



Analysis of the Situation of Street Children within Key EU Member States in 2009

European Federation for Street Children- *Help us to save the children from the street*

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Introduction

The **European Federation for Street Children (EFSC)** has requested that its member organisations contribute to a fact finding on the situation of street children in the countries and regions where they work.

In order to receive concrete field-related facts and tendencies on the situation of street children, and to obtain comparable information, all organisations have been asked in November 2009 to fill in a survey with questions relating to the number of specific groups of children, including street children, children in care, children in single-families, children in poverty, children attending school, children using drugs, children in conflict with the law, unaccompanied minors and foreign children. In addition, these organisations have been asked to indicate which are the responsible authorities which have the highest relevance to their work and which are the policies and legislative frameworks, which are of the most relevance to their work. The definition of street children used in this survey is from UNICEF and the Council of Europe.¹ Evidence shows that the number of street children worldwide is almost impossible to recognize.²

Ten surveys were returned from national organisations working in twelve European countries in mid February 2010

Organisations and countries that have taken part in the survey:

- Save the Children Norway South East Europe Regional Office, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Alliance for Children and Youth, Bulgaria
- Gavroche Association, Bulgaria
- Silesian Diacony, Czech Republic
- Hors la Rue, France
- The Smile of the Child, Greece
- The Italian Association for Aid to Children (CIAI), Italy

¹ A **street child** is 'any boy or girl for whom the street in the widest sense of the word has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults' (**UNICEF definition**);

'Street children are children under 18 who, for shorter or longer periods, live in a street milieu. They are children who live wandering from place to place and who have their peer groups and contacts in the street. Officially these children may have as their address their parents' homes or institution of social welfare. Most significantly they have very few or no contacts with those adults, parents, school, child welfare institutions, social services, with a duty towards them'. (**Council of Europe definition, 1994**);

² The World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF in the mid '90s estimated the number of street children to be 100 million. The Council of Europe estimates 7,000 street children in the Netherlands, 10,000 in France, 500 to 1,000 in Ireland, 6,000 to 7,000 in Turkey and 1,000 in Bucharest, Romania, in *Casa Alianza, Worldwide Statistics*, September 2000.

- Istituto don Calabria, Comunita' San Benedetto, Italy
- Associazione Maestri di Strada ONLUS, Italy
- The First Children's Embassy of the World Megjashi, Macedonia
- The Society of the Friends of Children, Poland
- Instituto de Apoio à Criança (IAC), Portugal
- Fundația Română pentru Copii, Comunitate și Familie, Romania
- Diagrama Foundation Psychosocial Intervention (Fundación diagram intervención psicosocial), Spain
- Pupil Parent Partnership, United Kingdom

I. Target groups³

Questions	Bosnia & Herzeg.	Bulg (ACY)	Bulg (GA)	Czech Republic	Greece	France	Italy (CIAI)	Italy (IdC)	Italy (ONLUS)	Macedonia	Poland	Portugal	Romania	Spain	UK
Scope of the organisation's activities National or Regional	Reg. NGO (Europe)	Loc, Nat.	Loc.	Nat.	Nat.	Reg.	Nat.	Reg. (in Italy)	Nat.	Nat.	Nat.	Nat.	Reg. (in Roman.)	Nat.	Loc, Reg. Europ
I.1 How many children does your organisation work with?	122	155	58 ⁴	100	6653	298	37	300	300	22	30.000	424	1.300	414	228
I.2 How many of them are street children according to the internationally agreed definition ⁵ ?	108 (88%)	155 (100%)	7 (6%)	-	1013 (15%)	105 (35%)	-	40 (13%)	50 (16%)	12 (50%)	18.000 (60%)	70 (16%)	60 (5%)	-	⁶
I.3 How many of them are in care of institutions ?	4 (3%)	12 (8%)	10 (17%)	-	299 (2009) (4%)	16 (5%)	-	All of them	100 (33%)	-	0	12 (3%)	70 (5%)	414 (100%)	39 (17%)
I.4 How many of them live in lone-parent families ?	55 (45%)	88 (57%)	50 (86%)	35 (35%)	433 (6%)	85 (28%)	6 (16%)	No one	150 (50%)	None	5.000 (16%)	34 (8%)	430 (33%)	0	110 (50%)
I.5 How many of the children you are taking care of are regularly using drugs ?	2 (suspected)	9 (5%)	0	-	No data collected	26 (8%)	-	10 (3%)	30 (10%)	None	-	47 (11%)	10 ⁷ (1%)	80 (19%)	136 (60%)
I.6 How many children you are taking care of are living in poverty (relative or absolute) ?	122 (100%)	155 (100%)	58 (100%)	5 (5%)	2474 (40%)	253 (85%)	-	Yes	80 (25%)	22 (100%)	15.000 (50%)	347 (82%)	1,300 (100%)	0	149 (65%)
I.7 How many children you are taking care of are regularly attending school ?	56 (45%)	48 (30%)	23 (40%)	50 (50%)	All	30 (10%)	All	10 (3%)	All	None	All	374 (88%)	90% ⁸	382 (92%)	43 (19%)

