



Youth for Love Recommendations for Free-GBV School



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D1.10 Final recommendations document

The Network outputs is represented by final recommendations, created together with the project partnership, on policy asks related to addressing GBV in EU schools.

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Summary

Youth for Love is a two-year project implemented in four European countries: Italy, Belgium, Greece, and Romania. The project aims to develop and test an integrated educational programme targeting high-school students (14-17 years old) and school professionals and is designed to raise awareness on gender-based violence prevention and management.

The education system should, on one hand, empower students with the knowledge, skills, and resources to prevent and manage GBV and, on the other hand, ensure that teachers and school staff provide for proper prevention policies as well as a sound referral mechanism of GBV cases involving students. In this view, schools are key players and allies to make gender inequality and GBV unacceptable among adolescents. Moreover, comprehensive policies and regular interventions are necessary to make the struggle against SRGBV a priority for the education system as a whole.

This document is the outcome of a participatory process that involved Youth for Love partners, beneficiaries, and stakeholders to raise awareness among local and national institutions and to call upon individual and collective responsibilities and action to make a real change. It consists of two distinct parts: Part 1 outlines the definitions of gender-based violence and school-related gender-based violence; the role of schools in the prevention and fight against these phenomena; and the writing process to agree upon a set of recommendations. Part 2 lists the identified recommendations broken down by targeted stakeholders that are or could be engaged at the local, national, and European level.

Laying the background for GBV – Free Schools

What are Gender-Based Violence and School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV)?

Gender-based violence (GBV) is generally defined as



"violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering, against someone based on gender discrimination, gender role expectations and/or gender stereotypes, or based on the differential power status linked to gender"

Council of Europe, Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, 2011, Art. 3.



School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) involves

"acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes and enforced by unequal power dynamics."

UNESCO and UN WOMEN (2016), Global guidance on addressing school-related gender-based violence.

What is the role of schools and education in preventing/addressing gender-based violence?

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) affects millions of children, families and communities globally. Adolescents and young people are being significantly impacted by this phenomenon with short and long-term consequences such as decreasing self-esteem, depression, lowering educational outcomes, and negative impacts on the overall individual growth and development.

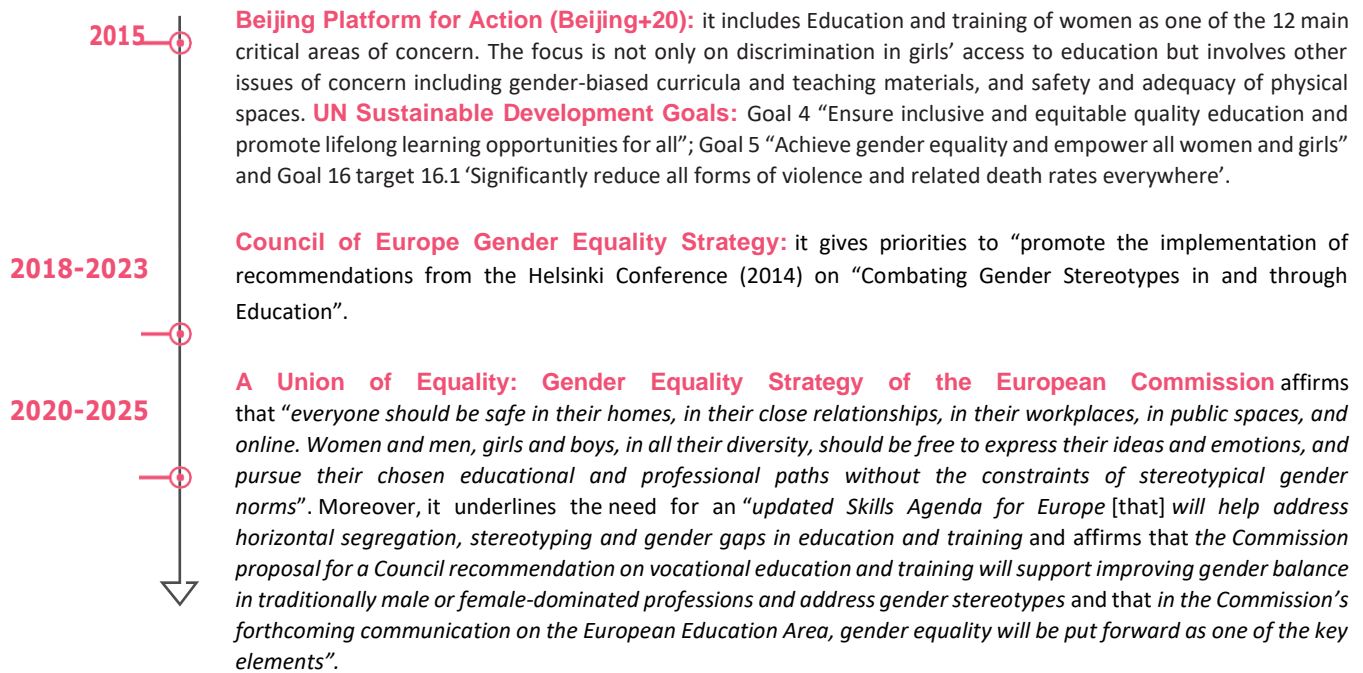
The role of education and schools in preventing and addressing gender-based violence is widely acknowledged in several international conventions and treaties, including:

1989

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affirms that children have the right to be properly cared for and protected from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them (Article 19: Protection from all forms of violence), without discrimination (Article 2), and in the best interests of the child (Article 3).

2011

Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (also known as the "Istanbul Convention") reaffirms the role of education in "Article 14 – Education: 14.1 Parties shall take, where appropriate, the necessary steps to include teaching material on issues such as equality between women and men, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships, gender-based violence against women and the right to personal integrity, adapted to the evolving capacity of learners, in formal curricula and at all levels of education; 14.2 Parties shall take the necessary steps to promote the principles referred to in paragraph 1 in informal educational facilities, as well as in sports, cultural and leisure facilities and the media."



The process towards the Youth for Love Recommendations for Free-GBV Schools

The hereinafter recommendations are the result of a **participatory process that involved project partners, stakeholders, and beneficiaries** (i.e., students and school staff, namely teachers, school headmasters, tutors, administrative staff) with the aim of collecting needs, priorities, and resources concerning the prevention and fight against SRGBV. **The roadmap** that led to the drafting of the recommendations comprised the following activities:

- **Creation or strengthening of a stakeholder network** supporting the project (civil society organizations, schools, activists, experts, students, school staff with different tasks within the network depending on their role) at national level and in the local project areas, i.e. Milan, Athens, Leuven, Bucharest.
- **Desk research on priorities** regarding gender and education, especially the legal and institutional framework, formal and non-formal practices in high schools, and other projects, with the aim to identify common practices or gaps in each partner country.
- **Collection and analysis of insights and needs from** students and school staff during the implementation of project activities (Teen's support programme, school staff programme, interviews with school Directors) and during dissemination activities (National workshops and trainings).
- **Meetings and exchanges with local and national stakeholders** to collect their inputs and contributions, especially during the project meetings in Athens (June 2019) and in Hasselt (February 2020).
- **Specific session on the recommendations** during the last (online) project meeting (January 2021) with stakeholders from each partner country.
- **Dedicated workshop during the Italian final event** (9 March 2021) to discuss and finalise the document with both stakeholders and project participants.
- **Dedicated session during the final institutional event** (10 March 2021) in which stakeholders from different countries shared their priorities to meet their specific needs.
- **Dedicated sessions during the online final national events** in each partner country (Greece, 8 March 2021; Romania, (26 March 2021) Belgium, (31 March 2021).

Partners involved in the recommendations developing process

Romania - **Monaliza Cirstea** (Director of GBV Department, National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men), **Mihaela Sasarman** (NGO working with teens and teachers on GBV prevention), **Eni Gall** (NGO working with teens and teachers on GBV prevention), **Daniela Draghici** - Advocacy specialist, **Eva Laszlo** – researcher and teacher (Babes Bolyai University, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work).

Belgium - **Emma Vandyck** (policymaker from the Department of Equal Opportunities for the City of Hasselt), **Leopold Lindelauff** – Chairperson Regenbooghuis Hasselt, **Tim Vandereyd**, **Lore Ceysens** – Social worker of Community centre.

Greece - **Rafael Bilidas** (LGBTQI activist), **Mairi Chioni** - Head of Health Education, A' Athens Directorate of Secondary Education, Scientific Associate Orlando at LGBT + mental health without stigma, **Vicky Germotsi** -Equality Research Center (KETHI), Program Planning, Documentation and Evaluation Office, **Theoni Koufonikolakou** - Deputy Ombudswoman for the Rights of the Child, **Elena Skarpidou** - Secondary Education Teacher, Sex Education Instructor, Head of Rainbow Education Sector, **Katia Kolovou** - Secondary Education Teacher, Director of the 2nd General High School of Kaisariani, **Panagiota Deligianni** - Secondary Education Teacher, Director of the 27th General High School of Athens.

Italy - **Monica Pasquino** – President of Scosse (national organization working on SRGBV), **Diana De Marchi** – teacher and President of the Equal Opportunities Commission of the City of Milan, **Gianmarco Silvano**, Unione degli Studenti (Students' movement), **Ma Basta Movimento** antibullismo (Students' movement), **Alessio Miceli** - Maschile Plurale, **Rita Barbieri** - Councilor for social and gender policies (Milan Municipality 6).

Recommendations to Address SRGBV

Through the abovementioned roadmap of activities, four sets of common recommendations were identified addressing schools and stakeholders at local, national, and European level. They are hereinafter listed, along with tailored recommendations targeting national stakeholders of each partner country.

Schools

Youth for Love focused on high school environment, procedures, and practices. Through the project's Teachers Programmes, the school staff examined the internal procedures to prevent and manage GBV cases, while students discussed about safe on unsafe spaces in schools or around them during the Teen Support Programme. The outputs of each workshop were gathered to share the students' and teachers' views, needs, and priorities as well as good practices.

In general, partners noticed that in high schools there is less attention on these topics than in primary and secondary schools, where procedures against bullying are in place.

Moreover, students must be involved and have a say in decisions that affect them at all levels. The experience of the project partners, but not only, has also shown that a punitive and authoritarian approach does not always achieve the desired changes. Rather, we recommend involving the student body in the definition of decisions affecting the school and in the definition of regulations, procedures and actions so that they are shared by the whole school community.

We recommend to schools to:

- Include **specific and detailed procedures** for preventing and managing SRGBV in the school rules and regulations, which should provide for the involvement of the entire educational community (teachers, school directors and school staff, parents and families, students, local civil society organizations and companies, citizens and institutions) and the equipment of the necessary knowledge, skills, tools, and support for schools.
- Ensure that teaching **methods and materials are gender-sensitive and inclusive** so not to reproduce stereotypes and discrimination messages.
- Provide **effective participation mechanisms** for students to engage them in the development of policies and actions to prevent and combat gender-based violence in schools.
- Provide **spaces for discussion** and exchange among teachers and school staff during their working hours in order to allow them to discuss classroom dynamics, identify any problems or critical issues related to SRGBV and properly respond at an early stage, plan and implement joint initiatives, and support each other.
- Appoint fully trained **SRGBV contact persons or tutors** from the school staff, each of them in charge of one or more classes.

Local level

Local institutions play a key role to promote networking, assure dialogue among different stakeholders in the prevention of School gender-based violence, and the harmonization of national and local policies. This role is often carried out by the Equal opportunity commission or Department in the Municipality in collaboration with local educational offices, the department of education and youth policies.

We recommend local stakeholders to:

- Establish **partnerships** among schools, institutions, associations, and companies to jointly plan projects and organise initiatives to prevent and combat gender-based violence targeting the whole educational community. Appoint **focal point schools on SRGBV** with dedicated resources and planning which can

represent a point of reference on these issues for other schools from the same local area in terms of training, expertise and best practices.

- Carry out **awareness-raising campaigns** on gender issues to foster the cultural change necessary to make gender inequalities and GBV unacceptable involving all relevant actors at local level (institutions, civil society, schools, young people, companies etc).
- Allocate **funds for initiatives** to prevent and combat gender-based violence that involve the whole educational community and have education as one of their priorities.
- Exchange and adapt **innovative strategies** and good practices, especially targeting young people, in close cooperation with other local institutions or networks.

National level

The Ministry of Education plays a key role in the prevention of gender-based violence in schools by putting gender equality at the heart of the national education system. Through comprehensive non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive strategies and policies, it can ensure a safe and secure learning environment to all students. To achieve this, the Ministry of Education should work in close cooperation with other relevant ministries and offices, such as at least the Ministry for Equal Opportunities, the Ministry of Youth, the Ministry of Health. Their roles and tasks should be clearly defined in the National Strategy for Education and in the National Plan to prevent and fight GBV. Against this background also the role of the national Parliament is critical since it can pass relevant legislation, allocate funds, and monitor the full implementation of the national strategy to achieve gender equality.

We recommend to the Ministry of Education to develop or improve **policies and guidelines on gender equality** to ensure gender-responsive instruction, with the contribution of experts from universities specialized in gender studies and education, NGOs working in the field of gender equality and education, and student representatives. Such policies should at least provide for the implementation of the following actions:

- **Review of school curricula** to ensure a gender-sensitive perspective.
- **Review of textbooks** to assure their language is inclusive and free from gender bias and promote a Code for educational publishers.
- Provision of **compulsory training on gender-related issues** for incoming teachers as well as regular refresher courses for school staff throughout their careers (life-long learning). The training modules should comply with criteria developed by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the relevant experts.
- Provision of **compulsory courses on gender and sexual education** for all students. The courses should be delivered in accordance with the students' age and maturity and be in line with the WHO guidelines on sexual education.
- Establishment of a **National Observatory on Gender Education** with a clear mandate, work programme, timeline, and participation criteria.
- Collection and reporting of **national statistics on SRGB** on regular basis and creation of a scientific monitoring system in schools, to inform national policies or actions.

