

Mapping of existing strategies and policies related to school related gender-based violence and abuse (WP3)

Comparative report

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Mapping existing strategies and policies related to school gender-based violence and abuse

This comparative report has been developed under the [“Children First- Addressing Gender – based Violence from the bottom - up”](#) project. Children First is a children-led, transnational project that aims to address dating violence as a form of school-related gender-based violence. The information presented in this report was collected from both desk-based and field-based research conducted in all partner countries under Work Package 3: Mapping of existing strategies and policies related to school related gender-based violence and abuse.

Primary and secondary research of the WP3 of the [“Children first project”](#) aimed to:

- a. Identify and map existing policies and strategies and models for prevention of school related gender-based violence (SRGBV);
- b. Identify existing tools available to educators to promote prevention of SRGBV;
- c. Capture awareness, views and attitudes of educators and the broader community (parents and community) on school related gender-based violence.

This report consists of 5 national reports summaries prepared by project partners from: Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, and the UK.

Identifying and mapping existing policies and strategies and models for prevention of school related gender-based violence (SRGBV)

Abstract

Although the five project countries rank in the Gender Equality Index very differently (UK – 6th, Italy – 14th, Cyprus – 21st, Lithuania – 22th, and Greece -28th), in all five countries school related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is rather a new theme of discussion, appearing in the last few years. The term gender-based violence (GBV) in the majority of cases is used as the synonym for violence against women (VAW). In Lithuania, specifically, there is still no legal definition of GBV; domestic violence is defined as a gender-neutral offence. The terms GBV and SRGBV are mainly used by NGOs

and researchers. In all five countries GBV (and SRGBV) are acknowledged as a manifestation of system and unique forms of discrimination which presents an impediment to women's equality.

Although a huge improvement has been achieved in the recent years, the reports stress that GBV is still a prominent issue among the female population of the countries and the LBTQI+ community.

National contexts

For the purposes of secondary research, project participants explored existing safeguarding policies and strategies at the national and EU level to prevent, address and safeguard children & young people at risk of SRGBV. National and EU legislation, and policy documents, academic and grey literature, as well as practical results of past European funded projects was explored as well.

The research suggests that GBV is a grave problem in all five countries as in spite of various legal acts adopted and policies developed and implemented, statistics and research showed high prevalence of GBV or/and SRGBV.

In the UK, over the years there has been a moral panic regarding the experiences of young people and an influx of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) prevalent in schools and in their social spheres. Research from the UK's leading children charity the NSPCC¹ found that young people aged between 13 - 18 years old encountered different forms of dating violence such as physical, emotional, manipulation and verbal. Within the research:

- Two-thirds of female participants and a third of male participants reported that they had experienced emotional violence
- 50% of the girls stated that they had experienced some form of sexual and physical violence in at least of one of their partner relationships
- Only a minority of young people told an adult about the violence

These statistics, which have been consistent throughout the 2010s, indicate the severity of school related gender-based violence (SRGBV) and the importance of having measures in place that can prevent and intervene when these forms of discrimination occur.

In Italy, in terms of data available, national statistics focus mainly on violence against women. The most recent ones show that, compared to the past, the incidences of GBV are decreasing. However, the National Institute for Statistics (Istat) study of 2015 attests that 31.5 % of women between 16 and 70 years old (6.78 million) still experienced some forms of physical or sexual violence, 26.4 % of the same sample experienced psychological or economic violence from the current partner and 46.1

¹ NSPCC, (2011), RESEARCH REPORT 'Standing on my own two feet': Disadvantaged Teenagers, Intimate Partner Violence and Coercive Control, Available: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/standing-own-two-feet-report.pdf>

% from an ex-partner, and 21.5 % experienced persecutory acts from an ex-partner (Istat, 2015)². Furthermore, it has been proved that very recently, during the lockdown which was imposed in Italy following the spreading of the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of women asking for help from anti-violence centres increased by 74.5 % - an increase of 1,200 women in one month. Concerning stereotypes and the social image of GBV, in 2018 another Istat study showed that 7.4% of people surveyed believe that it is always or sometimes acceptable that "a boy slaps his girlfriend because she flirted with another man", 6.2 % could accept a slap within the couple and 17.7 % believe that it is always or sometimes acceptable for a man to check the mobile phone or activity on social networks of his wife/partner (Istat, 2018).

More specifically on dating violence, from the few existing data sources a clear need to deepen the matter emerges: Istat data show that 5 out of 10 boys would not hesitate to hit the partner (Istat, 2014), and 2 out of 5 girls think that hitting a girl is an act of virility (Istat, 2015). Also in 2014, a survey by Telefono Azzurro and Doxa Kids states that out of a sample of over 1,500 Italian adolescents aged 11-18 years, 22.7 % experienced being screamed at by their partner, 13.9 % have been insulted, and 32.8 % know someone who has been insulted by their partner. Finally, data from the National Adolescent Observatory show that in 2017, out of a sample of 11,500 teenagers aged 11-19 years, 1 in 10 is afraid of their partner, 3 out of 50 adolescents feel stuck in a relationship, because of the partner's threats of committing suicide, 2 out of 50 have been physically attacked by the partner and 2 out of 10 verbally, and 19 % claim to have a possessive partner. Finally, 20 % check the partner's phone, 16 % have been forced to delete contacts on social networks because of the partner's jealousy, and 7 out of 100 have been forced to share social network passwords with their partner.

In Cyprus, the data of national statistics on GBV is limited and not representative of the magnitude of the problem, especially regarding GBV faced by children and teenagers. All data collected by the authorities relate to certain forms of violence such as domestic violence, sexual assault and rape and there is no public body assigned to implement targeted and large-scale research on the matter. Instead, all the data offered for the case of Cyprus, comes either from International and EU statistics or from the independent work of private organisations in Cyprus such as the Mediterranean Institute of Gender, the Cyprus Family Planning Association, the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family, ACCEPT and others. Less attention is paid to the violence occurring in the LGBTQI+ community in Cyprus and there is no demographic data to evaluate the forms and extent of such violence. Nonetheless, it is estimated that at least 22% of Cypriot women aged 15 and over have experienced physical and / or sexual violence, while 39% of women have been subjected to psychological violence by their partners (FRA-European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014). In addition, 60% of women who were victims of violence did not report the incident (Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family, 2012). The Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family, responsible for

² The report is dated 2015. More recent data has been collected, but a new report on women's safety is yet to be published.

preventing and managing domestic violence, has a 24-hour helpline where victims can report incidents of violence and seek help. This body keeps records of these incidents for statistical reasons.

In 2017 only, there were 1,680 incidents of violence, 48.8% were cases with a history of abuse and complaint and 32.6% were new cases (Helpline 1440 Statistics 2017, 2017). Of these cases, 89.1% of the victims were women and 9% men, 10.2% of the victims were under 18 years of age, and only 1.2% of the perpetrators were under 18 years of age (ibid). 45% of victims experienced abuse from their partners and 61.4% of the victims still live with the perpetrator. 68.5% of these victims had children. 30.1% of the victims reported that the abuse was emotional, 53.7% emotional and physical, and 11.3% that the abuse involved emotional, physical and sexual violence. Of the cases brought before the court, 6.9% of the perpetrators received a warning, 0.4% received a prison sentence, 0.1% received a fine and 0.3% received a restraining order (ibid). Hence, the lack of statistical data on the subject refers to the lack of systematic training and education of professionals who will be in charge of recording cases of GBV in Cyprus, the absence of a governing body to coordinate such actions, the lack of a national policy scheme to address these needs, and the absence of a central database where the recorded data is stored.

In Lithuania, in 2019, every tenth victim of domestic violence was a child under 18 years of age. A recent survey³ revealed that every fifth household has to deal with this complex issue. 60% of victims do not report domestic violence to any institution, which can partially be explained by high rates of victim-blaming in Lithuanian society. According to a Eurobarometer survey,⁴ 42% of respondents agree that women often make up or exaggerate claims of abuse or rape, and 45% agree that violence against women is often provoked by the victim. These victim-blaming attitudes are linked to the traditional roles of men and women in society.

48% of respondents in Lithuania stated that they know a victim of domestic violence from their immediate social circle (the EU average is 39%)⁵. In 2019, police registered 7,691 domestic violence offences, 80% of the victims of which were women of whom 79% were abused by their spouse or partner. In 2019, 21 women were murdered by their spouse or partner (61.5% more than in 2018). Lithuania ranks 6th in the EU in terms of the number of women killed by their spouse or partner (EIGE). A high murder rate and growing numbers of repeat cases of domestic violence are proving that Lithuania must urgently focus on primary prevention of gender-based violence.

