School Diagnosis Guiding Tools
A user friendly guide

Summary

1. Introduction

The **YOUTH FOR LOVE** project, co-funded by the European Union – Department of Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, aims to develop, implement and evaluate an integrated educational program in 12 high schools in 4 European countries - Italy, Romania, Greece and Belgium – which will contribute to the prevention and combating of gender based violence among teenagers and will support and increase awareness to both of school staff and students concerning existing and unacceptable consequences of gender violence and the necessary procedures to be applied in these cases.

Specifically, at a European level, the project envisages:

- ❖ **Developing educational tools and methodologies** for the prevention and management of cases of gender violence in 12 European second-level schools;
- ❖ **Educating and increasing the awareness of 1,200 students** of all genders using practical educational procedures regarding gender violence;
- ❖ **Training and supporting 180 educators and school staff** on gender violence problems and how to prevent them;
- ❖ **To involve 2 million young Europeans in a communications campaign** on the theme of stereotypes and gender violence carried out by way of a website and an online game.

The project partnership is composed of the following European organizations: ActionAid Italy (Italy), ActionAid Hellas (Greece), UC Limburg (Belgium), AFOL - Metropolitan Agency for Training, Guidance and Job Placement (Italy) and CPE - Fundatia Centrul Partenariat Pentru Egalitate (Romania).

The following toolkit is aimed at second-level school staff (professors, educators, tutors...) with the intention of offering an easy-to-use tool that supports schools interested in replicating the Y4L educational program, step by step, in the realization of school diagnoses (data collection and analysis) aimed at preparing, contextualizing educational interventions and modeling them to the characteristics, context and needs of pro-active schools.

The diagnosis, if well prepared, allows for collecting, organizing and analyzing important data and information about:

- ❖ students' perceptions of femininity / masculinity, gender roles, sexuality, gender violence, cyber-bullying and harassment, as well as those of the school staff;
- ❖ formal and informal procedures to implement in school in cases of gender violence;
- ❖ levels of awareness regarding the topic, including mapping previous initiatives implemented in the school environment;
- ❖ analysis of the context and needs of the class / school in which one wants to intervene.

Co-funded by the Rights,
Equality and Citizenship (REC)
Programme of the European Union

The toolkit is composed of a user friendly guide and a series of files that can be consulted in the form of intervention packages, Specifically:

- ❖ 1 focus group guide for school professionals and for teenagers;
- ❖ 1 project and school diagnosis presentation for teenagers and parents;
- ❖ 1 informed consent form for teenagers and 1 informed consent form for parents;
- ❖ 1 formal / informal procedure existence assessment guide.

The guide contains a series of methodological indications and operating procedures to be applied prior to the implementation of educational interventions aimed at preventing and managing episodes of violence that occur in the school environment but, due to the very nature of the phenomenon, also reveal instances of past or present violence occurring outside the scholastic context.

The school, in fact, can be a key stakeholder, capable of identifying, managing and taking charge of the violence, collaborating with the territorial services that in various ways deal with the problem. For this reason, the role it has in the fight against violence is crucial: defining protocols and integrating educational programs is fundamental not only to prevent, manage and resolve cases of gender violence that occur in the school context, but to swiftly weaken the cultural roots of violence[1], aided by stereotypes and relational customs, still today, typical of patriarchal and sexist cultures.

The objectives of the **YOUTH FOR LOVE** project include:

- ❖ Developing educational tools and methodologies to prevent and manage violence based on the evidence and needs emerging from each context;
- ❖ Increasing awareness of violent dynamics through ad hoc teaching modules;
- ❖ Involving students and school staff, both teachers and non-teachers, in forming a consciousness that makes any type of violence in the school environment unacceptable;
- ❖ Training and supporting school personnel on gender violence issues.

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[1] Magaraggia e Cherubini, 2013

2. The exploratory phase: the focus group methodology

The most suitable tool to explore the perceptions, experiences and needs of the target to be analyzed is the focus group.

The focus group (FG) is a qualitative data collection technique used in social research that is based on information emerging from a group discussion on a topic or theme that the researcher wishes to investigate in depth[2]. It presents itself as a particularly effective tool for:

- ❖ Analyzing the needs of a context, an organization or an institution (in this case the educational institution);
- ❖ Activating participatory processes;
- ❖ Facilitating learning processes;
- ❖ Assessing the impact of a service or project (the focus group is the main method for qualitative assessment strategies).

The FG is a versatile tool that aims not only to clarify what a group of people thinks about a certain issue and the feelings it arouses in them, but also to observe the processes of consensus building within a group, as well as the methods used by individuals to express their position and defend their diversity and difference. It is often possible to observe the process that leads to the formation of an opinion on the topic of study (for example: marketing, reaction to a new product). Sometimes, in the case of previously fixed opinions, the FG facilitates an evaluation of their solidity and, during the discussion, enables the observation of how, and if, the participants change or maintain their opinion.

The comparison and discussion take place by way of:

- ❖ Reciprocal questions;
- ❖ Requests for clarification and further information;
- ❖ Questioning of opinions;
- ❖ Detection of weak points in the arguments.