European level

At European level we recommend to:

- The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), and (Eurostat) to cooperate to regularly **collect, collate, and report data and statistics** on SRGBV and on gender issues related to education so to fully inform the legislation, policies, and initiatives of the EU and Member States' institutions.
- The European Commission to **increase the funds for initiatives and projects** aiming at preventing and fighting SRGBV, with a special focus on the deconstruction of gender stereotypes and the fight against the patriarchal culture, especially in The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (previous REC Programme) that in the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 has three specific objectives: promoting equality and rights; promoting citizens engagement and participation in the democratic life of the Union; and fighting violence (Daphne strand).

In each Youth for Love partner country, also tailor-made recommendations addressing relevant national institutions were developed. They are illustrated hereinbelow along with context-related information.

National specific recommendations

1. Belgium

Belgium has a federal/national government and a Flemish government. Education is governed solely by the Flemish government while the domains of gender equality and justice are governed both at federal and national level. In 2016, Belgium ratified the Istanbul Convention at federal level and also at Flemish and Walloon community level. To assure the implementation of the Convention into legislation and policy, the Institute for Equality of Men and Women was founded. The latter also gives judicial assistance to victims of sexual violence but does not directly deal with education. Currently, the National Action Plan against Sexual Violence and the Flemish Action Plan against Sexual Violence are being implemented (2020-2024).

The Belgian educational system is governed at regional level, so each community has its own separate policy. In the Flemish region, where Youth for Love is implemented, the educational system is structured in the following way: kindergarten (which is not mandatory), six years of elementary school, two years of middle school, and four years of high school choosing between academic, technical or vocational.

Awareness raising on gender-based violence targeting students, teachers, and education professionals is a priority. The National Action Plan against Violence underlines that education plays a key role in the prevention field. In this view, it provides for training on GBV for school professionals and suggests training activities on the equality of men and women in the form of educational material integrated in the official curricula. It is stressed that education plays a key role in the prevention of violence and that healthy sexual relationships should be discussed at all ages throughout the whole school career.

2. Greece

The Greek Parliament voted the Istanbul Convention in March 2018 and published it in the Official Gazette in April 2018, when it entered into force. Greece adopted the National Action Plan for Gender Equality (2016-2020) and the National Action Plan for the Rights of the Child (2018-2020), which both include a chapter on the prevention and fight against GBV, and a which includes actions aiming at preventing and combating violence in different contexts (family, school, etc.).

The Greek educational system is divided in three levels, of which the first two are compulsory: six years of primary school, three years of middle schools and three years of lyceum or vocational studies.

In Greece, there is no specific plan on education, but the latter is a cross cutting issue addressed to in other areas of actions such as child protection and gender. The Greek Ministry of Education organised various initiatives on issues related to school violence and bullying, whereas agencies such as the Institute of Educational Policy, the Research Centre for Gender Equality – KETHI, and the General Secretariat for Gender Equality issued guidelines and reports and organized trainings and awareness raising events for educators on topics concerning gender and education. However, in most cases, these activities were fragmentary and lacked continuity.

Against this background, we recommend the Ministry of Education to:

- Adopt a **National Strategy for Education**, created through a collaborative process, which will incorporate a section on gender mainstreaming in education and policies to combat GBV.
- Develop and adopt **child protection and child safeguarding policies** in places where activities for children are running.
- Issue **guidelines for the development of specific procedures**, roles, and responsibilities for preventing and combating GBV in schools, that put children's rights at the centre.
- Provide for **trainings and awareness raising** of teachers, parents, and employees of public institutions that

support education, regarding human rights, gender equality and GBV as an integral part of the National Strategy for Education and the child protection policies that need to be adopted and applied.

- Include **human rights and gender related classes** in school curricula. Inclusive sexual education should also be part of the curricula.
- Establish **strategic partnerships** and communication channels among the actors that work on school related gender-based violence, public institutions, civic society organisations, schools, students, parents and teachers, school psychologists, while enabling students' active participation in fora and activities about GBV at schools.
- Ensure that all the people and actors involved in the prevention and combatting processes of GBV at schools are **fully supported, equipped, and protected** to meet obligations provided for by law or suggest policy and legal changes that can reform or/ and improve the systems that are in place.

