



Global Initiative to
**End All Corporal Punishment
of Children**

SWEDEN – COUNTRY REPORT

Summary of necessary legal reform to achieve full prohibition

Corporal punishment is prohibited in all settings, including the home.

DETAILED COUNTRY REPORT

Legality of corporal punishment

Home

Corporal punishment is prohibited in the home. In 1957, the law excusing parents who caused their children minor injury through corporal punishment was removed from the Penal Code. In 1966, the provision allowing “reprimands” was removed from the Parenthood and Guardianship Code. Corporal punishment was explicitly prohibited in a 1979 amendment to the Parenthood and Guardianship Code which states (article 6.1): “Children are entitled to care, security and a good upbringing. Children are to be treated with respect for their person and individuality and may not be subjected to corporal punishment or any other humiliating treatment.” Article 5 of the Constitution (1975) states: “All citizens shall be protected against corporal punishment....”

Schools

Corporal punishment was prohibited in gymnasiums (elite secondary schools) in 1918, in state-run secondary schools in 1928, and in all schools, including elementary schools, in 1958. Article 13 of the Act Prohibiting Discrimination and Other Degrading Treatment of Children and School Students (2006) protects students from all degrading treatment by staff members and management. A new Education Act is expected to come into force in 2011.

Penal system

Corporal punishment is unlawful as a **sentence for crime** and as a **disciplinary measure** in penal institutions under the Constitution (see above).

Alternative care

Corporal punishment is unlawful in alternative care settings under the Parenthood and Guardianship Code (see above).

Prevalence research

A 2009 review of the thirty years since the legislation was introduced showed that there has been a consistent decline in the use of physical punishment and the number of adults who are in favour of it. In the 1970s, around half of children were smacked regularly; this fell to around a third in the 1980s, and just a few per cent after 2000. Children who are still smacked experience this less often; 1.5% experience physical punishment with an implement. The reporting of cases of assault on children has increased since the 1980s, reflecting less tolerance within society for violence towards children. The review also notes that in 1981, just two years after the law was introduced, over 90% of Swedish families were aware of the prohibition on corporal punishment. The change in legislation was accompanied by a large public awareness campaign, with pamphlets distributed to every household with children and information printed on milk cartons.¹

A study carried in 2007 examined five European countries: Sweden, Austria, Germany, France and Spain. Five thousand parents (1,000 in each nation) were interviewed about their use of and attitude towards corporal punishment, their own experiences of violence and their knowledge and beliefs about

¹ Modig, C. (2009), *Never Violence – Thirty Years on from Sweden’s Abolition of Corporal Punishment*, Save the Children Sweden and Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

the law. Fourteen per cent of Swedish parents said they had “mildly” slapped their child on the face and 17% had slapped their child on the bottom; 4% had given their child a “resounding” slap on the face and 1.8% had beaten their child with an object. Three out of four (76%) had never used corporal punishment; 88% agreed that “one should try to use as little corporal punishment as possible” and 93% agreed that “non-violent child-rearing is the ideal”.²

For research published more than 10 years ago, see the research pages at www.endcorporalpunishment.org.

Recommendations by human rights treaty bodies

Committee on the Rights of the Child

(12 June 2009, CRC/C/SWE/CO/4 Advance Unedited Version, Concluding observations on fourth report, para. 39)

“The Committee recommends that the State Party continue and strengthen its efforts to provide adequate assistance to children who are victims of child abuse, including through:...

f) public awareness-raising and education campaigns about the negative consequences of ill-treatment and preventive programmes, including family development programmes, promoting positive, non-violent forms of discipline.”

European Committee of Social Rights

(1 January 2001, Conclusions XV-2 vol. 2, pages 567-569)

“The Code of Parenthood and Guardianship expressly provides that children may not be subjected to corporal punishment or other degrading treatment.”

European Committee of Social Rights

(1 January 1981, Conclusions VII, page 90)

“In particular, the committee noted the efforts made in the legislative field through the enactment of legislation (in force since July 1979), to prohibit physical punishment or other injurious or humiliating treatment towards children....”

Universal Periodic Review

Sweden was examined under the Universal Periodic Review process in 2010. Full prohibition of corporal punishment of children was achieved in 1979.

Report prepared by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children

www.endcorporalpunishment.org; info@endcorporalpunishment.org

January 2011

² Bussmann, K. D. (2009), *The Effect of Banning Corporal Punishment in Europe: A Five-Nation Comparison*, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg