

Irene Fereti

Legislative measures for the protection of children from family violence. The case of the Greek legislation

Family violence has been increasingly recognized as a major problem in contemporary Greek society. For the last two decades feminist organisations have developed support networks, counselling services and worked systematically in order to bring domestic violence into the limelight, while at the same time the child protection system, in both its governmental and non-governmental structures, has addressed the issue of child abuse and neglect.

As it has been the case in many countries, the two major categories of victims, women and children, have been approached from a completely different perspective and ideological context, the result being that many aspects of violence against children have been ignored.

Recently, on the 24th of October 2006, a new legislation was passed by the Greek Parliament in order to deal with the phenomenon of family violence in its entirety. The protection of children who grow up in a violent home has been a priority in drafting the new law in which a number of articles were especially incorporated to safeguard children's rights from various forms of victimisation.

In the new law, we see for the first time, among others, the introduction of: a wider definition of the family which includes various contemporary forms (single parent, reconstituted, non-married partners, etc.), the prohibition of corporal punishment of children, the protection of children from testifying in court, the recognition that a child who is witnessing violence without being directly victimized is also a victim and the obligation of teachers to report cases of abuse. Such innovations are in accordance with the changes which have occurred over the years at both the family and societal level.

As research data from recent studies in Greece shows violence in the home is a problem which needs to be addressed. To this end, the new legislation is considered to be a significant step forward, however, a lot more remains to be done in terms of policy measures and prevention strategies for an effective application of the law.

Irene Fereti

Institute of Child Health, Athens, Greece

e-mail: irenefereti@yahoo.gr