondary education (13%).

The ethnic discrimination is the most present in the cities of Tetovo (31%) and Kicevo (32%), as well as language discrimination, probably because the members of different ethnicities speak different languages. The boys feel more discriminated (22%) than girls (12%). Most discrimination on this basis is present in first year of high school (23%), and the least in third year of high school (10%).

The girls are more sexually discriminated than boys (a difference of 8%). This type of discrimination, as well as the previous two, is most present in the cities of Tetovo (20%) and Kicevo (21%), and mostly occurs among students of first year high school (23%), and the least at third year high (11%).

Religious discrimination is also represented in children, mostly in the fifth grade (31%), and the least at third year high school (5.7%). It occurs most often in the cities of Tetovo (25%) and Kicevo (32%).

The race as a reason for discrimination is more present among boys (14%) than girls (5%), mostly in the fifth grade (17%), the same as the religious discrimination, but the least in the seventh grade (6%). This type of discrimination most often occurs in Kicevo (21%).

Social status discrimination is mostly happening in the city of Tetovo (27%) and least in Kicevo (17%). The discrimination on this basis is mostly happening by peers (84%), and after that are the professors (44%). This question does not have differences according to the gender of the respondents, but there are some in terms of age. In

elementary school, the percentages range from 15% to 23% and in secondary schools from 24.5% to 34.5%.

On the question of ethnic origin discrimination, 21% of respondents personally felt this kind of discrimination, mostly by their peers (77%), and 29% by their teachers. This type of discrimination most often occurs in Tetovo, and most rarely in Kavadarci. On the basis of ethnic origin, the boys feel more discriminated (27%) opposed to the girls (16%). Similarly as the basis of social origin, the ethnic origin (nationality) discrimination in primary schools ranges from 13% to 23%, and in secondary schools from 20% to 33%.

*Many schools are violating the right to education for children with disabilities as a result of lack of appropriate conditions for their inclusion in regular classes, which among other things represents a form of discrimination.*

## **VI. Institutions, organizations and individuals that care about protecting children's rights**

In our survey we also asked the children about their opinion on which institutions and individuals are responsible to secure their rights. On this question we received the following results:

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>State</b>	<b>71%</b>
<b>Family</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>School</b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>Non-governmental organizations</b>	<b>20%</b>

However, only 21.5% of children have addressed somewhere when one of their rights was violated, while 35% said they did not experience violation on their rights.

The children have most confidence in their parents, and half of the children turned to them for help. 13.5% of children turned to the police, and 2% turned to the SOS phone numbers.

Most probably these 2% are due to the fear of the children to expose their identity, especially those who are living in smaller towns.

Additional information is that only 6% of children are familiar with some SOS phone number where they could turn for help.

The best known phone numbers are those of the police, SOS telephone for children and youth - Megjashi and SOS line for assistance from human trafficking.

***At a time when the number of drug addicts is constantly increasing, especially among young people, the fact that a very small percentage of people are familiar that there is drug counselling is frightening.***

Only 166 of 2234 respondents know the numbers of the drug counselling.

We can not avoid mentioning that only 2% of children whose rights were violated turned to their schools, and only 0.3% to the Centre of social affairs.

Although the authorized persons employed in these institutions are more competent than the parents, the children still do not have confidence in them.

Some of the schools do not have enough developed communication between the authorized persons and students.

***As a reason for children not turning to the centre for social work could be cited that a good part of them probably are not aware of the existence of such centres and their work.***

15% of the respondents were satisfied, while 2% were not satisfied with the institution in which they turned to when one of their rights was violated.

On the question "Have you heard about the First Children's Embassy in the world Megjashi?", 43% answered yes, of which only 3% know what is the role of this organization.

Approximately the same percentages were obtained on the question of whether the children heard (45%) about the Ombudsman and which is its role (4.4%).

### **What do children do to protect their rights?**

***We believe that we, as children, can and should contribute to protect ours, as well as other children's rights. But do the children do that?***

From 66% to 75% of children defend their attitudes in order to protect their rights in the family, the school and the street. But, 16% to 18% of children do not dare to say something and thus contribute to the protection of children's rights, regardless of the environment in question.

***We believe that the silence and the withdrawal of children are due to their character, manner of education, pressure from parents, the fear that is occurring in children and the dependence from the social characteristics and norms in their environment.***

Although only 73% of children show interest in involvement in activities that would contribute to the protection of children's rights (such as "inclusion of all children in the

educational process"), however only 29% had the opportunity to engage in these activities.