Each year the numbers on violence against children are growing. According to the data provided by an official statistics portal (2018)⁶, 1,541 cases of physical violence against children were registered in Lithuania in 2017 (897 cases in 2016). Psychological violence was the most common type of

³ Survey of Lithuanian residents on domestic violence (2019), Baltic Surveys

⁴ [Special Eurobarometer 449. Gender – based violence](#) (2016)

⁵ FRA survey, Figure 9.5: Knowledge of cases of domestic violence in the circle of friends or family, or in the work environment, by EU Member State (%), source https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14_en.pdf (accessed 4 April 2020)

⁶ Violence against children in Lithuania, source:

[https://socmin.lrv.lt/uploads/socmin/documents/files/2018%2012%2005%20SADM%20smurto%20statistika_lentele_06\(1\).pdf](https://socmin.lrv.lt/uploads/socmin/documents/files/2018%2012%2005%20SADM%20smurto%20statistika_lentele_06(1).pdf)

violence against children in 2017. According to the survey conducted by the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, 45% of respondents agreed with the statement that if a boy pulls a girl's hair or lifts up her skirt, it is only an innocent show of affection⁷. These gender stereotypes have an impact on GBV rates among the young.

In Greece, there is very little evidence regarding the views and attitudes of teachers and parents regarding school-related violence on the basis of gender. Likewise, there is very limited research data regarding the capacity of the school institution and educational staff to address such phenomena, while it is noteworthy that most of the research carried out on the issue of school bullying concerns primary education and not the more advanced levels of education. Notwithstanding the lack of sufficient research data on the issue from the side of the educational community, the findings of past research on the subject present some very important conclusions regarding the prevailing attitudes and perceptions among teachers and educators in Greece.

In more specific, the results of the most recent available survey among school teachers (2019) revealed that almost half of the participants (44%) appeared to believe that they have contributed sufficiently to the prevention of incidents of school violence by taking some kind of action toward the evading of negative student behaviour. More than half of the surveyed teachers⁸ (59.3%) appeared to believe that the victims do not deserve to be treated in that manner, while 37.3% said that this kind of behaviour makes them quite angry⁹.

The legal environment

In the UK, an abundance of legislation and policies are being implemented: such as the 2010 Equality Act¹⁰ which protects all citizens from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society, and the 1998 Human Rights Act which sets out the fundamental rights and freedom of everyone in the UK. Other policies relating to gender equality centre around the elimination of all forms of GBV/VAWG in the UK. Examples of these have included legal provisions such as Modern Slavery Act¹¹, Domestic Violence Protection Orders¹², the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme¹³, the FGM Protection Orders and Duty report and the Violence against Women, Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Act in Wales¹⁴ to tackle offences such as stalking, forced marriage, FGM, revenge pornography, and

⁷ Nationwide survey on gender equality and GBV, 2019

⁸ Bibou-Nakou, I., Asimopoulos, C., Hatzipemou, T., Soumaki, E. and Tsiantis, J. (2014). 'Bullying in Greek secondary schools: prevalence and profile of bullying practices'. *International Journal of Mental Health Promotion*, Vol.16(1), 3- 18.

⁹ Christopoulou E., Alexandropoulos G. (2019). "The primary school teacher's views on bullying at school and the role of the principal in his administration". *Hellenic Journal of Research in Education*, Vol 8 (1), 41-62.

¹⁰ 2010 Equality Act. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

¹¹ The Modern Slavery Act 2015. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/30/contents/enacted>

¹² Domestic Violence Protection Order. Available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575363/DVPO_guidance_FINAL_3.pdf

¹³ Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-violence-disclosure-scheme-pilot-guidance>

¹⁴ Violence against Women, Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse (Wales) Act, 2015 Available at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/3/contents/enacted>

domestic abuse. One of the reasons why there has been a significant shift and focus on the eliminations of GBV from the UK government has been because of the lasting and damaging impact GBV has had on multiple generations particularly young people.

Section 175 of the Education Act (2002)¹⁵ states that schools and colleges have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people at their educational establishment. Just like any other sector, educational institutions need to comply with the following to protect children from GBV:

- **The Equality Act (2010)**¹⁶ - which prohibits discrimination, harassment and victimisation in education on the grounds of certain protected characteristics. Schools and colleges must not discriminate against sex, race, disability, religion/belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or sexual orientation
- **Gender Equality Duty (2007)**¹⁷ - schools have a legal responsibility to tackle sexual harassment and violence against women and girls
- **The Public Sector Equality Duty (2011)**¹⁸ - all public bodies (schools and colleges) have a legal requirement to eliminate discrimination and harassment of girls, to advance equality and opportunity for girls.

Italian legislation has made great steps forward in the last decade on tackling GBV, following three main objectives: preventing crime, punishing offenders, protecting victims. Even at school level, the legislation concerning the prevention of GBV at school appear updated, focused on education for gender equality and on supporting the elimination of gender stereotypes and norms. However, these attempts are only political orientations and not obligations (thus just in place theoretically), while the specific phenomenon of dating violence remains poorly addressed by laws and statistics (with the obvious exception of statistics and legislation about child sexual abuse, where referring to a romantic relationship is not possible).

As for legislation in Italy, GBV occurring in school is only partially addressed. Many recent reforms show a growing interest in gender education and elimination of discriminatory and sexist stereotypes and norms in primary and secondary education. Particularly, the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) has signed several Memoranda of Understanding with the Department for Equal Opportunities (DPO) over the last years, which inspired further laws, policies and action plans. The prominent texts on which this strategy is based are:

¹⁵ The Education Act (2002). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents>

¹⁶ 2010 Equality Act. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

¹⁷ The Public Sector Equality Duty. Available at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty>

¹⁸ The Public Sector Equality Duty. Available at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty>

- The **“Femicide Law” (Law no.119 of 2013)**, which followed the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, and the subsequent **Extraordinary Action Plan against sexual and gender-based violence**, which introduce trainings of school staff and a greater attention to gender in textbooks;
- The **"Good School Law" (Law no.107 of 2015)**, which through the introduction of a Three-Year Plan of Education promotes, among other things, equality, prevention of GBV and all discrimination, and informs and raises awareness of students, teachers and parents.
- In 2017, **the National Plan for Education to Respect** and the related **National Guidelines** add a reference to the fight against online discrimination, in line with the provisions of the same year to combat cyberbullying (Law no. 71 of 2017).

In this context there is no doubt that these legislative interventions, when applied, could indirectly contribute to raise awareness and preventing GBV among adolescents. However, the fact that the Italian regulatory framework does not mention the specific phenomenon of dating violence, nor promote investigations of its causes and consequences, drastically decreases its scope. On the contrary, a clear reference to such a frequent phenomenon in schools could favour its understanding between young people and adults, and facilitate its identification and elimination.

In Cyprus there is no comprehensive legislation on gender-based violence between children and adolescents, with an emphasis on the violence occurring in teen relationships. Nevertheless, already existing legislation/policies and laws cover a wide range of ages and individuals when discussing the elimination of violence towards women. All the provisions and legal frameworks on gender-based violence revolve around issues of gender equality, domestic violence, human trafficking and sexual abuse, specific articles of which may refer to children and adolescents. Most of them refer to women and sometimes neglect the LGBTQI+ community in Cyprus. The legal framework that protects children's rights from forms of violence (including gender-based violence) is a practice that usually stems from conventions of the European Union and the United Nations. In particular, the Council of Europe on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) was ratified by the Government of Cyprus in 2017.

In addition, in accordance with Article 34 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the Republic of Cyprus in 1991, State parties are obliged to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Other relevant laws concern the Establishment of Minimum Standards on the Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime Law (2016), the Combating of Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography, Law 91 (I) (2014) and the Domestic Violence (Victim Prevention and Protection) Law (2000).

