

Abolishing corporal punishment of children



The Council of Europe wants a continent free of corporal punishment. Hitting people is wrong – and children are people too.

To protect children from corporal punishment, the Council of Europe has developed tools for the use of governments, parliaments, local authorities, professional networks, civil society and, more generally, anyone caring for children.

Abolition of corporal punishment by 2009 has become a global goal.

www.coe.int/children



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What is corporal punishment of children?

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child defines corporal punishment as “any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light”.

Most corporal punishment involves hitting (smacking, slapping, spanking) children, with the hand or with an implement. It can also involve kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scalding or forced ingestion.



*Hitting adults is called assault.
Hitting animals is called cruelty.
Hitting children is “for their own good”.*

Why should we abolish corporal punishment of children?

1

It is a violation of children's rights to respect for physical integrity, human dignity and equal protection under the law.

2

It can cause serious physical and psychological harm to children.

3

It teaches children that violence is an acceptable way of resolving conflict.

Children are not mini-human beings with mini-human rights.



4

It is ineffective as a means of discipline. There are positive ways to teach, correct or discipline children, which are better for children's development and for family relations.

5

It is more difficult to protect children if corporal punishment is legitimate – this implies that some forms or levels of violence against children are acceptable.



Hello! Can you tell me what reasonable chastisement is?

How can we achieve abolition?

1

Through law reform

- ▶ Introducing an explicit prohibition of all corporal punishment in all settings, including the home
- ▶ Ensuring there are no existing legal defences that justify corporal punishment by parents or others
- ▶ Providing guidance on appropriate enforcement of these laws

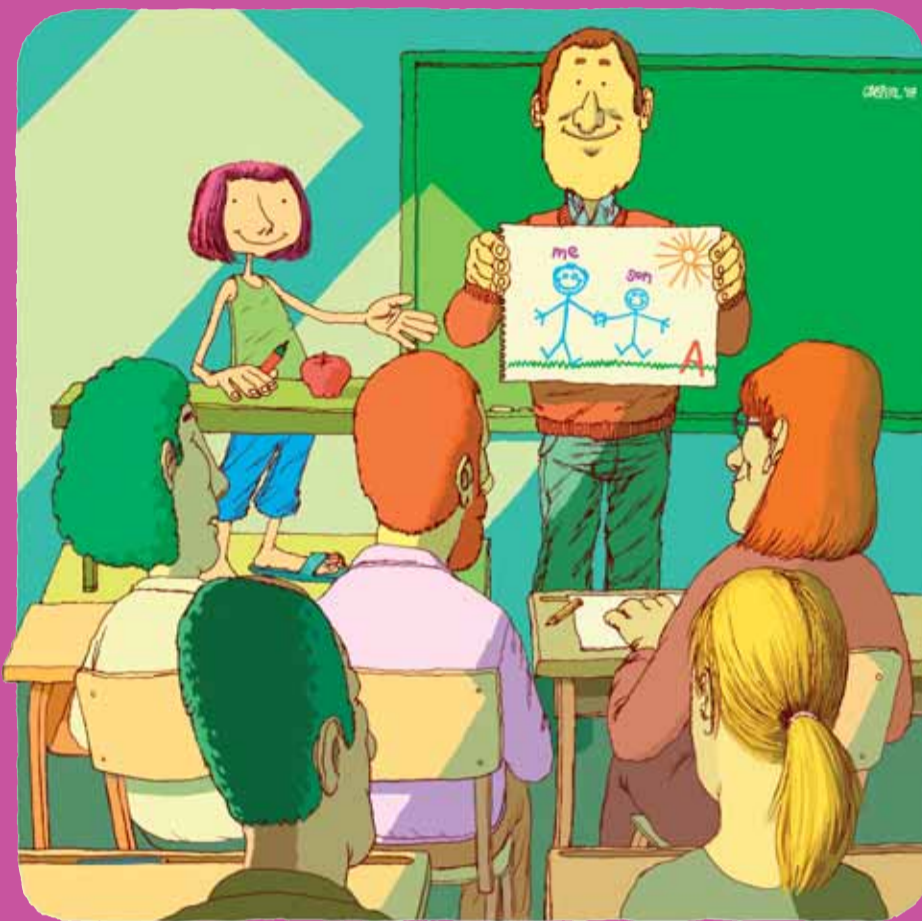
2

Through policy measures

- ▶ Ensuring comprehensive prevention policies and effective protection systems are implemented at different levels
- ▶ Promoting positive, non-violent forms of child-rearing, conflict resolution and education

Criminalising corporal punishment of children is not about putting parents in jail.





Abolishing corporal punishment means promoting positive parenting.

3

Through awareness raising

- ▶ Ensuring comprehensive awareness raising of the prohibition of corporal punishment, and of children's rights in general

Children's rights concern us all.