³ Percentages in this table are taken from of all children that an organisation works with.

⁴ The children Gavroche Association from Bulgaria work with are from poor families and families with social problems, who are on the street during the day, but do not live on the street.

⁵ See footnote 2

⁶ Concern for street children in the UK has been low, principally because not many are seen: the last rough sleeper count found only two under-18 year olds sleeping rough. However young people who run away often choose to sleep in dangerous places, and the number of runaways is increasing.

⁷ This figure is only a guess.

I.8 Do the children you take care of have regular access to healthcare ?	60 (50%)	No	45 (77%)	Yes	Yes	None	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not all	Yes	All, but not all use the services.	95% ⁹	414 (100%)	228 (100%)
I.9 How many children you take care of are in conflict with the law ?	2 (suspected)	7 (5%)	12 (21%)	30 (30%)	None	45 (15%)	None	10 (3%)	50 (20%)	None	-	61 (25%)	50 (4%)	0,2%	143 (63%)
I.10 How many children you take care of are unaccompanied minors ?	4	110 (70%)	10 (17%)	40 (40%)	94 (1%)	142 (50%)	None	20 (6%)	0	None	-	18 (4%)	-	414 (100%)	12 (5%)
I.11 How many children you take care of are foreigners ?	10 (8%)	0	0	3 (3%)	2594 (39%)	All (100%)	14 (40%)	23 (7%)	0	None	1.000 (10%)	22 (5%)	-	414 (100%)	57 ¹⁰ (25%)

Analysis of the different target groups of children on which EFSC member organisations focus their work

The organisations involved in this consultation are primarily national organisations, although frequently focusing their work, locally with children. The number of children the organisations work with vary, for example the Polish and Greek organisations work with thousands of children, while other organisations, for instance the ones in France, Italy, Portugal and Spain work with a only a few hundred children. To be able to interpret the figures given by each organisation, they have to be seen within perspective and within the overall work with specific groups of children by that particular organisation. Bearing in mind the different types of organisations, some trends can be noted with regard to the implementation of children's rights of specific vulnerable groups of children.

Most organisations work with **children living on the streets**, although for most organisations this group makes up less than 20% of the children they work with, with the exception of Alliance for Children and Youth in Bulgaria (100%), Save the Children, working in South-Eastern Europe (88%), Hors la Rue in France (35%), The First Children's Embassy of the World in Macedonia (50%) and the Society of Friends of Children in Poland (60%). A few organisations focus the majority of their work on **children in care**, meaning children not living with their biological parents, these include the, Italian NGOs ONLUS and the Istituto don Calabria as well as the Spanish NGO Diagrama Foundation Psychosocial Intervention.

⁸ It is difficult to give a correct data because of the failures (lack of willingness) in recording children's absences in schools.

⁹ A very small percentage of Romanian children have access to regular healthcare. For those children living in poor families, in rural areas and Roma children the treatments and medical supplies are not accessible.

¹⁰ Young people who define themselves as White British are leaving 171 outside this category.

More than 50% of the children that Bulgarian organisations work with live in **single-parent families**. This percentage is between 35% to 50% for organisations working in South-Eastern Europe, the Czech Republic, Italy (only one NGO), Romania and the UK. Within the other countries this is a very low percentage. The number of **drug users** amongst children taken care of by the NGOs is relatively low or non-existent, with the exception of the UK where more than 60% of the children taken over are regularly using drugs.