In general, the participants mostly talk about the issues that the moderator brings to their attention.

The degree of consensus detected through a group discussion does not necessarily translate into a summary outline, but provides fundamental information that guides those who must make decisions.

In this specific case, on the topic of violence in and out of the school context, it is possible to define the contents and methodologies for subsequent educational interventions. Specifically, the focus group allows for:

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[2] Zammuner, 2003; Frisina, 2010

- ❖ Understanding in greater detail and depth the needs of the interviewees[3];
- ❖ Calibrating ad hoc intervention policies and, in collaboration with the other local institutions and services that in various capacities deal with gender violence, proposing appropriate solutions for the problems that emerge;
- ❖ Choosing more appropriate ways to represent the problems to people experiencing violence in its various forms.

2.1 The focus groups in YOUTH FOR LOVE

The first phase of the YOUTH FOR LOVE project featured an impact assessment project involving a quantitative survey, through the distribution of a questionnaire, and a qualitative exploration of the needs and characteristics of the scholastic context. Focus groups were used as qualitative survey tools to gather information on the topic and listen to students' experiences with violence.

The project methodology provided for focus groups with students and school staff (teachers, tutors and technicians / administrators).

Focus groups conducted with pupils and students participating in the YOUTH FOR LOVE project had defined objectives:

- ❖ Comprehending the violence students of different genders experience, especially those related to and/or occurring in the school context;

- ❖ Understanding more profoundly the gender violence suffered, witnessed and provoked by boys and girls;

- ❖ Recognizing students' perceptions of the school environment, in terms of safety and protection from any episodes of violence that may occur in that context;

- ❖ Hypothesizing initiatives, services or proposals that allow schools to prevent, manage and resolve violence.

The focus groups involved approximately 480 students from 12 high schools in 4 European countries (Italy, Belgium, Greece, Romania). Each school participated in 4 or 5 focus groups, each 90 minutes long. The groups were formed by the coordinating teachers though the basic request was to create at least 1 group composed only of girls, 1 group composed only of boys and 1 group with a mixed composition. This subdivision was very useful for analyzing the different cultural perceptions and narratives of violence that are often conditioned by gender identity. Regardless of the scholastic area of study or personal backgrounds, the qualitative survey conducted through the school focus groups revealed that almost all the boys and all the girls had had some early experience with violence. Students of all genders spoke knowingly and in detail of their own violent experiences, expressing the desire to share and discuss these issues and experiences within safe and protected spaces.

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[3] Albanesi, 2004

other focus groups with defined objectives:

- ❖ Analyzing participants' experiences of gender violence, especially those known to teachers in the school context
- ❖ Expanding the role of the school in bringing out and managing the dynamics of violence
- ❖ Investigating the actions and tools designed to prevent, manage and resolve violence
- ❖ Formulating additional tools, initiatives or services that the school, also in collaboration with territorial services handling gender violence, could implement to prevent and manage violence.

2.2 How many and which participants are involved in the focus groups

Context analysis

Before proceeding with focus groups, it is advisable to collect preliminary information on the study context and the reference group, especially when the topic to be investigated is violence. It is essential to collect general information on the school's broader area of influence (students' home neighborhoods, previous schooling, perception of the school and its educational offerings in the territory, etc.) and on the specific context of the classes participating in the discussion (for example if there are particular cases of hardship, if serious situations of discrimination or conflict persist, etc.). This information allows the moderators to adapt the direction of the discussion to the context, and/or to concentrate comparison and research on areas that are deemed more urgent and/or necessary. To this end, co-planning meetings with the "experts", ie, the teaching staff, on the social and scholastic context that is being investigated play an important role.

The composition of the group

The focus group participants usually range from six to ten participants. However, on a delicate topic such as violence, it is essential to keep the number of participants in the discussion to a maximum of eight boys / girls. Even for school staff, the number should never exceed 10 people. In some cases, when the context is particularly difficult, eg, when the participants in the FG have experienced known episodes of violence, it is essential to further reduce the number of participants in order to guarantee the space necessary to speak to all the participants, to limit the possibility of conflicts arising and to allow the moderators to better manage the emotional aspects related to sharing violence-related content.

The focus group represents a qualitative technique, therefore it is not necessary to constitute a representative sample. This means that the subjects involved in the FG must not be representative of a population in a statistical sense; rather they must follow the logic of "theoretical significance", ensuring that

Homogeneity vs Heterogeneity

Considering the composition of the FG, there may be research questions that require a homogeneous group of participants, or others that can be answered only by inviting very heterogeneous people to the discussion. However, it is imperative that all the subjects that take part in the discussion, have something to say about the topic, without having to have the same level of experience or to represent the same point of view.

In some cases:

❖ It may be useful to promote the internal homogeneity of the group in relation to age and socio-economic status, rather than roles (for example, in school it may be preferable NOT to put students and teaching staff together around the table and favor autonomous discussions between different social components);

❖ A possible option is to privilege homogeneity in relation to gender, for issues in which the simultaneous presence of men and women could inhibit free expression.