Lithuania does not have specialised legislation addressing GBV. In 2011, Lithuania adopted the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence (Lietuvos Respublikos Apsaugos nuo smurto artimoje

aplinkoje įstatymas)¹⁹ that provided for the specific regulation of cases of domestic violence (this law is gender-neutral and does not recognise domestic violence as violence perpetrated by men against women) and included articles on the prevention of domestic violence. This law served as a basis for the establishment of Specialised Assistance Centres (SACs) for victims of domestic violence – NGOs that have extensive experience both in the field of gender equality as well as dealing with GBV issues. In 2019, SACs supported 11,164 victims of domestic violence (9,300 women, 1,788 men, 76 children: 75 aged 7 – 17 years old and 1 child under 7 years old). These centres also implement numerous initiatives aimed at the prevention of domestic violence among youth.²⁰

Policies, strategies and models for prevention of school related gender - based violence

Countries reported about existing policies, strategies and models for prevention of SRGBV:

In the UK, as a result of statistics data and research, there have been various tools and key measures set out by governments to tackle GBV in schools and amongst young people. These have included campaigns and project such as:

- **This is Abuse Campaign**²¹ “This is Abuse” campaign which ran from 2010 to 2014 was targeted at 13 - 18 years old to help to prevent them from becoming victims and preparator of abusive relationships. The campaign which was nationwide effort with posters plastered all over bus stops, TV shows and radio encouraged teenagers to rethink their views of controlling behaviours, abuse, violence and understand what consent means within their relationships. Most of the educational tools attached to this campaign consisted of facilitated lesson plans and campaign materials which led to in-depth discussion with young people about the dynamics of teenage relationships and what the next stages are for them in seeking help. The significance of this campaign was that it led to discussion that would normally happen in classroom also happen in different arenas such as the home, the media and within friendship groups.
- **Equally Safe in Our Schools**²² The “Equally Safe in Schools” project was implemented under the Scottish Government’s Zero Tolerance Policy. The aims of the project consisted of developing strategies that prioritise primary prevention and challenge the notions that violence is inevitable or acceptable. With the idea of creating a whole school approach, the project focussed on mapping the area or subjects in school where GBV was most prevalent and developing strategies where students and staff are able to identify and respond to incident of harassment and violent abuse.

¹⁹ [Republic of Lithuania Law on Protection Against Domestic Violence](#) (Lietuvos Respublikos Apsaugos nuo smurto artimoje aplinkoje įstatymas) (2011), No. XI-1425, 26 May 2011. [accessed 26 August 2019]

²⁰ Data provided by representative of SAC, more information and reports: <https://www.specializuotospagalboscentras.lt> (accessed on 6 May 2020)

²¹ *This is Abuse’ campaign 2010 to 2014* <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/this-is-abuse-campaign>

²² *Equally Safe in Schools: A whole school approach to Gender Based Violence*. Available at: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/researchinstitutes/healthwellbeing/research/mrccsocialandpublichealthsciencesunit/programmes/relationships/fisr/genderbasedviolencewholeschoolsapproach/>

- **Disrespect NoBody**²³ The disrespect Nobody Campaign helps young people to understand what a healthy relationship is, so that they can understand what consent means. The campaign was targeted at 12 - 18-year olds to prevent them from becoming perpetrators and victims of abusive relationships.

In Italy the best practises proposed in the report come from projects promoted by both local and national institutions, as well as from EU-funded projects realised in Italy over the past decade. They are:

- The **“Gender School” project**, promoted since 2015 by the National Agency INDIRE and DPO, and aimed at training professors and raise awareness in schools all around Italy²⁴,
- **“noisiamopari.it”**, a web portal of the MIUR, which since 2016 collect best practices and materials about GBV and gender education²⁵
- the project **“NoiNo.org”** of the Monte di Bologna e Ravenna Foundation, promoting trainings for boys and men about GBV since 2012²⁶
- the **DAPHNE project “Log-in”**, which allowed partners around Europe to promote online responsible behaviours against GBV among teenagers²⁷
- the **DAPHNE project “Youth4Youth”** addressing the issue of GBV among adolescents through trainings and awareness-raising campaigns²⁸
- similar objectives were pursued by the REC projects **“CONVEY – Digital Education for Gender Equality”** (through the creation of an online game and a training programme)²⁹ and
- **“SAFER - Systematic Approaches for Equality of gender”**³⁰.

In Cyprus, although issues such as gender equality, gender-based violence and the right to personal integrity are to some extent included in the Ministry of Education's curriculum for Health Education; sex education at all levels of education is still incomplete. However, the Ministry of Education and Culture established the Violence Observatory in schools in 2009. The objectives of the Observatory are to conduct scientific research aimed at measuring the phenomenon of violence in schools and the parameters associated with it, to formulate specific recommendations for determining political prevention and management of violence as a result of scientific research, education and awareness and the empowerment of parents, students, teachers and other professionals involved in the subject. The National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Violence at School, implemented for the period 2018-2022, is a commitment of the Ministry of Education in Cyprus to ensure the right of all members of the school community to coexist in a safe and peaceful environment, which promotes and respects human rights and ensures gender equality.

²³ Disrespect Nobody. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/disrespect-nobody-campaign>

²⁴ Link to the project's website: <http://www.genderschool.it>

²⁵ Link to the project's website: <http://www.noisiamopari.it>

²⁶ Link to the project's website: <http://www.noino.org>

²⁷ Link to the project's website: <http://www.comune.moderna.it/progetto-login/>

²⁸ Link to the project's website: <http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/youth4youth-empowering-young-people-in-preventing-gender-based-violence-through-peer-education/>

²⁹ Link to the project's website: <http://www.coveyproject.eu/?lang=it>

³⁰ Link to the project's website: <http://www.gendersafer.eu>

The Association for the Prevention and Treatment of Domestic Violence (SPAVO) and Family Planning Association (KSOP) provide a 24/7 line on domestic violence, shelters and many initiatives to prevent domestic and gender-based violence. Another NGO, Hope for Children-CRC Policy Center, recently launched the "House of Children" to provide forensic examinations, assessment, treatment and social rehabilitation to child victims of sexual abuse and their families.

The tools/programmes that exist to support the schools of Cyprus with the ultimate goal of reducing gender-based violence in schools are:

- the programmes offered by the **Educational Psychology teams** on gender-based violence,
- the "**Conflict Resolution - School Mediation**" programme in schools, providing students with problem-solving skills
- For teachers there is the "**Conflict Resolution in Primary School**" guide and textbook and the "**Recognition and Handling of School Bullying**" programme which aims to identify and understand bullying behaviour at school, and to reduce victimisation with the participation of all members of the school community.

The Best Practises derive mostly from EU funded programmes such as:

- the **SWPBS Erasmus+ programme**, which aims to establish an inclusive non-discriminatory social culture and necessary socio-emotional and behavioural supports for all children in schools
- the **SAFER project** which aims to raise awareness of primary school teachers, students, parents and relevant stakeholders regarding GBV
- supply teachers with relevant classroom GBV material, challenge existing gender stereotypes and ultimately prevent GBV; and
- the **HOMBAT project** which contributes to the prevention & combating of homophobia and transphobia (HT) by building the capacities of teachers and school advisors on preventing and addressing HT bullying, enhancing multi-actor cooperation on combating HT bullying in schools and raising awareness.

In Lithuania the current policy debate in Lithuania centres around the issue of ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (known as the Istanbul Convention). This convention would pave the way for implementing SRGBV prevention measures. Even though it seems that some politicians are expressing their political will for ratification, in general the political climate is not welcoming and clear steps towards ratification are unseen due to fears and speculation on the concept of "gender".

Most programmes and strategies are focused on the general prevention of violence against children or domestic violence. In 2014, Lithuania adopted the National Programme on Prevention of

Domestic Violence and Support for Victims 2014-2020³¹. The main purpose of the programme is to reduce domestic violence in Lithuania. The programme seeks to educate society about the various manifestations of violence, its consequences and the necessity to prevent it, as well as the need to foster intolerance for violent behaviour.

In 2017, the new edition of the Law on Fundamental Protection of Children's Rights (Lietuvos Respublikos vaiko teisių apsaugos pagrindų įstatymo Nr. I-1234 pakeitimo įstatymas, 2017) was approved. This law seeks to implement, defend and protect children's rights; strengthen the responsibility of parents and other children's representatives; ensure that the interests of children are protected; set out the organisational fundamentals of aid for children and families; define the mechanisms for children's rights and protection and institutions within the children's rights protection system; the legal basis for these institutions' practice and provisions on the fundamental responsibilities to tackle children's rights violations. This law defines four forms of violence against children: physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. It does not provide a definition of GBV, but Article 4, paragraph 5 prohibits discrimination against children based on their gender.