The number of children taken care of by the NGOs **living in relative or extreme poverty** are particularly high in Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Romania, the UK and certain areas of Italy, where all children taken care of by the involved NGOs live in poverty. This percentage is also high for Portugal, France and Poland.

Many children taken care of **regularly attend school**, with the exception of children in France, Macedonia, the UK and a region within Italy, where only a few children attend school regularly. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria approximately half of the children attend school regularly. **Access to health care** is possible for the large majority of children, excluding France, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and parts of Bulgaria.

The percentage of children taken care of which are **in conflict with the law** is relatively low in all countries, except the UK (63%). Only one Italian NGO, the Portuguese and the Czech NGOs have slightly higher numbers of children taken care of, between 20% to 30%, which have been in conflict with the law.

Only four specialised NGOs work with high numbers of **unaccompanied minors**, they are, the Spanish NGO (100%), the Bulgarian NGO ACY (70%), the French NGO (50%) and the Czech NGO (40%). The other NGOs have very few or a low percentage of unaccompanied minors in their care. Similar numbers are given by the NGOs on the number of **foreign children** they take care of: all Spanish and French children are foreign children and approximately 40% of the Greek and Italian children (CIAI NGO) are foreigners.

II Estimates about extreme child exclusion

Questions	Bosnia & Herzeg.	Bulg. ACY	Bulg. GA	Czech Republic	France	Greece	Italy (CIAI)	Italy (IdB)	Italy (ONLUS)	Macedonia	Poland	Portugal	Romania	Spain	UK
II.1 How many street children according to the internationally agreed definition do you estimate to be there in your town ?	N/a ¹¹	600	5-10	No data	600	No data ¹²	No info provided	50	500-800 ¹³	-	17.500 Aprox.	No info provided	100	250 Aprox. ¹⁴	¹⁵

¹¹ No reliable statistics exists due to the current situation and the lack of appropriate institutional and measurement mechanisms, which is in itself part of the problem.

II.2 How many street children do you estimate to be there in your country ?	N/a	-	500-600	No data ¹⁶	5000	No data		6.587 ¹⁷	unknown	More than 1000 ¹⁸	About 350.000		4000	1500 ¹⁹	147.000 ²⁰
II.3 How many children living in extreme exclusion ²¹ do you estimate to be there in your town ?	> 200	-	>1000	No data	1000	No data		No data	3000				3000-4000		21%

According to data collected between 01.01.2007 and 31.12.2007 by the Ministry of Work, Social Policies, Displaced and Refugee Persons of Canton Sarajevo, 204 children were reported to be panhandling in the territory of CS. The quantity of registered minors amounts to 17% of total reported cases of individuals involved in begging and vagabonding.

¹² Cannot be estimated as there is great mobility and no formal data available.

¹³ Statistics are about primary and middle school drop-out rates in the area of the Comune di Napoli.

¹⁴ Source: Asociación Emaná

¹⁵ **'Runaways'**: The Children's Society estimates that about 100,000 children under 16 run away from home every year. Most stay away for between one and three nights. Most do not travel long distances; only one-fifth travel further afield than the nearest city. The majority will stay with friends or sleep in garden sheds, fields or bus stations. **Homeless**: There are few statistics on youth homelessness. Centrepoint in London provides a place to stay for over 500 young people every night; in 2000 one in five were 16 and 17 year olds.

Street Homeless: The last rough sleeper count found only two under-18 year olds sleeping rough on the streets. However young people who run away often choose to sleep in dangerous places. Source: http://www.sssk.org.uk/content/_pages/Street%20Kids%20in%20Britain.pdf

¹⁶ There are children, who are running from care of institutions and these are hidden in the street.

¹⁷ These are only unaccompanied foreign minors, source: Bank data of the Committee of foreign Minors, 30 September 2009.

¹⁸ 58% of the street children are from the Roma population; 15,5% are at age 0-6; 64% are at age 7-14; 88,5% are with antisocial behaviour and 11,5% have social acceptable behaviour.

¹⁹ Source: <http://www.elmundo.es/2001/05/25/sociedad/1000462.html>

²⁰ <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/article-23427989-homeless-children-figure-doubles.do>

²¹ Children in extreme exclusion are children with severe disabilities, with HIV, Roma children and children in conflict with the law, which are excluded from normal life (definition given by Romanian NGO).

