

**PREVENTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
AGAINST CHILDREN IN SWEDEN**

The issue of domestic violence against children was intensified in Sweden about a century ago. The term "violence", as seen in the use of physical force, in European countries has long included physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and economic violence. And each of these types of violence (and in practice they are mostly complex) involves punishment - from administrative one to imprisonment.

The undisputed priority of Sweden was established in 1979, when the first in the world ban on the physical punishment of children was imposed at the legislative level. Not only physical force, but also raising your voice to a level that has a harmful emotional impact, cannot be applied to children. It is strictly forbidden to leave children alone (in some cases up to 12 years of age). Neighbors will consider it a civic duty to report such cases to the police, and upon returning home, parents may not stay at home with their children – they will be temporarily registered in special shelters until their parents are found guilty. They will have to prove their ability to obey the law and raise their children again.

If the minor is abused, the Law on Social Service obliges workers in institutions working with children to report to the social service immediately. Upon receiving such a signal, the social service must immediately assess whether the child needs immediate protection. The service then has 14 days to reach a decision to open an investigation. Except in special cases, it must be completed within four months. According to the law, the investigation should be conducted without unnecessary inconvenience and, if necessary, with the involvement of experts. Stakeholders should be informed that an investigation has been initiated. If it appears that a minor needs care outside the home, a plan for such care should be developed. Since 2013, social workers have an obligation to take into account the child's own opinion (as much as she is able to express it). Unless the child is in direct danger, any decision shall be made in agreement with the parents and taking into account the interests of all parties.

It is not proper for other countries to blindly copy the Swedish experience, but it can be critically assessed and used in Ukraine for improving our own policy in combating that disgusting social evil.

Language adviser O. S. Levashov