In 2017, the Minister for Education and Science approved two sets of recommendations for prevention of violence in schools:

- 1) Recommendations for implementation of violence prevention at schools (2017 m. kovo 22 d. Švietimo ir mokslo ministrės įsakymas Nr. V-190). The recommendations describe the means of violence prevention and intervention in order to create a safe environment in schools, broken down into measures to be taken at school, municipal and national levels, as well as the responsibilities and duties of schools, municipalities and governmental institutions in order to achieve this goal.
- 2) Recommendations for schools on the criteria for recognition of domestic violence and actions to be taken in the event of possible domestic violence (2017 m. rugpjūčio 3 d. Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro įsakymas Nr. V-625). The main purpose of these recommendations is to identify students suffering from domestic violence as soon as possible and take actions against any possible recurrent violence of this kind. The recommendations also include the consequences of domestic violence (physical, psychological, sexual, neglect) for children's health and development; forms of violence and its recognition criteria; the actions of school employees that are to be taken where there is suspicion of domestic violence; a list of normal or troubling sexual behaviours of children at different ages; and the particular sequence of actions to be taken by school employees in the event of possible domestic violence. Both of these recommendations could form a basis for recommendations on SRGBV.

³¹ [National program on prevention of domestic violence as well as support for victims for the period of 2014 – 2020](#) (Valstybinė smurto artimoje aplinkoje prevencijos ir pagalbos teikimo nukentėjusiems asmenims 2014–2020 metų programa) (2014). (accessed 6 May 2020)

Some municipalities also have programmes aimed at preventing domestic violence and offering support for victims. For example, the Vilnius municipality was the first to approve the programme Prevention of domestic violence and aid to its victims. Although this programme is gender-neutral, it can be considered an example of good practice for other municipalities in Lithuania that are mostly implementing general measures to reduce violence in communities, e.g. by combating substance abuse, running social inclusion programmes, etc. which do not address SRGBV.

In February 2011 the Greek Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Child Ombudsman, issued a circular proposing good practices and measures that could help prevent and eliminate gender-based violence among school students. Some of the proposed guidelines therein include:

- Developing a positive school climate
- Exploiting the institution of Student Councils to promote fruitful conversation within the classroom and the school community in general
- Monitoring and protecting all members of the school community
- Respecting everyone's rights and listening actively to their needs
- Reporting of incidents of violence and imposing punishment for violent behaviour
- Adopting sound conflict resolution strategies within the school setting
- Communicating and cooperating constantly with parents.

At institutional level, the competent authority at central level (i.e. the Greek Ministry of Education) along with primary and secondary schools and relevant educational unions can play a vital role in tackling gender-based violence among children and adolescents, but also in preventing the occurrence of violent behaviour later on in their adult life. Among the various initiatives undertaken in recent years in this field, we distinguish a large action programme on school violence that was implemented in Greece with EC funding titled **"GEAR against IPV"**. This action involved a coordinated effort to prevent primary intimate partner violence in secondary education through school-based interventions aimed at raising awareness among students by properly trained teachers³².

From the side of the family environment, there is complete lack of evidence regarding parents'/guardians' attitudes and perceptions on the issue of gender-based violence in school. The only initiatives that try to indirectly address the phenomenon within the family setting are limited to certain strategic plans for gender equality from the competent public authority (i.e. the General Secretariat for Gender Equality). At present, this concerns the "National Plan for the Equality of Genders 2016 - 2020", which aims to incorporate the gender dimensions in all public policies and measures³³, with very limited effectiveness though if we consider that Greece ranks last among EU-28 in gender equality performance. In trying to explain the striking lack of evidence about parents'

³² The Daphne III Programme (2007-2013). To Prevent and Combat Violence Against Children, Young People and Women and to Protect Victims and Groups at Risk, European Anti-Violence Network (EAVN) (2011) Gender Equality Awareness Raising against Intimate Partner Violence

³³ <http://www.isotita.wp-content/uploads/2017/04/ESDIF.pdf>

attitudes and role in shaping children's gender identities, we should consider that traditionally, Greece is an extremely family-oriented country allowing very little interventions from the state.

Tools available to educators to promote prevention of school related gender - based violence

Two countries provided descriptions of the tools to educators to promote prevention of SRGBV: UK and Lithuania.

In the UK there has been a wide range of educational material and tools introduced to education young people and children about the different aspect of relationships as services and programmes of support.

- **The TEA video** ³⁴ [The Tea Consent video](#) was an animation made to educate young people on what consent means and entails from a real-life perspective. The juxtaposition of using the analogy of a cup of tea is a clever way of getting young people to think and remember the impact of their actions
- **IT'S NOT OK** ³⁵ Based on their research on teenage relationship abuse, the NSPCC developed training resources and safeguarding material to help children and young people recognise concerning behaviours and identify characteristics of positive relationships. The [IT'S NOT OK](#) work package consists of lesson plans, films and accompanying activities which cover behaviours to look out for and how to respond to it. The resources in this learning toolkit can form part of school teaching for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). The lesson plan can be adapted for uses with other audience and can be used in schools and community settings
- **SAFE4ME toolkit** ³⁶ [The SAFE4ME](#) toolkit is web-based education which gives parents resources to help educate, guide and support children and young people. The web programme has a free educational resource library curated by Hampshire Police which tackles all issues in relation to keeping young people safe.

In Lithuania most prevention programmes focus on the general prevention of violence and bullying while some focus on domestic violence. The majority of programmes implemented in schools do not address GBV, including teen dating violence. Nevertheless, there are some examples of good practice among NGOs, universities and state institutions implementing successful initiatives to raise awareness among educators and help them to promote gender equality and reduce gender-based violence.

³⁴ The TEA consent video. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZwvrxVavnQ>

³⁵ IT'S NOT OK: teaching resources about positive relationship. Available at: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/schools/its-not-ok>

³⁶ SAFE4ME. Available at: <https://www.safe4me.co.uk/>

GENDER-ED: Combating gender stereotypes in education and career guidance. The [Women's Issues Information Centre](#)³⁷ and its partners implemented Gender-ED aimed at:

- addressing stereotyping in educational and career choices and promoting gender equality in education, training and career guidance
- attracting women into male-dominated sectors or occupations, and conversely attracting men into female-dominated sectors or occupations
- challenging stereotypical assumptions about the roles of women and men in the labour market, including in leadership positions, and changing behaviours and practices that hamper equality.

Although this project did not tackle gender-based violence specifically, it tackled the main cause of GBV – gender inequality, and had a positive effect on awareness among teachers and youth of the negative effects of gender stereotypes. The main outcomes of the project were:

- Teachers Manual and Guide for Teachers in Secondary Education, Theoretical part. The Women's Issues Information Centre organised two days of interactive training for teachers, who later conducted training with students. This 16-hour-long practical programme was successfully piloted and received accreditation from Vilnius University and is available for all teachers in Lithuania.
- ["Dream Fighters" online game](#)³⁸ – an innovative online game for adolescents (aged 13-16) intended to be a resource to support the deconstruction of traditional and stereotypical attitudes and behaviours related to gender.
- **BREAK! Free from gender stereotypes.** The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson of Lithuania and various partners implemented the "BREAK!"³⁹ project, which is aimed at young people to make career choices based on their interest and regardless of gender stereotypes. Different products were developed to raise awareness among educators, experts responsible for preparing the official curriculum, and children. The main outcomes of the project were:
 - **Assessment of 32 books** for 6th and 7th graders in relation to gender equality⁴⁰, evaluating gender stereotypes in the official curriculum. This activity was evaluated as good practice by the UN CEDAW Committee in its report and recommendations for Lithuania (2019). According to this assessment, trainings for developers of the curriculum and teachers were organised, where they learned how to recognise gender stereotypes and omit them from the official curriculum and in schools
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³⁷ Women's Issues Information Centre: <http://www.womensissuescentre.com/gender-ed-combatting-gender-stereotypes-in-education-and-career-guidance/> (accessed 6 May 2020)

³⁸ Dream Fighters app: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.mdl.dreamcrushers&hl=en>

³⁹ Project "BREAK!", source: <https://brea-k.eu/en/about-3/> (accessed on 6 May 2020)

⁴⁰ Assessment of official curriculum in LT: https://www.lygybe.lt/data/public/uploads/2019/07/d1_vadoveliu-ir-kitu-mokymossi-priemoniu-vertinimo-lyciu-aspektu-apzvalga-2019.pdf (accessed on 6 May 2020)