In gender violence focus groups, separation by gender identification could, on the one hand, promote greater freedom and mutual understanding of the specific forms of violence in each of the two genders. On the other hand, it could implicitly reinforce some stereotypes related to the cultural representation of the problem and exclude, from the learning and awareness processes, the gender that does not participate in the discussion. Therefore, there is no precise recipe beyond favoring the choice most appropriate to the reference context; in this case, the school context and the classes in which the FG is conducted. In evaluating whether to mix participant genders, a preliminary discussion with the teachers, contact persons or project managers of the schools involved is always useful.

A multiplicity of differences

In addition to the gender dimension, it is important to consider the many other sources of differentiation (social class, cultural origin, sexual orientation - if known and/or declared, etc.) that exist in the school (and, more generally, in contemporary society, which is plural by definition) and which are relevant to understanding the phenomenon. Even in these cases, the choice to favor heterogeneity or homogeneity in the composition of groups depends on specific considerations, linked to the objectives and contexts of the investigation. For example, potentially, a heterogeneous group in terms of social and cultural background has many advantages: it allows comparing the thought processes of different cultures and/or social classes, highlighting the different cultural representations of multiple forms of violence. It also leaves open the possibility of bringing out and investigating some specific experiences of violence against women linked and/or having a higher incidence in some countries of origin and "cultures" (eg, female genital mutilation,

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[4] cfr. Stagi Luisa, *Il focus group come tecnica di valutazione. Pregi, difetti, potenzialità*, in Rassegna Italiana di Valutazione • n. 20 • ottobre-dicembre 2000

forced marriages, etc.)[5]. In the YOUTH FOR LOVE project, the classes involved in group discussions were characterized by students from different cultural backgrounds, social and economic backgrounds.

As far as school staff is concerned, heterogeneity can also be guaranteed by involving staff with different roles within the school. This choice was also made in the YOUTH FOR LOVE project.

Familiarity vs Oddity

Another issue influencing methodological choices in the composition of the groups concerns the degree of familiarity or unfamiliarity between the participants. The extraneousness of the participants could:

- ❖ Intensify protection of privacy;
- ❖ Facilitate opening oneself to matters deemed "compromising";
- ❖ Reduce probability of conformism and confirm stereotypes;
- ❖ Reduce risks of manipulation of the group process (jargon, relational and power dynamics, etc.).

However, by putting students from different classes of the same educational institution in groups, there is a risk of failing to trigger the transformation of group dynamics (an indirect process) into one of sharing delicate and compromising experiences. In general, in the case of teachers and non-scholastic staff, preference is given to voluntary participation in the focus group project. Forcing an adult to share personal experiences or otherwise expose themselves regarding sensitive issues could even be counterproductive to group dynamics.

Also bringing together people who already have a certain degree of awareness can contribute to the successful outcome of the focus group. In the case of students belonging to the same class, the familiarity of everyday discussion and debate already experienced in life in the school environment can be enhanced, facilitating:

- ❖ Arrival at deeper discussion levels faster;
- ❖ A greater climate of intimacy and free exchange of opinions;
- ❖ Strengthening bonds and friendships;
- ❖ Paying greater attention and knowing more of reciprocal life stories;
- ❖ The possibility of defusing existing conflictual dynamics within the group;
- ❖ Raising consciousness and awareness of oneself and others.

Sharing experiences and life events, if well managed and supported with subsequent educational work, can trigger an indirect process transforming relational dynamics and promoting greater well-being in students both within, and outside, the school context.

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[5] The question of cultural difference is as important in the composition of the groups and subsequently in the analysis of the content emerging from the FG as other considerations. Together with other variables (eg, social class), it effectively contributes to making schools and society transcultural pluralities. Considering the different social and cultural origins in the focus groups allows us to contextually detect the multiplicity of points of view due to the different approaches, representations and ways of responding to violence according to different "thought processes", cultural "models", mentalities and sub-cultures. Taking this complexity into account allows greater analytical precision. It is essential to clarify that the element of cultural differences should not be objectified, and should not be considered an immutable variable over time.

In the selection of the focus participants it is also important to:

❖ Avoid the co-presence of students / school staff who have deeply rooted conflicts, so that they do not unduly undermine the discussion with issues related to their personal relationships, which risks inhibiting the participation of the other members of the group and the expression of other opinions;

❖ Distribute, if known, the most difficult cases or those presenting unusual situations or experiences between different groups.

To encourage the participation of boys and girls, it is necessary to:
❖ Convince students this is a curious research project that merits participation;
❖ Explain to them that to try to improve school life we need their points of view, we need them to talk about their experiences;
❖ Facilitate participation by choosing places and times that are easy to reach and compatible with educational activities and students' extra-curricular commitments.

A possible recruitment procedure could be to distribute a short flyer in which the project, the objectives, the use of the data are presented. Provide teachers with a succinct presentation, so that they can read it to the students. In this presentation, you can already indicate the date, time and place of the focus group, as well as personal contact information. The preliminary contact with the participants or with those who mediate the relationship with them is essential to prepare the students for their conscientious and motivated participation.