Key conclusions on the numbers of street children and children living in extreme exclusion

One of the key conclusions that can be drawn when requesting estimates of extremely excluded children and the numbers of street children within the towns and countries that NGOs are working in is **the lack of reliable data**. In addition, the UK NGO has remarked on the definition of street children and the existence of different groups of children living on the streets, for the majority of the time. They have categorized them into three groups, according to the UK context which could be considered as street children, the first group being **'Runaways'** which are young people who stay away from home for at least one night without the permission of their parent or care taker. A quarter of runaways will sleep outside. The second category is referred to as the **'Homeless'**, which is someone who has no home where they can be expected to live, and who may be staying with friends, in a hostel or in a shelter. The third category is the **'Street homeless'**, which is someone who is homeless and sleeping physically outside on the street or elsewhere.

Several organisations have made **recommendations to improve the collection of reliable and comparable data**.

The key recommendations include:

- Create **centralised governmental mechanisms**, which are **cooperating with NGOs and organisations working on the ground** to collect data on street children and children living in extreme exclusion. Train professionals working in the field to collect data.
- Create or cooperate with **national observatories on children and youth**, which need to be made responsible for collecting data about street children and children in extreme exclusion.
- **Develop indicators** for the collection of data on street children and excluded children.
- **Create networks between the competent institution and NGOs** operating on the ground. (Ensure involvement of paediatricians, general practitioners, infant and primary schools working on the ground.)
- **Share outcomes and results of collected data between the different stakeholders.**

Although data is very often not available or sources are not given, one of the prudent conclusions that can be drawn from the estimated number of street children and extremely excluded children given by organisations working directly with the most vulnerable children show that the **numbers of street children are unexpectedly high**, and run into the thousands and in Poland even within the hundreds of thousands of children (350.000 children).

It is striking that estimated data of street children shows that where these exist, there is **no difference between Western European countries and Eastern European countries**: high numbers of children live on the streets in Western European countries, such as France, Italy and Spain, as well as in Eastern European countries, including Romania, Macedonia and Poland, proving that economically well-off countries are not surpassing countries that are economically less well-off.

Possible ways to improve Member organisations' involvement in the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion.

1. Reference Ministry most relevant to the organisations' work

The Ministries which are the most supportive of the work of the member organisations of EFSC taking part in the survey are for the majority of the organisations (9 organisations) the **Ministry of Social Affairs**. Other important ministries are the **Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice** (each 4 organisations). Ministries important for only one or two organisations are the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of labour and immigration, and the Department of schools and families.

2. Institutions and (local) actors of highest relevance to the organisations' work

All organisations taking part in the survey indicated a list of institutions and actors which are the most relevant for their work. Though the list of different organisations, ministries, local authorities and other actors is varied, some common trends can be seen.

- The first trend that can be found is that most organisations work with **local or regional institutions**, which include for a majority of the organisations cooperation with municipalities, but also local and regional centres for social work, health, internal affairs, family care and education.
- A second trend that is relevant is that many organisations cooperation with other **NGOs** (6 organisations) and with **schools** (8 organisations)
- For several organisations cooperation within the **juvenile justice field** is important, including cooperation with the police (6 organisations) and with the ministry of justice, public prosecutors, juvenile justice departments and judges.
- Within the **child protection** field several organisations value the importance in their work to cooperate with child protection departments (5 organisations) or with crisis intervention centres, counselling centres, the ombudsman and sensitised citizens calling helplines.
- **Public social services** or social work is important for many NGOs (6 organisations).
- Cooperation with sponsors and donors was raised by two organisations as being important actors for them.
- International organisations, the EU Commission and the European Social Fund are important to cooperate with for only a few organisations.

3. The policies which are of highest relevance to the organisations' work

When analysing the policies which are most relevant for EFSC member organisations there are no real trends of policies which are relevant for a majority of the organisations. Policies which are important for a group of organisations are child protection policies, including policies in relation to trafficking and missing children. Another area of relevance is social policies, including social services for children, social exclusion and social care.

Several organisations refer to National Strategies and Action Plans for Children as being relevant for their work. In addition, the area of juvenile justice, including crime prevention and domestic violence is important for several organisations. A last relevant policy area is education, including improving educational methods and educational care for children.



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- *and relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large*

For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/progress>

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

The poll has been carried out by the European Federation for Street Children; the analyse was made by Mieke Schurman, consultant on children's rights.