- **"Why Not?!"⁴¹ TV series with alternate endings for students** – a 10-episode TV series that tells the story of an 18-year old girl named Anna, who is about to graduate from high school and wants to become a famous rapper. However, she is considered a real 'nerd' and has a stutter. Everybody expects her to go to university and study something serious. Even Anna herself senses that her dream is unachievable, until one day when everything changes.
- **Study materials for teachers and career counsellors⁴²** on how to talk about (gender) stereotypes with students in different classes and different age groups enabling education experts to recognise and avoid gender stereotypes in school environments that are one of the main causes of gender-based violence.
- **SAFER.** The aim of the "SAFER"⁴³ project is the provision of life skills training, in which teachers will transfer appropriate information, knowledge and skills to children to help them manage their behaviour, and avoid and prevent violent behaviour. Developing healthy relationships with others and maintaining meaningful life skills are considered crucial elements for building trust and positive relationships in order to identify maladaptive and abusive behaviours. Trained teachers will be competent to identify, recognise, prevent and respond to incidents of GBV as well as avoid stereotypes that contribute to GBV. The aim of the project is to provide the necessary resources for teachers to be able to implement activities in the classroom in the future and raise awareness about GBV. The project's main results were as follows:
 - **Research⁴⁴** that involved both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative analyses were conducted to explore attitudes and reactions to gender-based violence (GBV) among teachers and children, while qualitative analyses provided in-depth and culturally sensitive insights into key stakeholders' beliefs, attitudes and motivations. The research aimed to explore key attitudes towards, and experiences of, GBV in order to develop culturally sensitive training package materials.
 - **Training package⁴⁵** materials for teachers on GBV and **video materials⁴⁶** for students on GBV.
 - **It Stops NOW" Project.** Sexual violence and harassment are two of the most hidden forms of gender-based violence. In Lithuania there is lack of sex education classes in which children have the opportunity to learn not only how their bodies work, but also about the concepts of consent and sexual violence in relationships. Therefore, when they experience sexual violence, students tend to solve this issue on their own or with their peers and closest friends and avoid sharing this information with adults. The Women's Issues Information Centre and its partners analysed the prevalence of sexual violence and harassment at universities⁴⁷ and

⁴¹ TV series "Why not?!": <https://bre-ak.eu/en/why-not/> (accessed on 6 May 2020)

⁴² Study material for teachers and career counsellors, source: <https://brea-k.eu/lt/MOKYMO-SI-MEDZIAGA/> (žiūrėta 2020-05-06)

⁴³ Project "SAFER!", source: <http://gendersafer.eu/lt/about> (accessed on 6 May 2020)

⁴⁴ "SAFER" research, source <http://gendersafer.eu/results> (accessed on 7 May 2020)

⁴⁵ "SAFER" training material: <https://saferlearning.eu/> (accessed on 7 May 2020)

⁴⁶ Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I8P-Z1uit48> (accessed on 7 May 2020)

⁴⁷ Ending Sexual Harassment and Violence in Third-Level Education ESHE A review of data on the prevalence of Sexual Violence and Harassment of Women Students in Higher Education in the European Union, source:

<https://www.itstopsnow.org/sites/default/files/Toolkit/ESHTE%20Full%20Prevalence%20Report.pdf> (accessed 6 May, 2020)

on campuses in Lithuania and developed comprehensive measures that could be applied in different institutions⁴⁸

- **Stalking prevention and support for victims.** The “Stop Stalking”⁴⁹ website provides information on what stalking is, the harm it causes, how to react and what to do when stalking occurs. The goal of this website is “to increase awareness of stalking behaviour, the resulting harm and the ways in which we can ensure our own safety and the safety of others. This initiative also seeks to promote professional discussions about stalking behaviour and potential solutions to this problem”. The website includes a section in which different types of help are listed (legal, psychological, emotional, informational) along with directions on how to seek out each specific type of help.

Awareness, views and attitudes of educators and the broader community on school related gender-based violence

Primary research involved both quantitative and qualitative methodologies including: interviews with educators in the participating countries (10 per country), interviews with parents in the participating country (10 per country), interviews with representatives of institutions responsible for prevention in the area gender based violence and abuse (5 per country), and an online survey that targeted school teachers, educators and community members in the participating countries.

The samples of quantitative online surveys were slightly different in the counties of the project: UK reached 50 respondents, Italy – 57, Cyprus – 42, Lithuania – 210, and Greece – 60. They were teachers, educators, parents, representatives of institutions working with gender equality or youth, and representatives of the community. The questionnaires covered four topics: gender stereotypes, gender and dating violence, school climate, and the wider social and cultural context.

Gender Stereotypes

Respondents felt that gender stereotypes influenced young people’s behaviours. The survey considered respondents’ agreement with a range of statements reflecting traditional gender stereotypes, and demonstrated a progressive range of views, although responses to some items were more mixed.

Most respondents (UK -78%, Cyprus – 93%, Lithuania – 86%) felt that it was in the role of the teacher to promote gender equality in school. However, they also acknowledged that this is not just the responsibility of the teacher but also of the family and other adults in the children’s lives and

⁴⁸ Toolkit for Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Third-Level Education, source: <http://www.moteruinformacijoscentras.lt/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/It-Stops-Now-Toolkit-EN2.pdf> (accessed on 4 April 2020)

⁴⁹ “Stop Stalking” website: <http://www.persekiojimuistop.lt/> (accessed 6 May 2020)

cautioned placing sole or primary responsibility for such work on teachers. Furthermore, a range of barriers such as culture and curriculum were identified which hindered teachers' abilities to engage with this. According to Greek respondents, one of the most important root causes of the phenomenon relate to the prevailing gender stereotypes that may be reproduced within the family environment. Lithuanian participants claimed that some stereotypes are embedded in children by their parents, while others stated that their children faced stereotypes in different educational facilities starting from kindergarten to school. 67% of the participants claimed that gender stereotypes affect all people equally, 18% said that women are more affected, 10% said that men are more affected, and 9% that LGBTQ+ individuals are more affected

In Cyprus, participants were asked to point out some of the obstacles that teachers face in teaching children about gender equality. Most answered that one of the main obstacles is the negative effects that children have from their family and their wider social environment as well as the education system itself. According to the participants, "the stereotypes that the child may bring", either from the family, or from "the stereotypes that exist in society, the inequality at the systemic level", as well as the educational system itself that "does not favour the teaching" on other issues "except the ones of the official curriculum", ultimately ensure the perpetuation of the problem. It seems that "gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles are rooted in all areas of life", as a result of the deeply "sexist" and "patriarchal" Cypriot society.

According to the findings of primary research in Lithuania, opinions on who should assume the role of educating children on gender equality and GBV in order for children to know their rights varied depending on the target group. The majority of parents claimed that teachers and other experts working in schools should take on this role as they have more information, and children believe what they hear in school as well as spend more time there than at home. Educators said that they could raise awareness on the topics of gender equality and GBV, but there are barriers: lack of expertise and knowledge in the field and lack of time due to extensive material in the official curriculum. Some participants had some doubts about whether talking about gender equality might lead to instances of bullying and have negative effects on children. The same issue was raised in schools when they started to implement programmes against bullying, but teachers said those concerns disappeared after practical implementation of programmes brought results.

Some participants claimed that young people are more progressive now and they do not act upon gender stereotypes ("boys also wash dishes in our household"), while others stated that gender stereotypes have an effect on children's behaviour and could result in GBV ("boys do not appreciate other boys that are weak and cry"). Participants also mentioned that children sometimes declare that they do not act upon gender stereotypes, know that discrimination is bad and that all people should be treated equality, but they do not behave accordingly in practice at school.

Most participants did not agree with the gender stereotypes stated in the survey (boys are more aggressive than girls by nature, women should take care of the family more than men, etc.); nevertheless, in some cases participants showed that some stereotypes are applied more for a certain gender, e.g. it is more acceptable for boys to have more than one sexual partner, or girls

provoke sexual aggression by boys by the way they dress (22% agreed in comparison with 8% for the same statement for boys). 33% of participants claimed that girls are more vulnerable than boys, in comparison with 10% who stated that boys are more vulnerable than girls. It is important to mention that female vulnerability is usually used as an explanation as to why boys should not be aggressive towards girls. This flawed practice reinforces the idea in boys' heads that girls are vulnerable and weak.

Gender and Dating Violence

Although UK participants responses showed some acknowledgement that any gender can experience gender-based violence, 68% did state that girls appear to be most at risk. A range of risk factors were highlighted, with gender and witnessing GBV at home being the most reported risk factors for experiencing GBV (69.4% reported each of these factors), as well as substance abuse or addictions (49%). Other risk factors for experiencing GBV which were identified by a smaller proportion of the sample were poverty (38.8%), a history of anger management problems (38.8%), and unemployment (36.7%). Similar risk factors were identified for perpetrating GBV, primarily witnessing GBV at home which was identified by 81.6% of the sample, and a history of anger management problems identified by 49% of the sample, followed by gender (53.1%), substance abuse (51%), poverty (38.8%), and unemployment (32.7 %). Where participants reported having witnessed GBV among young people (44%), this was most commonly witnessed in school, followed by the community, and within the family setting. This was primarily thought to occur within young people's romantic relationships, followed by within their family, while experiencing it among their friends was considered least common.