To encourage the participation of school staff it is necessary:

❖ To convince them that this is an interesting research project that merits participation, also with a view to improving their individual pedagogical / teaching skills
❖ Explain to them that to try to improve school life we need their points of view, we need them to talk about their experiences and their relationship with the students
❖ Facilitate participation by choosing places and times that are easy to reach and compatible with educational activities and extra-curricular commitments.

Exploring themes of violence can provoke a strong emotional impact, especially if this opportunity is not contextualized and explained carefully to the recipients of the focus groups. Previous research demonstrates that students are willing to freely compare themselves with the adult world when they are free to reflect on their lives. The first contact with them and with the teaching staff simply must be prepared in careful detail.

In general, expect boys and girls, as well as school staff, to frequently have direct experience with violence in some form.

2.3 The construction of a "safe place"

When you are with the group of participants you must immediately build a relationship of mutual trust.
The moment before the first question is crucial.
Before the start of the focus group, it is important to reassure the participants about privacy rules (and have them sign the consent form for handling personal data - see attachment).

In fact, specifying that the information collected will be protected and remain anonymous, even in the case of publication, helps create a relaxed atmosphere and defines the space / time of the focus group as a protected and safe context. The indications contained in the Fiocco Bianco Campaign Training Manual[6] are very useful on this topic. Designed for educators, the Manual contains information and suggestions on how to conduct educational activities regarding gender violence in second-level schools. The Manual states that "unlike what happens during a normal lesson, the teacher, the Campaign activist or the student who acts as a guide in carrying out an exercise or in the organization of an activity on the subject, has a particularly delicate role in helping to create a properly protected environment " (pg. 13-14). Furthermore, in defining the rules of the discussion, it is important to emphasize the confidentiality of the contents emerging from the discussion.

In general, while managing the focus group, it is essential to specify that the classroom in which the meeting takes place, constitutes a "safe and protected haven", defining a clear educational pact shared by all participants, for which:

- ❖ everyone is obliged to respect the privacy of what was heard, learned, shared and discussed during the session
- ❖ each has the duty to respect and not judge what is shared by others, especially in situations where there is a distance between their own experiences and/or the opinions and experiences expressed by the other participants
- ❖ each participant affirms they must not disseminate content and stories that have emerged which do not involve their own personal experience
- ❖ each person is free to leave the discussion at any time if the emerging content is too difficult to handle emotionally.

The theme of violence (not just gender-related) can have a strong and unpredictable emotional impact. Potential emotional reactions are unpredictable to conductors that are unaware of participants' previous or current experiences of direct or indirect violence and their individual circumstances. The presenter has a central role in helping participants understand that violence affects us all and that it is a widespread phenomenon in our society.

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[6] The manual is available and can be consulted online at the following web address:
https://web.archive.org/web/20090411002021/http://www.fioccobianco.it/testi/pdf/Manuale_DEF_6-12-2007.pdf

The 2014 ISTAT report states that, although compared to 2006, some forms of violence have decreased among the very young, the percentage of women who have suffered physical or sexual violence between 16 and 24 years old is 27.1% and for female students is 25.9%.

Even on a European level, 33% of women have suffered some form of psychological and/or sexual violence and 55% sexual harassment and stalking (also in the workplace)[7]; a widespread phenomenon that must, unfortunately, be taken into account when conducting a focus group on these issues.

Repeating the previously shared rules of protection and respect for privacy throughout the session serves both to limit cases of "transgression" and disclosure of the delicate contents that emerge during the discussion, and to maintain a climate of mutual trust between the participants.

The issue of confidentiality and privacy obviously concerns teachers, as well as their students, due to their dual roles as professionals and as men and women.

2.4 The role of the conductor and the lever of experience

The main task of the conductor is to facilitate the discussion and encourage debate. The style can be more or less directive, depending on the agreements made with the research organizers. In general, the focus group guidelines are offered as a semi-structured framework, capable of adapting to situations and individual contexts, as well as supporting the priorities and urgencies that emerge during the discussion. However, different management methods have been identified:

- ❖ Non-directive style: the moderator launches the topic and lets the discussion proceed autonomously, influencing it only by raising questions

- ❖ Managerial style: the moderator / moderator takes tight control over both the content and the interactions between the participants.

In general, a good moderators skill set includes:

- ❖ Flexibility and adaptability
- ❖ Awareness of one's communication style
- ❖ Listening skills
- ❖ Focus on the task and the research mandate
- ❖ Observational skills
- ❖ Ability to refrain from speaking and not intervene to correct or reiterate
- ❖ "Scanning" capability[8]

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[77] EPRS European Parliamentary Research Service March 2018

[88] In this case, the English term *scanning* indicates the ability to grasp and understand the specific meanings of each context, to recognize and codify the characteristics and transformations of the environment in which one operates.