We think that this is due to the few activities and not informing the children of its existence.

## **VII. Quality of life**

In order for one child to develop into active and successful young person, its quality of life is very important. Taking this fact into consideration while doing the survey, we asked a couple of questions with intent to find out how the children grade their quality of life.

The following question was asked: "Do the children receive enough information about cultural topics and events?" This question was answered positively by 69% of the respondents, on the account of 15% that answered negatively. This percentage shows that almost three quarters of children are informed about the cultural events in their city, which is very positive.

***Anyhow, there is a need for higher frequency of cultural events, as well as organizing cultural and artistic events, directly aimed towards the young population.***

Next was the question "Do the children personally receive information about their health protection?" 70% answered yes, while 13% answered no. According to gender, this question showed that the girls are more informed about this topic (76%), than the boys (68%).

***This is a good percentage of being informed, but in our opinion the situation can be improved by employing full-time school doctors that can help children when they***

***need doctor's help and care. This proposal comes from the fact that the state has obliged to every child to secure access to medical and health services.***

Sports related, 70.5% of children answered that they receive information about sport related questions of their interest. However, we can not avoid to mention that a lot of children do not practice sports and are not involved in any other social activities.

***Our recommendation is to immediately change the approach towards children in sports and sport activities, so they can lead more active and healthier life.***

On the question “Do you receive enough information about questions of your interest in the children’s rights area?”, 65% of the respondents answered yes. This data does not correspond with another important information that even 73% of children did not answer anything on the question “Which children’s rights do you know?”

***We can not say for sure why this contradiction exists, but it is obvious that a large part of children are not aware or do not know their rights.***

After all these questions, we came to a conclusion that the children receive the least information about questions of their interest in the sexual education area. Only 40% of children answered positive on this question.

***This tells us that the children are a little familiar with this topic which represents a huge omission because the less the children’s conscience is developed, the easier they can be abused or used for inappropriate purposes.  
That is why we think that the state should dedicate more attention in the future on this topic, through implementing sexual education in the school curricula.***

We also asked the children “Do you get enough information about addiction related questions – the harmful influence of the nicotine, alcohol and drugs?” Yes answered 57%, which means that the rest of the children are not informed.

*Maybe because of that fact, the children and youth start smoking cigarettes or start using drugs, which represents a big threat for their health.  
Our recommendation is to have open public debates on these topics, as well as awareness raising campaigns for children and youths.*

## **VIII. Special notice**

Besides all topics covered in our survey, we think that the following should be mentioned in a separate section

### **Children excluded from school**

In the last couple of years significant reforms in the field of education were implemented. Besides the law on obligatory primary education, another law was introduced for obligatory secondary education, which was accompanied by numerous campaigns. All this resulted with the largest number of children who continued primary education.

But according to recent government data (published in 2005) there are about 18,500 children in Macedonia who are fully excluded from school.

This data talks about a truly great figure, in which the biggest share holds the Roma children. The reason for this, most often, is not registering in the book of the born right after birth, which contributes to not acquiring their right to identity.



*To be able to include these children in the educational process, it is necessary for the state to find mechanisms for locating and registering newborn children and to expedite the procedure for acquiring identity for those children who do not have it done on time.*

We also believe that social workers should be engaged to work with their parents.

## **Quality education**

One of the bigger problems in the schools is the low quality level of the education. The education curriculum in the primary education has extensive contents, inappropriate for the children's age and a lot of data. One lesson usually contains a minimum of 10 to 20 new and unfamiliar words. 12 mandatory subjects in one grade, which are present in the schedule at least with two classes per week, require from 10 year old children to memorise a lot of new information. Verification of knowledge is made by verbally repeating the memorised data.

Additional classes and sections in primary schools are rarely held. Children often go to private schools for foreign languages, or have to take private lessons in mathematics and other subjects, for which our parents have to pay separately.

The additional classes that are required for students with poor success are rarely held, and are not a regular practice.

High school curricula are obsolete, there are no adequate and modern tools for an education (especially for vocational schools), there is no maximum investment and engagement by the professors (teachers), there is corruption and indifference.

This shows us that Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is not fully respected and that the number of children who have the opportunity to develop their skills and talents by themselves is small, but also those who know what skills and talents they have are rare.

The program for talented children in Macedonia is exercised very rarely. The organization National technique, does not work at full capacity. The contests on certain subjects and for certain grades are very rare. The children do not have forms for acquiring and verification of additional knowledge.