Findings in Italy show that GBV is very frequent within families, especially psychological and verbal violence, mainly due to the echo of patriarchal society, lack of culture and education, and bad examples disseminated by the media. Among the participants, 20% think that boys are more aggressive than girls by their nature, 28% that girls are more vulnerable than boys, and 12% that girls cause sexual aggression by boys because of the way they dress or behave. 30% of the participants think that GBV is mostly experienced by women, 16% by the LGBTQI+ community, while the majority think that it can affect everyone indiscriminately. There is a great consensus among the groups in affirming that GBV is transversal, not affecting a common profile/population/specific group, but that it can occur mostly in contexts of vulnerability.

Most Cyprus participants believe that the female gender in children and adolescents is the one to suffer more from gender-based violence in their romantic relationships, 59.5%, followed by the LGBTQI+ community with 40.5% and 31% who voted that all individuals face equally gender-based violence. In the question regarding the conditions in which a child or adolescent experiences violence because of his or her gender, 31% believe that gender violence is more evident in the romantic relationships of children and adolescents, and 31% also believe that it appears in the friendly relationships of children and adolescents. 23% claim that children experience gender-based violence in their family environment, 11.9% in the extensive social environment of children and 2.4% in the school environment by teachers.

54% of respondents in Lithuania claimed that all people have equal chances of facing school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), while 21% claimed that this issue is more likely to happen to LGBTQ+ individuals, and 20% claimed that girls face this issue more. 3% stated that men are more likely to become victims of SRGBV. 83% of respondents stated that the main reason for perpetrating and experiencing SRGBV is experiencing violence within the family, 75% claimed that it is mostly due to alcohol and other substance abuse issues, and 67% attributed it to anger management issues. Only 14% stated gender as the main risk factor for experiencing SRGBV. Most respondents claimed that they had never faced SRGBV; out of those who did face it, 42% stated that it happened at school.

According to the primary research findings, Greek participants reported the occurrence of almost all types of violence (emotional, psychological, verbal) among young people while, interestingly, the surveyed teachers, parents and institutional actors appeared to believe that in the framework of child-adolescent intimate relationships, verbal and psychological violence is more frequent than physical and sexual violence. In the same context, the primary research participants in Greece appeared to believe that everyone can be a victim or perpetrator without differentiating the occurrence of such behaviour based on sex. Although some of the respondents reported that girls are more likely to be victims' due to their gender, the majority mentioned that boys may be equally victimised but also claimed that they consider them safer from psychological violence.

Regarding gender-based violence in romantic relationships, a significant percentage of the respondents mentioned that girls, LGBTQI and other vulnerable groups such as the disabled are more frequently victimised. Based on the research sample, the most common causes of gender-based violence relate to specific youths' personality traits, such as the outbursts of anger. Based on the collected feedback, students who participate in incidents of violence are more often adolescents who come from low-income families or have unemployed parents, which is confirmed by recent research findings⁵⁰.

School Climate

Concerningly, many respondents in the UK felt that teachers did not listen to students when they discuss their problems (i.e. a total of 44.9% vs. 32.7% who somewhat felt that they did), and most felt that teachers did not treat boys and girls equally (66% in total compared with a total of only 12% who felt that they did). Findings also raised concerns about the school climate as most felt that girls do not feel safe in schools (a total of 58%, compared with only 20% who thought they do feel safe). Approximately a quarter of the sample was unsure or undecided for each of these questions, highlighting a considerable degree of uncertainty regarding such issues. Interestingly, most respondents were unsure whether boys felt safe in schools (42%), although 34% in total agreed that

⁵⁰ Jansen, D. E., Veenstra, R., Ormel, J., Verhulst, F. C., Reijneveld, S. A. (2011). Early risk factors for being a bully, victim, or bully/victim in late elementary and early secondary education. The longitudinal TRAILS study. *BMC Public Health*, 11, 440

boys did feel safe in schools, compared with a total of 24% who somewhat disagreed with this statement.

A slight majority of the sample thought that young people usually report incidents of violence when they witness or experience it. However, findings show that respondents believed most young people did not know where to whom to report this. However, it is important to recognise that these are the views of adults, not of the young people themselves⁵¹.

The vast majority of the sample (66% in total) agreed that teachers have a responsibility for educating students on gender equality and gender-based violence, while a total of only 18% disagreed with this and 6% were unsure.

Most respondents did not know if programmes existed to educate students about gender-based violence (40%), although almost equal proportions of the remaining sample agreed that there were programmes available (22% in total), and that there were not programmes available (38% in total). 40% were not aware of whether individual assistance and psychological counselling were available to students when needed. Mixed findings were reported regarding whether teachers work closely with parents to resolve students' problems.

Regarding GBV at school in Italy, parents, teachers and educators believe that it is very difficult to be informed about cases of violence among adolescents, except in the most serious cases, mainly because of lack of dialogue, unpreparedness among teachers and lack of specific measures in schools. Among the recurring manifestations of GBV at school, many report the use of violent or stereotyped language and actions among peers. Phenomena such as cyberbullying, revenge porn and abuses are cited as potential manifestations, but never referring to direct experiences. There are also cases in which the school itself or the teachers convey unhealthy messages or behaviours (for example in the asset of the classroom, using textbooks showing stereotypes and sexism etc.).

In this regard, the online questionnaire provides an in-depth analysis of the school environment: 39% say that teachers do not listen to students sufficiently when they discuss their problems and 36% that they do not treat girls and boys equally. 60% say students do not know who to report when they experience or witness violence. Only 45% believe that teachers and school staff know what to do when they hear about or attend GBV.

In Cyprus, the lack of information and training of teachers and parents about any institutional measure and available tools to prevent violence has been showed by the research, since 42% of participants voted that there are no institutional measures / tools to prevent gender-based violence in schools, while 20% voted otherwise.

In Lithuania, 51% of respondents agreed with the statement that teachers treat boys and girls equally. 52% claimed that they would agree that girls and boys feel safe at school. A higher number

⁵¹ The views of young people have been taken into account in Work Package 2 of the Children First project. Findings of this work can be accessed through the Children First website: <https://childrenfirst.info/online-resources/>

of respondents (40%) agreed that girls would tell someone if they were to see or experience SRGBV, followed by 15% who agreed that boys would disclose their experience of violence. 60% of respondents claimed that teachers would know what to do and what actions to take if they were to be made aware of SRGBV, and 75% agreed that there are mechanisms of support in place for victims of SRGBV.

Wider social and cultural context

Most of the UK sample reported that they had never been informed about gender-based violence (61.2% compared with 34.7%). Few respondents were aware of any specific laws, national schemes or policies protecting children from gender-based violence, although the highest proportion of responses that did list any strategies highlighted safeguarding laws (27%). Most did not appear to be aware of any institutional tools or measures to prevent gender-based violence in their school or organisation. The need for training for teachers was highlighted in open responses both to inform teachers and to support them in communicating with students around this topic. The need for presentations, talks and external speakers in schools was also suggested.

70% of respondents in Lithuania claimed they have never received information on SRGBV, and 50% said that they are unaware of legal acts and strategies on prevention of SRGBV; those who had some information mentioned the Istanbul Convention, the Law on Protection Against Domestic Violence, the Ministry of Education's recommendations on prevention of violence and bullying in schools, the Olweus programme, and helplines for children and youth. 51% claimed that they were unaware of measures to prevent SRGBV in their schools. Those participants that knew of some measures indicated the Lion's Quest programme on social and emotional education, child welfare commissions in schools as well as trainings and seminars for education professionals. The majority of respondents flagged the need to have visual material on prevention of SRGBV, real-life scenarios and other interactive material that would engage students to actively discuss this phenomenon.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders including teachers/educators, representatives of relevant organisations (referred to henceforth as experts), and parents. Participants were recruited via email through contacting a range of organisations, community groups, schools, and online advertising. Interviews were conducted via videoconferencing and most lasted one hour or less. Interviews first explored participants' attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of gender-based violence generally, before focusing on specific interventions, strategies and approaches used to address gender-based violence.

Attitudes, Beliefs and Perceptions of Gender-Based Violence

Participants agreed that gender-based violence was very prevalent, although acknowledged that it could be difficult to detect as much of it is hidden, and often exists in more subtle forms than people might expect. Types of behaviour thought to constitute GBV included physical behaviours, emotional or verbal abuse, psychological abuse or controlling behaviours, and sexual violence.