In focus groups specifically dealing with violence, it is necessary that the person managing the discussion not only knows the principal subject literature and contents under debate, but also has an awareness of the social and emotional aspects of the phenomenon and a familiarity with violence prevention center practices and methods. This facilitates dealing with possible experiences of violence as they emerge. However, in order to respect the research mandate of the project, it is essential that the "operator" perspective not prevail over that of the researcher. Specific violence-related competencies also allow the conductor to avoid situations of re-victimization or secondary victimization. Explicitly prohibited by art. 18 of the Istanbul Convention (2011), secondary victimization can be defined as "a condition of further suffering and offense experienced by the victim in relation to an attitude of insufficient attention, or negligence, by the formal control agencies in their intervention phase and manifests itself in the further psychological consequences that the victim suffers"[9]. Often secondary victimization occurs in contact with institutions, contexts where the victim feels forced to narrate their own experience of violence with consequent effects of repetition and reinforcement of the suffering and experience.

The processes of secondary victimization are often characterized by the inability to meet the individual needs, sensitivity and limits that those who have suffered violence relive in sharing the story of their own experience. Therefore it is important that the conductor of the FG be able to perceive the emotional measure of the narrator, not judging, but expressing closeness, recognizing the strength of the narrator, and favoring any requests for removal from group work[10].

Sharing personal experiences, although difficult to manage, is nevertheless necessary and enriching. Leveraging on the experiences of both direct and indirect violence is important not only for exploratory and investigative purposes, but to trigger individual and collective pathways and processes to redefine violence, whether as a victim, perpetrator or enabler. It is a question of finding a space for recognizing and naming violence without judging it, of approaching violence without nurturing false expectations of easy solutions, of giving it meaning using a shared language, emerging from the context of guided discussion.

Naming violence and triggering processes of redefinition and awareness take place within an scholastic relationship of mutual respect that can trigger subsequent processes of individual, and school-wide, awareness and transformation. This will be the task that teachers, operators and educators will, consequently, have to carry out in the school context, applying appropriate action in synergy with violence-related institutions and services in the area.

At the end of the focus group it is essential to give participants useful addresses of violence prevention centers or other local services that deal in various ways with gender violence in the area.

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[9]9 *La vittimizzazione secondaria: ambiti di ricerca, teorizzazioni e scenari*, Giovanna Fanci, Rivista di Criminologia, Vittimologia e Sicurezza – Vol. V – N. 3 – Settembre-Dicembre 2011, p. 54.
[10]10 "*Manuale per la formazione del Fiocco Bianco*"

3. Practical indications

3.1 How to organize a focus group

Before arriving at the school or wherever the focus group will take place, it is essential to:

- ❖ Memorize the focus group questions and have a printed copy of the outline
- ❖ Ask for an adequate space. Requirements: the classroom must be quiet with chairs arranged around a table
- ❖ If needed, a table for the FG assistant
- ❖ Have leaflets, to be distributed at the end of the FG, with the telephone numbers for useful local violence-related services to contact in case of need.

Once at school, before meeting participants:

- ❖ Prepare the room, then place chairs around the table.
- ❖ Prepare the recorder (make sure the batteries are new). Place sheets, Post-it notes, name tags, pens and anything else you may need during the meeting.

Upon arrival of the participants:

- ❖ Fill in the personal data and privacy forms (you must always agree with the schools on how to manage the privacy forms; where minors are involved, it is obligatory to first send the forms to the families or guardians)
- ❖ Create a relaxed and friendly atmosphere while waiting to start.

The participants should arrive together. While waiting for late arrivals, talk about neutral issues. Decide in advance how long you are willing to wait for latecomers.

N.B. Before initiating the focus group, it is important to specify that:

- ❖ all information collected will protect your anonymity, even in the event of publication;
- ❖ the classroom in which the focus group takes place is a "safe and secure haven" with a clear educational agreement for all participants, for which:
  - everyone is required to respect the privacy of what is heard, learned, shared and discussed during the session
  - each participant affirms they must not disseminate content and stories that emerge which do not involve their personal experience
  - each person is free to leave the discussion at any time if the emerging content is too difficult to handle emotionally.

Start the FG:

Turn on the recorder and place it in the center of the table.

Specify:

- ❖ how and why the participants were chosen
- ❖ the general topic of discussion
- ❖ the use of the recorder and of the information
- ❖ the context in which the meeting is taking place
- ❖ that everyone's opinions are important
- ❖ that everyone must have the opportunity to speak
- ❖ that anyone can express disagreement with the ideas expressed by others while respecting different ideas from one's own
- ❖ that everyone is free to ask moderators and other participants their questions
- ❖ that the moderator will bring topics to the attention of the group, which is invited to discuss them freely, among the group more than with the moderator
- ❖ that no one is obliged to speak; everyone is free to intervene if and when they wish
- ❖ that people not speak simultaneously, so all the information can be clearly recorded
- ❖ that each person is free to leave the discussion at any time if they feel uncomfortable continuing.