3. Romania

The Istanbul Convention has been ratified by Romania in March 2016 and entered into force in September 2016. Romania also has a National Strategy for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities and Treatment for Women and Men and Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence for the period 2018-2021. Its action has focused on domestic violence, with the passing of the Domestic Violence Law, while no specific legislation on other forms of violence against women exists.

The Romanian educational system consists in pre-school education (kindergarten), which is optional for children aged 3-4 and compulsory for children aged 5, five years of primary education, four years of middle school and four years of high school choosing between vocational or technical.

The Romanian law states that the Ministry of Education is obliged to introduce, in the educational curricula, contents on equal opportunities and treatment between women and men, mutual respect, nonviolent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships, GBV, as well as combating discriminatory stereotypes based on gender roles, adapted to the age and understanding of students. Extracurricular activities can be developed by professionals working on the topic of domestic violence in pre-university education. Additionally, each school also has the obligation to conduct educational programmes for teachers, parents, and children in order to prevent domestic violence, harassment, and sexual violence.

Against this background, we recommend the Ministry of Education to issue **guidelines for the creation of specific procedures for preventing and combating GBV in schools** that can be fully incorporated into school regulation of all levels and that includes appointed teachers/counselors to support students in case of any type of violence or discrimination.

4. Italy

Italy ratified the Istanbul Convention in May 2013 and converted it into law in June 2013. The Italian National Anti-violence Plan 2017-2020 aimed at combating male violence against women in all areas of both public and private life. Education is one of the main priorities of the Prevention part of the Plan, however, the cultural roots of violence are not comprehensively addressed. The Italian educational system is structured as follows: a total of six years of kindergarten (which is optional), five years of primary school, three years of middle school, and five years of high school choosing between academic, technical or vocational.

In 2017, the Ministry of Education developed the *Educate to Respect Plan and Guidelines* to promote gender equality and prevent GBV and all forms of discrimination in schools. Mainly due to political reasons, i.e. political election and rise of conservative parties, the implementation of the plan was partly interrupted. Currently, gender issues are not a priority for the Ministry of Education. As a matter of fact, for example, no specific focus on GBV and gender issues are included in the civic education guidelines recently introduced as a mandatory subject (2020). Also initiatives which were already in place, such as the Observatory on SRGBV within the Ministry or the appointment of Focal point schools (*scuole polo*) at local level for preventing and contrasting SRGBV in terms of training and capacity building, expertise and sharing of best practices, have been stopped.

In 2014, a CSO network "*Educare alle differenze*" was set up to support public schools and to promote an education

based on differences as a value and a resource, not as a problem or a threat. The main objectives of this network are, in fact, to prevent violence, combating stereotypes on gender and sexual orientation, children's rights, affective education, equal rights and interculturalism.

Against this background, we recommend to the Ministry of Education to:

- Ensure that the **guidelines for the development of procedures for preventing and combating GBV in schools** are fully incorporated into school rules and regulations of all levels, including the provision on the appointment of a tutor teacher/counselor to support students victims of any type of violence or discrimination.
- **Reactivate the “Osservatorio Nazionale per il monitoraggio e la promozione di iniziative sulla parità tra i sessi e il contrasto della violenza contro le donne”**, with a clear mandate, work programme, timeline, and participation criteria to be identified with experts and CSO specialised in education and gender-related issues.
- **Counteract harassment** both in school and during internship periods.
- **Review and update the national plan** and guidelines *“Educazione al rispetto”*.

Conclusions

Gender-based violence is rooted in the patriarchal culture and in unbalanced power dynamics that shape our relationships and the way we see the world. Violence is not an emergency but a structural phenomenon and as such it must be considered in the legislation and strategies implemented by the government, ranging from the national anti-violence plan to specific guidelines and policies in the educational system.

The school, the most democratic institution in European countries, has the task of educating the younger generations to respect, inclusion and differences and provide them with the tools to tackle discrimination and inequality. In this view, schools are key players and allies to make gender inequality and GBV unacceptable among adolescents. Moreover, comprehensive policies and regular interventions are necessary to make the struggle against SRGBV a priority for the education system. For these reasons, we ask local and national institutions to take on the recommendations listed in this document and **open a broader consultation process** with stakeholders and educational communities to free schools from violence.

In the next two years, (May 2021 – April 2023), thanks to the participatory process set into motion, through **Youth for Love 2** co-funded by the European Commission, Youth for Love partners will develop a strong **campaigning and advocacy work**, involving stakeholders, students, and school staff, to target local and national institutions of the educational system. This document is thus a first draft of policy recommendations that will feed the future community-based process Youth for Love 2 partners will lead in Italy, Romania, Belgium, and Greece.



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