In the UK, risk factors perceived to contribute to GBV included cultural and religious backgrounds, financial or economic factors, family background and upbringing, witnessing or experiencing violence at home and other adverse childhood experiences, lack of psychological support for those at risk of perpetrating violence, beliefs about gender roles and relationships, and lack of education. The perpetrator's temperament and personality was also highlighted as a contributing factor, as well as any significant tensions or imbalances in the relationship. Specific populations were identified as having increased prevalence of GBV, such as Muslim communities, although respondents acknowledged that GBV could occur among people from any community or background. Younger people in their first relationships and people from low socioeconomic backgrounds were also identified as being at increased risk. Although it was widely acknowledged that women seemed to be the primary victims of GBV, some participants also acknowledged that men could be victims, while a small number of participants acknowledged the increased risk of GBV for LGBTQ+ people, and in particular for transgender people.

In Greece, it is believed that education is not the only factor in gender-related perceptions. Another major influence on the formation of gender stereotypes and prejudices is the family environment. In this respect, the majority of the research participants called for awareness, training, and better data collection and reporting mechanisms.

Barriers to leaving abusive relationships

In the UK all participants acknowledged the difficulty of leaving relationships where violence was occurring, due to a wide range of factors. These included the person's perception of the situation as normal, and their perception of what constitutes a healthy or abusive relationship, as well as the complexity of leaving a relationship they still perceived as loving or beneficial to them (e.g. through a sense of safety, or dependence on their partner). Furthermore, being in a controlling or coercive relationship could also be a barrier to leaving, as could lack of self-esteem on the part of the victim. In longer term relationships, women not wanting to break up the family unit was highlighted, as well as victims not wanting to leave their family, friends and support networks, and reluctance to uproot other aspects of their lives such as having to leave their workplace or take their children out of school in order to move far away from the perpetrator. The lack of spaces available in shelters was acknowledged by some participants as a barrier to leaving, as was a lack of social support. Finally, the need to conceptualise the exiting of an abusive relationship as a process towards a route out, rather than 'just leaving', was considered important. In young people specifically, the lack of control that young people have over their environment was reported by one expert participant to limit their freedom to effectively escape abusive relationships. This included not being in a position to move away from the geographical area, being enrolled in school in the area, and not being able to access refuges/shelters when under 18, as well as younger people often not being taken seriously when disclosing GBV.

Gender Based Violence in the School Context

In the UK, views on the prevalence of gender-based violence among young people were mixed, but it was generally considered to be relatively prevalent. The difficulties of detecting it were reported

by many participants, due to the language used around such behaviours, the often hidden nature of this type of violence, and the likelihood that many behaviours in the young people's relationships may occur more outside of the school itself. An important insight arising from these interviews was the difficulty in differentiating gender-based violence from bullying, and the often-overlapping nature of these types of harmful behaviours. Manifestations of gender-based violence within school settings focused more on non-physical behaviours, such as teasing, harassment and catcalling; microaggressions including LGBT harassment and homophobia; controlling behaviours and jealousy; sexual harassment; sharing of nude photos and revenge porn.

Difficulties of measuring or monitoring gender-based violence within the school setting were also mainly due to the difficulty in detecting signs of violence and, in particular, more subtle forms of violence or abuse; as well as reliance on victims being willing to disclose their experience, potential issues regarding the accuracy of reporting, potential for miscommunication due to the specific types of language used by young people around this issue, and stigma.

On the modalities of intervention in case of violence in Italy, teachers' opinions and priorities are conflicting; demonstrating that they are not sufficiently prepared and that instead, at present, in schools they mainly proceed on a "case by case" basis. However, contact with the family and with the school director are the main priorities for the majority of them. In the same situation, parents would try to talk to their kids immediately, also declaring that they would offer psychological support. As for institutions, they mention some forms of intervention, initiatives and partnerships in place to tackle GBV in general (underlying the important work of anti-violence centres), but not specifically on youth.

In Cyprus, from the interviews with teachers it has been concluded that incidents of any form of GBV are very common, almost on a daily basis in schools, beginning with the use of language. It was also pointed out that there is more information, rights and consequently recording incidents of violence by individuals, but at the same time the forms of violence between children and adolescents have changed in recent years (e.g. cyber bullying). According to Council of Europe directives, measures against GBV exist in all schools in Cyprus but the responsible bodies "are unable or unwilling to implement" them.

Specifically, most of the parents involved in the study did not know if their child's school has a strategy for dealing with gender-based violence, which shows the lack of information and training of many parents to deal with cases of gender-based violence or the implemented school-based measures for the prevention of this phenomenon. Many parents point out that they do not know how to handle cases where their child is a victim of GBV, which shows the gap in the awareness and information available to parents in regards to the mechanisms implemented on a national level (both in and out of the school environment) on the topic.

Many of the interviewed participants in Lithuania said that physical and psychological violence are the most prevalent forms of GBV. Some participants also named economic and sexual violence. According to the respondents, psychological violence is more prevalent at the moment but hard to

detect. Interviewed teachers said that they rarely hear about situations of SRGBV from students, and parents also agreed that if children face GBV, they are reluctant to disclose these experiences to adults and would rather face this issue by themselves or seek support from their peers. Nevertheless, educators, social workers and other experts working in schools gave some examples of GBV that they have witnessed or heard of.

One of the problems stated by participants in interviews was that schools are still trying to hide instances of violence and bullying in order to avoid scandals and maintain their reputation unless the administration receives a complaint from parents. Some parents whose children have experienced GBV stated that they felt alienated in the community by other parents for trying to solve the problem of their daughter being harassed and bullied by classmates and did not get much support from the school's administration. These concerns that schools are concealing cases of violence and bullying were shared by institutional actors and child protection officers working with schools.

Most teachers that participated in the interviews claimed that where they encounter violent behaviour in their classroom, they have the full support of other school staff members as well as the school's social worker and psychologist, and they work collectively to re work collectively to resolve issues if needed.

Noteworthy is also the fact that most of the participants reported that the Greek school institutions do not have a solid strategy for addressing gender-based violence and also that they haven't ever received any kind of information or training on how to deal with gender-based violence, thus such incidents are dealt on a case-by-case basis.

Need for clear strategy and collaboration

Participants were often unaware of specific strategies, policies or approaches to support young people in schools in relation to GBV particularly from a policy and legislation perspective. Several highlighted the recent changes to legislation in the UK regarding relationships and sexuality education (RSE) in the school curriculum. Local authorities, charities, and mental health education and support were all highlighted as being important in addressing these issues generally. However, challenges of providing education around GBV in schools were highlighted.

Educators and representatives of organisations working in the area of gender-based violence described the need for greater collaboration with a range of organisations, institutions and experts, including the need more support from the government; more clinical psychologists, counsellors and other mental health support in schools; multi-agency safeguarding hubs and other wider networks to address childhood adversity; social services; police; community or youth workers; parents, and communities, including faith communities. The value of external speakers visiting schools was highlighted by many participants, with examples given of the benefits of having speakers with lived experience, particularly younger people with lived experience of GBV. The need for young people to have an input in this collaborative approach to addressing GBV was also noted, to ensure

interventions are appropriate and relevant. Challenges were noted by one expert informant who described difficulties in engaging non-statutory stakeholders such as GPs.

Where teachers reported that they were aware of strategies or processes for responding to gender-based violence in the school this involved safeguarding officers, child protection policies and training. As in the survey responses, there was general consensus from the interviews with teachers and educators that it was important for teachers to instruct young people about gender equality, and that they have a responsibility to explicitly address gender-based violence.

In Italy, as regards the measures to be taken at an institutional level, all mentioned the need for awareness-raising campaigns in the media and in school textbooks, a greater involvement of professionals who work on the front lines, stricter laws to punish GBV, more spending and more time to devote to the phenomenon at school.

The conclusion from the interviews with the representatives of institutions in Cyprus is that social change is an ongoing process and "as far as gender-based violence is concerned, we see a greater number of reports of incidents, and victims are looking for options and services to support them, and through this, specialised organisations have been and continue to be developed to solve this problem". Some of the gaps that were stressed are: "the lack of a coordinated body of action and multidisciplinary cooperation among stakeholders", "the lack of information on measures to prevent and address gender-based violence", "gaps in legislation and in the processes of identification" of victims and at a national level, "there is a great need for education of teachers, students and parents, with the inclusion of relevant topics in the regular educational process and school curriculum of the Ministry of Education".