3.2 Analyze and code the data

As a tool for qualitative investigation, focus groups make it possible to gather abundant and valuable information concerning a theme: it can provide a very rich qualitative database. Often the facilitator's notes, their impressions and reflective analyses are useful. A correct analysis requires a partial or selective transcription, in which only the most important information is transcribed for research purposes, or a complete transcription of the recordings. In general, content analysis is divided into:

- ❖ Thematic analysis: some analytical categories are identified that correspond to the opinions and attitudes expressed by the participants (Gobo 2005: 73). These categories identify, following interpretative guidelines, the range of opinions that have emerged;
- ❖ Analysis of the conversation and the interactive dynamics: these reveal how participants interacted, that is how they express in-depth issues in the focus group; this analysis can favor both formal and substantive approaches;
- ❖ Semiotic analysis: analyzing the meanings, understanding the content and how it is codified.

A preliminary rundown of the collected contents can take place as the very focus group is proceeding (Krueger 2002). To this end, during the focus session, the conductor can:

- ❖ Clarify contradictory and confused observations during the discussion;
- ❖ Explain cryptic contributions
- ❖ Ask each participant which issues they consider most relevant
- ❖ Summarize the key points and share them with the participants

Immediately after the focus group, it is important to:

- ❖ Make sure everything has been correctly recorded
- ❖ Label the recording
- ❖ Draw a diagram of the participants' seating distribution around the table
- ❖ Note: main impressions from the focus group proceedings; the most frequently mentioned themes; ideas and reflective observations
- ❖ Hold a short de-briefing with the focus group assistant (if present)
- ❖ Methodically collect and store the materials used and the materials collected during the session (used post-its, distributed materials, etc.)
- ❖ Contrast and compare with other focus groups carried out with the same objective, in the same context (eg, focus groups carried out at the same school)

In the next phase it is essential to:

- ❖ copy or back up recordings on a computer;
- ❖ transcribe focus group conversations
- ❖ listen to the recordings a second time, reviewing the notes taken in the field, re-reading the transcription notes;
- ❖ prepare interpretative and data encoding guidelines
- ❖ write a report for each individual focus group reporting the participants' answers for each question, enriching, if necessary, with footnotes;
- ❖ compare the reports with those prepared by other researchers, if present

After decoding the data, proceed with:

- ❖ analyzing the observations that emerged from all the focus groups produced in the field research
- ❖ comparing the results according to analysis or coding categories
- ❖ highlighting the main issues or questions
- ❖ building classification or analytical models
- ❖ describing the results in detail, including using additional notes

Finally, create a final report, usually an overall synthesis, which demonstrates the main results. In general, the order of the paragraphs in the report follows the areas under investigation in the focus group's preliminary outline.

Annex 1 Focus Group Outlines for Students: an example

The direction of the focus group varies according to the research mandate: in general, it is not possible to give restrictive indications on the questions to be included in the discussion because they are connected to the questions that we want to investigate using the focus tool. This outline for student focus groups is intended as a semi-structured framework, subject to the varying issues that emerge and the participants' responses during the discussion.

In YOUTH FOR LOVE, the outline was divided into three macro areas:

- ❖ experiences with violence, especially those that took place in the school context;
- ❖ the perception of the school as a safe or unsafe environment;
- ❖ the initiatives and services that the school puts into practice or could implement to prevent, manage and resolve violence.

INTRODUCTION (estimated time 5 minutes)

Thanks for being here. As you know, we invited you to participate in a Focus Group (a group discussion) on youth, violence and the school context. I am a researcher / operator working for (*insert the organization for which the conductor / presenter works*).

I deal with youth and gender-based violence. My task is to facilitate debate between different opinions and the group discussion. In this regard, we need to give ourselves some rules. To make the conversation smoother, I propose addressing each other using our first names. My name is (*FIRST NAME*). (Write and attach a name tag with your name on your shirt).

This is a research project dealing with youth, violence and the school context, funded with EU financing.

This focus group is a chat about a variety of topics; it will last 1 hour and 30 minutes. We are not going to take breaks - if the bell rings or there is an pre-scheduled break - I ask you to stay here. After the FG, you will have a few minutes before returning to your classroom.

You are all students at this school, from different classes. You have been selected to participate in this meeting because your experience is an important stimulus for us. You don't have to stay; if you become uncomfortable, you can leave.

We are interested in your point of view, so we are interested in hearing the opinions of all of you and each of you. Our conversation will be recorded, because it is difficult to rely only on memory and, above all, because we want to be able to carefully consider all the opinions you express.

We are the only ones that will hear the full recordings, then they will be rendered anonymous. In the publications that follow, we will use fictitious names and will not identify the school.

Let's make a deal: we agree to protect everything we say here. We want this to be a safe haven. We also ask you to respect what each of us says here, and not talk about it outside. I also ask you not to talk about events that don't involve you but involve others that are here, because if they want to express themselves, it is right that they can.

The only rules: don't talk simultaneously. If you want to clarify what your classmate is saying, or if you disagree, ask each other questions! And don't forget: I highly recommend protecting yourself, that is, avoid

talking about the contents shared in this discussion outside of this context (the rules of privacy and of the previously agreed educational pact can be mentioned in this regard).

Do you have any questions?