***We think that the state can solve the above listed problems, but should invest more from the budget into education and it needs to appoint more strict inspections in the schools.***

## **Children with special needs**

All Member States of the Convention on the Rights of the Child are obliged to respect and ensure the children's rights for every child without any discrimination, even without discrimination based on disability.

But even then, schools that teach 71% of respondents are not accessible to persons with disabilities. This inaccessibility for children with disabilities, among other things, prevents their inclusion in school. This means that they will either fall under the classification children excluded from school or their parents will be forced to include them in some private schools. Rates of education in private schools range from 1000 to 5000 euro for one school year, while the average salary in Macedonia is up to 350 euro.

***We think that this is a very serious problem for which our state must find a solution as soon as possible.***

## **Not respecting children's rights**

On the question "What rights are not respected in your family" 60% of respondents answered that it is the right of privacy, 32% the right of their own opinion, while 7% said it was the right of education.

Our survey included questions related to the rights of children in school. On the question "Has it happened to you personally, your rights not to be respected by your teacher/professor?" 30% said yes, while 33% refused to answer.

On the question "Has it happened to you personally, your rights not to be respected by your friends?" 28% answered affirmative, while only 32% left the question unanswered, probably because they were not sure whether their rights were violated.

## **IX. Conclusions**

1. 1/3 of children claim that the professors (teachers) do not respect their rights. We think that this is a great problem because the children learn from their teachers, from their lectures and their everyday actions.
2. Rights that are the most ignored in the family are the right to privacy (3/5) and the right to have own opinion (1/3).
3. 1/5 of children are exposed to family violence, at 2/3 of them this is happening every day
4. Half of the children claim that there is violence in their school. From them, 14% said that it is happening every day. 14.5% of respondents have experienced physical violence from their teachers (professors). According to us, the teachers (professors) are considering the physical violence as an efficient pedagogical measure and that is why they apply it and think it can be tolerated.

5.  $\frac{2}{3}$  of children said that there is violence on the streets, from which  $\frac{1}{5}$  claim that it is happening every day.  $\frac{1}{3}$  of respondents were physically attacked. According to these data we can conclude that the safety on the streets is on a very low level.
6. Between  $\frac{1}{5}$  and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of children said that they personally committed some kind of physical or mental violence in the family, at school or on the streets.
7. Between  $\frac{1}{6}$  and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of children refused to answer the questions of whether they were exposed to some kind of violence. We think that the reason for this lies in the fear to openly answer to this type of question
8. Only 21.5% of children turned somewhere for help when some of their rights were violated, and they trust their parents the most, to whom 50% turned for help
9. Only 60% of children know at least one SOS phone number where they could turn to for help, and  $\frac{1}{3}$  from them already reported some kind of problem
10. Only 166 from 2234 respondents know the numbers for drug counselling
11. The right of equality (without discrimination) is one of the lesser known rights (2%).
12. The children are feeling discriminated on several accounts: age (44%), language (19%), ethnicity (17%), gender (16%), religion (15%) and race (9%). Most discrimination is happening in the city of Tetovo, on the basis of language, ethnic origin, gender, religion, social status and race, as in the town of Kicevo for age, ethnic origin, gender, religion, race, and the least for social status.
13. The girls feel more discriminated than the boys about their age and gender, while it is the opposite for language, ethnic origin, religion and race.
14. Viewed by age, most discrimination is among students from fifth grade (on grounds of age and religion) and first-year high school (on the basis of ethnicity and language) and the least at third year high school. Similarly, as the basis of social status and the ethnic origin (nationality), discrimination in primary schools ranges from 13% to 23% and in secondary schools from 20% to 33%.

15. The children are discriminated the most by their peers (77%), and fewer (29%) by their professors.
16. Children with disabilities are discriminated in some schools because there are no conditions for their inclusion in the regular education, which is violating their right to education.
17. 3/4 of children do not know their rights, and to the ones that know them, the most popular right is the right to education on mother tongue, while the least known right is the right to equality (without discrimination)
18. 4/5 believes that the rights of the child include its responsibilities. They think that responsibility is to carry out their duties and to behave with respect towards the others.
19. Children have acquired information about their rights through school, TV, home and the non-governmental organizations
20. Half of the children heard about the Convention on the rights of the child from the same sources that they learned about their rights from