Most respondents in Lithuania agreed that families play a major role in how children behave. Parents claimed that they lack knowledge on the subject of GBV and, therefore, should be included in preventive action against GBV more actively and in a practical format by receiving articles on the subject via online educational platforms used by schools as well as online and face-to-face seminars, and practical assignments with students.

GBV education for young people

The need to facilitate discussion about GBV was acknowledged by some informants in the UK, but it was felt that such efforts should be embedded into the curriculum across subjects rather than being one-off lessons or talks. Some mentioned specific opportunities for young people to be instructed about GBV within the school such as through PSE or RSE lessons or external speakers visiting the school. Another suggestion included incentivising action on GBV by creating a national award scheme for schools. However, the competing demands on teachers' time and their existing workload were acknowledged as significant barriers to them being able to engage in proactive activities around GBV.

Other barriers included parents not wanting their children to be taught about such sensitive or controversial topics, the challenge of teaching about such issues in faith schools and the need for teachers to have more training in recognising signs of GBV, as well as in how to discuss such topics with young people in an effective and constructive manner. Some respondents also felt that teachers needed much more support in addressing such issues, and that other staff were needed in schools as well, such as more counsellors or clinical psychologists. This appears to be in line with the caution that many participants expressed about putting all of the responsibility for this issue on to teachers, and that addressing this issue and educating young people about it is everyone's responsibility.

It emerges that in Italy the majority of materials available for adolescents to be more aware about GBV come from EU-funded projects and from single initiatives of teachers and schools, thus demonstrating the need to address the issue in official school curricula. It is also noted that there are far more programmes on bullying and cyberbullying than on GBV.

About who should have to role to talk about GBV with adolescents, most parents feel that they have a primary role, to be played by promoting dialogue with their children and giving them the example at home since childhood. All agree that teachers and schools in general have also a crucial role, but there are some obstacles: the education's institutions themselves sometimes do not consider GBV as a priority, they lack time and space to address the issue within the curricular programme, professors are not prepared.

In Cyprus informants proposed that Lifelong Learning-Health Education courses should be a key part of students' education and should be sufficiently enriched with Human Rights, Gender-Based Violence, Homophobia and Discrimination issues, with clear guidelines for their proper use.

Many of the interviewed teachers in Greece reported that they try to educate and inform their students on the issue of gender equality, but also noted that in order to do so, they need appropriate resources and materials, pedagogical methods, space and support within the formal school curriculum. On the same note, the surveyed parents reported that teachers play central role in promoting gender equality among children and adolescents, whereas parents are also believed to play equally important role in this regard. Almost all research participants, teachers and parents alike, agreed that school as an institution plays critical role in shaping young people's gender identity through specific educational experiences and practices.

Need for teacher training

In the UK suggestions for the creation of effective training materials for teachers on the topic of GBV mainly highlighted the need for training to be interactive and involve reflective discussion, as well as practical aspects such as case examples and role plays. Teachers also wanted training materials to clarify the signs of GBV that they needed to be aware of, particularly the subtler signs that they may otherwise miss. It was also suggested that training should clarify the steps and pathways they needed to take to report and address GBV if they came across it. Suggestions for content included

the need to emphasise the intergenerational transmission of violent behaviour and, therefore, the need to consider the young person's personal and family background when dealing with suspected GBV perpetrators. Furthermore, the need for explicit training content on trauma-informed approaches was reported by several experts and educators. Finally, the need for training to equip teachers in how to talk to young people about gender-based violence in an open and constructive way was acknowledged. The need for protected time to undertake training was identified.

Italian teachers affirm that in order to work on the issue, they would need mainly theoretical explanations on the phenomenon and examples of practical activities to propose in class that reflect children's reality.

In the opinion of one participant in Cyprus: "we need a generalized teacher training programme and incentives to implement similar programmes and attitudes in schools". In particular, another one of the participants pointed out the following needs: "I would like to have practical tools for Non-Formal Education in my daily work environment, to which I would have direct access at any time. At the same time, I would like each student's book to be carefully studied and tested, carefully written, with photographic material that does not promote stereotypes and that it respects every gender". And of course, every teacher who will teach the specific courses should be adequately trained and familiar with these topics.

Lithuanian teachers claimed that for them to educate children on SRGBV and gender equality in general they would need very practical materials that they could use in lessons as well as training on how to apply these materials and evaluate their effectiveness.

Recommendations

Concluding remarks

The findings of this research demonstrate the multidisciplinary nature of GBV and how tackling GBV entails a multi-stakeholder approach. The views of the educators, parents and community members highlighted the needs for sustainable, equal and accessible provision to support young people. There was a consensus that many of the manifestation of GBV is not only relative to a lack of education, but the way society functions. When trying to develop and create tool to eradicate inequalities, developing strategies and tools that focus on lived experiences and empowering victims is an important start in starting the cycle for change.

Based on the findings of the research within the context of the [Children First project](#), country teams managed to gain deeper understanding about the current situation at a national level. All the countries felt that there was a lack of research and statistical data; the absence of a satisfying legal environment; and the need to train teachers, educators, community as a whole on how to deal with incidents of peer (gender-based) violence in the school setting.

Recommendations

- Conduct nationwide research on SRGBV, assess the situation of SRGBV in terms of the quality of schools' support for victims through yearly anonymous online surveys for members of school communities (teachers, parents and students); creation of a database of surveys, policies and actions on SRGBV
- Enact codes of ethics and legal reforms against all forms of violence in the school setting; create specialised actions, strategic plans and legal frameworks for gender-based violence (especially in the school environment); emphasise the inclusion of the LGBTQI+ community in the relevant legislations, policies, tools and practices
- Enhance evaluation of the implementation of the necessary measures at the local level and assigning a public body responsible for the research and implementation of the measures; strengthening the support, monitoring, treatment and prevention of such cases in the school environment
- Draft and adopt recommendations on prevention of SRGBV and support for victims, including referral mechanisms for educators dealing with victims of SRGBV
- Ensure the active participation of girls and boys, which is essential to tackle a phenomenon that affects them directly and could compromise their development; include families and specialised figures

- Strengthen cooperation between NGOs working on gender equality and prevention of GBV in schools and other educational institutions, in order to implement continuous prevention programmes at every level of education as well as annual training sessions for specialists working with children
- Education of teachers should be the most important priority. There should be systemic education and information of teachers and the school units with statistics on the subject, gender-based violence and its implication, on a mandatory basis. This training is considered necessary to raise awareness among teachers about GBV as well as to gain practical knowledge and advice on current school policies and to effectively manage GBV incidents that come to light within the school environment.
- In parallel, to train teachers and future teachers on the implementation of created programmes, and to prepare them to respond adequately to cases of GBV at school. Training for teachers:
 - *should involve reflective work and discussion, as well as enabling teachers to understand and address their own biases in relation to gender equality and gender-based violence topics*
 - *should clarify signs to look out for and how to distinguish gender-based violence from other forms of abuse or bullying*
 - *needs to demonstrate clear steps or pathways to follow once gender-based violence has been identified or suspected*
 - *should include awareness regarding culture specific factors, and support or acknowledgement of the challenges of working on the issue of gender-based violence within faith schools*
 - *should include some form of guidance on working collaboratively with parents in relation to gender equality issues which will be helpful to enable teachers to address parents' concerns in relation to sensitive topics*
 - *should acknowledge that there is a clear need for content to be embedded in the curriculum across subject areas, and for the topic to be discussed authentically, rather than just being covered as content from a book. Support is therefore needed for teachers in achieving this*
 - *should include communication training to equip teachers to discuss sensitive topics in a clear, effective and age-appropriate manner*
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- *should include multi-modal training programmes for teachers, including different delivery methods such as videos, case studies and discussion, and interactive elements.*
- Develop a programme on GBV to be embedded in the official curriculum and textbooks at every level of education. Gender equality and GBV experts should participate in the programme's creation. Create specialised educational materials for students, teachers and parents, especially on issues of gender-based violence, at all levels of education. Development of the training materials should include some content on the need for trauma informed approaches to teaching due to the significant role of trauma in contributing to gender-based violence
- Dedicate more time to the school curriculum by implementing non-formal education workshops for GBV. Sex education, building healthy relationships and informing young people of their rights is also important. Treat dating violence as a public health issue, to be addressed also and above all at school and, in this regard, strengthen the support services already existing in schools.

At European level:

- Adopt an EU directive on gender-based violence and an EU-wide strategy to eliminate violence against women
- Initiate EU-wide research on the prevalence of SRGBV in EU Member States
- Establish a European knowledge centre for sharing successful examples of SRGBV prevention programmes at every level of education in Member States within the EU