Can you present yourself briefly and stick a name tag on your shirt?

QUESTIONS / STIMULI OUTLINE

First section (estimated time 25 minutes)

1. Let's imagine that in your experience, just like in everyone's experience, you have to or have had to deal with some form of violence. Can you tell us about these episodes of violence, both inside and outside the school environment?

I suggest, if you want to talk about episodes that do not directly involve you, do not use the names of the protagonists, so as not to violate their privacy.

We'd like to ask you to reflect on the episodes that come to mind. Write them on these Post-its. Describe the type of violence that was perpetrated, experienced or observed. One episode for each Post-it. Take 5 minutes.

(The question is an open question: various types of violence can be shared, anything that comes to mind. It will be the task of the facilitators to examine the examples in greater depth and detail. At the beginning, you can start with some "free association").

Well, now that you're done, let me ask you to stick the post-it on this sheet in the middle of the table one at a time and tell us about the episode and the type of violence.

If details do not emerge from the story of the boys / girls, use the following questions to go into greater detail:

- ❖ Check where the violence took place. Focus on what happened at school.
- ❖ Check who, of those present, is aware of the reported case.
- ❖ Verify whether the violence was perpetrated or experienced.
- ❖ Verify gender. Do the participants think gender was a factor?
- ❖ Verify violence between generations. Is there a generational dimension?
- ❖ Check cultural origins. Is racism a factor?
- ❖ Verify social and economic status
- ❖ Disability?
- ❖ Sexual orientation / sexual "practices"?
- ❖ Physical aspect?

Second section (estimated time: about 20 minutes)

After collecting all the stories of violence, select two or three cases to discuss in more detail. Specify that the cases under discussion will concern violence perpetrated or suffered by students. The criteria for selecting cases to be investigated are:

- ❖ cases which most participants know about
- ❖ differentiate between cases as much as possible, then choose:

- ❖ cases in which more people are involved, more actors acting in the context of the school in question
- ❖ a case involving violence and conflicts between "peers"
- ❖ a case involving episodes of violence between generations

After the selection of the cases, proceed with the second question.

2. These (two / three) episodes occurred at school. Most of you know them, but maybe not all of them. Can you describe them in more detail? (*The questions are addressed to everyone, one episode is chosen at a time.*)

- ❖ Have you talked to anyone about this (*Check teachers / friends / psychologist at the school*)?
- ❖ How did you feel?
- ❖ Who intervened and how?
- ❖ In general, regarding situations like this, what can be done to manage them better?
- ❖ What could the teachers have done differently, to better deal with the situation and better manage the people involved?

Here it is important to stimulate the different stories about the selected episodes and to verify the perception of the participants on how the school reacted to them.

Third question: estimated time (20 minutes)

3. In light of what you have told us:

- ❖ When you are at school, do you feel you are in a safe space or are you always on alert?
- ❖ As far as you know, how has the school prepared to prevent and/or manage violence?
- ❖ Are there educational courses on gender equality?
- ❖ If yes, what do you think of them?
- ❖ Tell us a good thing and a bad thing that you took away from the most recent educational workshop you did here at school.

Are you aware of internal school and/or local services that deal with managing and resolving cases of violence?

If you witnessed or suffered an act of violence, with whom would you rather talk about it?

Fourth question: estimated time (20 minutes)

4. If you had a magic wand: what solutions would you like the school to set up to prevent and manage violence?

CLOSING Focus Group

Considering the issues we wanted to address, that is, violence perpetrated or suffered in and out of school facilities, do you think we have forgotten anything? Is there something else you want to add?

Before saying goodbye, let's remember what we said at the beginning of our meeting:

- ❖ the information collected will be protected and remain anonymous, even in the event of publication;
- ❖ the classroom where our meeting took place is a "safe and secure haven" with a clear educational pact under which:
- ❖ everyone agreed to respect the privacy of what was heard, learned, shared and discussed during the session
- ❖ each participant affirmed they will not disseminate content and stories that have emerged here which do not involve their personal experience.

We're all counting on having your full cooperation.

Now I'm going to give you information materials about the services in the local area that deal with preventing violence and helping those who are victims of it.

(Give each participant a copy.)

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Annex 2 Focus Group Outlines for Teachers: an example

INTRODUCTION (estimated time 5 minutes)

Thanks for being here. As you know, we invited you to participate in a Focus Group (a group discussion) on youth, violence and the school context.

I am a researcher / operator working for (insert the organization for which the conductor / presenter works). I deal with youth and gender violence. My task is to facilitate debate between different opinions and the group discussion. In this regard, we need to give ourselves some rules. To make the conversation smoother, I propose addressing each other using our first names. My name is (FIRST NAME). (Write and attach a name tag with your name on your chest).

This is a research project dealing with youth, violence and the school context funded with EU financing.

This focus group is a chat about a variety of topics; it will last 1 hour and 30 minutes. We are not going to take breaks. After the FG, you will have a few minutes before resuming your work.

You are all teachers at this school, from different classes. You have been selected to participate in this meeting because... (*REASON*). You don't have to stay; if you become uncomfortable, you can leave.