## **X. Our recommendations**

1. The state must take appropriate measures through its relevant institutions in order to guarantee the safety of the children in their every day life.
2. Actively promoting the peacefull education and inclusion in the regular education process in order to reduce the high rate of discrimination and violence among peers.
3. The state to find ways to support children/youth clubs (associations/societes) in schools and the civil organizations, where the children's participation will be promoted and encouraged.
4. Providing modern and professional conditions for quality learning of the curricula in the educational process.
5. Through public campaigns and media, children should be encouraged to report violence or any other form of rights violation

6. The state to find forms of mass informing about the children's rights to all categories of citizens (children, parents, school staff, and professionals from all relevant institutions).
7. The state to introduce legislation for the safe use of the Internet by minors (campaigns for safe use in school and through the media).
8. Every school to have a general practice doctor and a dentist.
9. The state should find mechanisms to eradicate the mendacity of children on the streets as a way to supply livelihood
10. Introduction of stricter measures for protection from inappropriate contents for the age and the psychophysical development of children in the media and other information services.
11. Stricter enforcement of the law for prohibited sale of alcohol and cigarettes to minors especially in smaller towns and ban of the sale of any pornographic materials in public places accessible to children.
12. Appropriate functioning of the professional services in the schools (teachers and psychologists) and expansion of the teams with social workers and special educators.
13. The state should find adequate forms that will introduce the children to the existence, operation and role of the centres for social work, SOS telephone numbers and the Ombudsman where they could turn to for any kind of help.
14. The state should find mechanisms for locating and registering the newborn Roma children and to accelerate the process of acquiring their identity for those who have not done in time, in order to enable them to be involved in the educational process.

# **XI. Recommendations from other children**

## **Education**

- \* Enforcement of the law for mandatory secondary education among students of Albanian nationality.
- \* Introduction of Board of pupils in primary and secondary schools through which students can express their needs and can communicate with teachers.
- \* Open Days for socializing of children, parents and teachers.
- \* Organizing more one-day excursions outside the country for the students to acquire new experiences
- \* Introduction of visual material in the schools that will break the monotony and will achieve greater success with the students.
- \* Classes to last 30 minutes.
- \* More modern equipment in the classrooms, including TV, air conditioning, DVD.
- \* To introduce practice in education, with nicely furnished classrooms and rooms where children could gain lasting knowledge.
- \* The law "Free textbooks for students from secondary and primary schools" to not exempt students from the vocational schools, because it is discriminating them by incomplete implementation of that law.
- \* To reduce the number of classes and to eliminate the unnecessary subjects, or to give freedom to the students to choose what they would like to learn.
- \* To provide better conditions for holding the educational process, especially for persons with disabilities.
- \* Learning by 5 subjects depending on the further education of the child.
- \* Fruit for the break between classes.
- \* Additional classes for socializing and debating of the children on the topic "Children's Rights
- \* Following the classes via the Internet and computer.
- \* At the end of the school year, a book for each student with exemplary behaviour.

- \* The right to healthy food in school – bigger breaks, removal of carbonated beverages, abolition of FAST FOOD, introduction of fruit, vegetables and other that do not destroy the children.
- \* To not go to school on Saturdays in replacement for the Tree day.
- \* Establishing a network of cooperation with foreign countries which will enable the realization of exchange between students in order to deliver educational experiences from one country to another.
- \* Better education in rural areas.
- \* Each school (Kichevo) to have security for children to be safer during their stay at the school.
- \* Holding local discussions and debates where the children could present their personal opinions on everyday issues that surround us.
- \* Education for all citizens about children's rights and their importance, in order to provide a better environment for the healthy development of children.

## **Health**

- \*Health section in every school.

## **Discrimination**

- \* Organizing trainings for teachers on the topic "All children are equal," in order to stop with their separations, which are often based on financial status and reputation of the children's parents.
- \* Organizing more activities (discussions, debates, seminars, sports activities), where children can make friends from different ethnicities.

## **Media**

- \* To reduce violent programs, news and movies on TV.



## **Other**

- \* In our town (Kichevo) children have no place for recreation and games. We want children's park and playing courts to be built.
- \* Introducing legislation to ban coercion of Roma minors to beg and to be released from school to carry out domestic and unimportant activities by their guardians.
- \* To have penalties for each adult who does not allow the children to play and who are drilling holes in their balls.
- \* To allow children to express and show their creativity.
- \* To be able to easily find information of children's interests.
- \* We want to enter Europe under our constitutional name.
- \* Stricter laws regarding the sale of cigarettes and alcohol as well curfew for children less than 18 years.