We are interested in your point of view, so we are interested in hearing the opinions of all of you and each of you. Our conversation will be recorded, because it is difficult to rely only on memory and, above all, because we want to be able to carefully consider all the opinions you express.

We are the only ones that will hear the full recordings, then they will be rendered anonymous. In the publications that follow, we will use fictitious names and will not identify the school.

I propose an educational pact: we agree to protect everything we say here. We want this to be a safe haven. We also ask you to respect what each of us says here, and not talk about it outside. I also ask you not to talk about events that don't involve you but involve others that are here, because if they want to express themselves, it is right that they can.

The only rules: don't talk simultaneously. If you want to clarify what your classmate is saying, or if you disagree, ask each other questions! And don't forget: I highly recommend protecting yourself, that is, avoid talking about the contents shared in this discussion outside of this context. We respect the privacy of people, whether they are here or not: please avoid using proper names when describing facts / events.

Do you have any questions?

QUESTIONS / STIMULI OUTLINE

First Section (estimated time 25 minutes)

1. Let us imagine that, in your experience as a teacher, even you have to, or have had to, deal with some form of violence at school. Can you tell us about these episodes of violence?

I suggest, if you want to talk about episodes that do not directly involve you, do not use the names of the protagonists, so as not to violate their privacy. We'd like to ask you to reflect on the episodes that come to mind. Write them on these Post-its. Describe the type of violence that was perpetrated, experienced or observed. One episode for each Post-it. Take 5 minutes.

(The question is an open question: various types of violence can be shared, anything that comes to mind. It will be the task of the facilitators to examine the examples in greater depth and detail. At the beginning, you can start with some "free association").

Well, now that you're done, let me ask you to stick the post-its on this sheet in the middle of the table one at a time and tell us about the episode and the type of violence.

- ❖ Check where the violence took place. Focus on what happened at school.
- ❖ Check who, of those present, is aware of the reported case.
- ❖ Verify whether the violence was perpetrated or experienced.
- ❖ Verify gender. Do the participants think gender was a factor?
- ❖ Verify violence between generations. Is there a generational dimension?
- ❖ Check cultural origins. Is racism a factor?
- ❖ Verify social and economic status
- ❖ Disability?
- ❖ Sexual orientation / sexual "practices"?
- ❖ Physical aspect?

Second section (estimated time: about 20 minutes)

After collecting all the stories of violence, select two or three cases to discuss in more detail. Specify that the cases under discussion will concern violence perpetrated or suffered by students. The criteria for selecting cases to be investigated are:

- ❖ cases which most participants know about
- ❖ differentiate between cases as much as possible, then choose:
- ❖ cases in which more people are involved, more actors acting in the context of the school in question
- ❖ a case involving violence and conflicts between "peers"
- ❖ a case involving episodes of violence between generations

After the selection of the cases, proceed with the second question.

2. These (two / three) episodes occurred at school. Most of you know them, but maybe not all of them. (The questions are addressed to everyone, one episode is chosen at a time.)

Let's start with this episode. Can you describe it in more detail?

In your opinion, what role did the school play in bringing out and managing the dynamics inherent in the violence?

What did you do, specifically, when you found yourself facing the episode you told us about?

To intervene, what tools did you have available?

What would you need to feel more confident and intervene more easily?

Here it is important to stimulate the different stories about the selected episodes, and to verify the perception of the participants on how the school reacted to them.

Third Section: (estimated time 20 minutes)

3. Are you aware of initiatives (meetings, educational courses, etc.) promoted by the school to promote gender equality and non-discrimination and prevent violence?

- ❖ What are they?
- ❖ What's you opinion of them? Can you tell us about a useful and a less useful element that you think characterizes the educational programs on these topics provided here at school.
- ❖ What do the students think?
- ❖ Are you aware of internal school and/or local services that deal with managing and resolving cases of violence?
- ❖ What connections does the school have with them?

Fourth Section: (estimated time 20 minutes)

4. In your opinion, what additional role could the school have in raising awareness, managing and resolving the dynamics of violence?

5. What support do you need to have a more incisive role in the emergence and management of cases of violence?

6. If you had a magic wand, which activities, tools or initiatives would you set up to face and prevent violence in the school environment?

CLOSING Focus Group

Considering the issues we wanted to address... [*repeat initial questions and topics, eg violence and the youth world*]

Do you think we have forgotten anything? Is there something else you want to add?

Before saying goodbye, let us remember what we said at the beginning of our meeting:

- ❖ the information collected will be protected and remain anonymous, even in the event of publication;
- ❖ the classroom where our meeting took place is a "safe and secure haven" with a clear educational pact under which:

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- ❖ everyone agreed to respect the privacy of what was heard, learned, shared and discussed during the session

- ❖

- ❖ each participant affirmed they will not disseminate content and stories that have emerged here which do not involve their personal experience.

We're all counting on having your full cooperation.

Now I'm going to give you information materials about the services in the local area that deal with preventing violence and helping those who are victims of it.

(Give each participant a copy.)

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