

THINK ABOUT POLARITY!

Cross-national report



SAY:  
„BYE, POLARITY“



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Polarity and Polarisation</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1	Definition and aim	2
2.2	Current situation in Projects Partner countries	4
2.3	Pan-European view	12
<b>3</b>	<b>Dealing with the topic in secondary school education</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1	Methodology of qualitative data collection	14
3.2	Results of the interviews with teachers	14
3.3	Conclusion of the interviews	21
<b>4</b>	<b>Good-practice-examples: Initial ideas on how to integrate the issue of increasing polarisation into teaching</b>	<b>22</b>
4.1	Methodological approach	22
4.2	Collection of good-practice-examples from the partner countries and EU as a whole	23
<b>5</b>	<b>Conclusions and next steps</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>44</b>



# 1 Introduction



The report is produced as a part of the Erasmus + project “bye, Polarity: Thinking beyond Polarity for Europe united in diversity”, which will be implemented in the period January 2022- December 2023.

Increasing polarisation in Europe and the entire Western world is a growing problem. Not only are politics and political views drifting apart, but also in society and in everyday life, a division is becoming more and more evident through increasing polarisation. Especially in times of crisis (Corona pandemic), increased polarisation tendencies are to be expected. Our world is increasingly characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. This environment is described as the so-called *vuca* world, which creates a great longing for clear, simple, and populist answers, thus lays the foundation for increasing polarisation. Frightening scenes such as the storming of the Capitol in the USA in January 2021 or the recurring riots in the French suburbs as well as increasing conspiracy theories around the Covid crisis are indicators of increasing polarisation. However, in order for our society to master the challenges of the future, it needs cohesion, the ability to discourse, empathy, and diversity as an opportunity for holistic solutions. Young people in particular are very impressionable in terms of polarising tendencies on the one hand, but on the other hand they can also have a lot of positive influence on their environment. Students must not feel left behind or pushed away, and teachers must be given appropriate tools to support students deal with the increasing polarisation online and offline.

Preliminary research by the consortium has shown that there are no suitable learning and teaching materials that can be used in secondary schools in a cross-curricular and low-threshold way. Furthermore, there is no learning material that prepares young people for the massive polarisation in social media and helps them to deal with use social media and use it positively.

The project *bye, Polarity* focuses especially on the platforms used by students, which adults and teachers are often no longer able to keep an overview of. It is important to close this gap. For this reason, the education community sees it as essential to address the issue of increasing polarisation and not only to sensitise young people and teachers

to the issue of increasing polarisation, but also to train them to be ambassadors for the basic idea of "united in diversity".

## 2 Polarity and Polarisation

### 2.1 Definition and aim

The term "polarity" describes, in the social-historical context, the opposition within the international relations, of two concepts, opinions, objects, etc. The word "polarity" is used in many fields, and represents a duality, that takes into account the development of phenomena in opposite directions, but which are in a relationship of interdependence. In this context, polarity can be considered a social process, being influenced by social policies, as well as by members of society, in a negative or positive direction.

Polarisation is the effect of polarity, which is present everywhere, and takes the form of phenomenon that society has to deal with on a daily basis. In conclusion, multi-stakeholder cooperation is needed to address polarisation. All stakeholders involved must participate in coordinating information and action, especially when polarisation reaches worrying levels.<sup>1</sup>

In the educational context, polarisation can be seen in the situations in the school environment, that students cause for one reason or another and that school staff have to deal with. Teachers are often confronted with polarisation in the classroom. The discussion that is the subject of this research is about how we can develop students' awareness of the prevailing polarities in politics and society and provide them with key skills to deal with them critically, in a context where students will increasingly feel this polarity.

We propose to offer examples of good practices, that teachers and students can follow, in order to acquire the necessary skills to become aware of polarity and accept it as a phenomenon that occurs everywhere in the world and must be integrated into our lives. In the context of increasing polarity, teachers are the ones who, together with the school counsellor, have the duty to face this challenge: They are the ones who meet their students on a daily basis and are the first to be confronted with their polarising statements. It is obvious that the effects of political and social polarity are also felt in the school environment. Students also need guidance to understand these effects as realities that need to be integrated and accepted in everyday life, as they cannot be prevented and should not be fought against.

In the project, we aim to identify ways to understand the dynamics of polarisation and its unique nature. Therefore, we have created a collection of good practices, to develop an attitude that makes it easier to cope with the effects of polarity. As polarisation is a

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2019-11/ran\\_polarisation\\_management\\_manual\\_amsterdam\\_06072017\\_ro.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2019-11/ran_polarisation_management_manual_amsterdam_06072017_ro.pdf)

political and social process, cooperation between several parties is necessary to manage it. The teacher has a key role to play by creating a pedagogical environment that promotes dialogue, empowers students and discusses real issues in the classroom so that learners become aware of their own capabilities and limitations.

In order for interactive activities to be perceived as pleasant and, above all, safe by all students, the teacher must create and maintain shared values in the group of students. Although it is obvious that not all students will share these values, they will at least respect them as they are a social rule of the class. By following the established rules, facilitated by the teacher, students will learn to listen to each other, which leads to effective communication that reduce conflicts. On the other hand, dialogue can be a challenge as teachers make statements that can generate or reinforce certain situations. The teacher should show empathy and understanding, by offering arguments or solutions, but also take more time to solve problems. It is important for all students to feel safe and supported and stick to the idea of forming a team with the class team coordinating teacher.

Unfortunately, these established common social rules and values are not applied all the time and the sporadic reference to them makes it difficult to comply with them. Moreover, conflicts arise when there is poor communication or no real interest in finding solutions together. When polarity occurs, all teachers, not just the head teacher, have an obligation to identify it and try to discuss the causes that led to it.

Polarity exists not only among students, but also between school staff or between parents. In this case, compliance with school rules and ethics leads to inclusion and teamwork. In this context, the role of the head teacher is essential. The head teacher must mediate conflicts as soon as they arise and ensure, by personal example, that school policies are adhered to. Since the students are adults, it is relatively easy to organise training on polarisation in order to acquire conflict resolution skills. Another way to avoid polarity in the teaching staff is to introduce team-building activities that ensure a close connection between group members and set common goals.

Not to be neglected is the polarity that arises between parents outside the educational institution itself, but which visibly affects the climate of the educational environment. Since the child is enrolled in the preparatory class, parents are taught the values promoted by the school, but there are still many parents who are not aware of this. There is a common interest, which is to motivate the student to learn, by providing a safe and appropriate environment for their needs. Therefore, a strong partnership between family and school leads to a harmonious development of the child and help the child to understand and deal with everyday realities.

The project is about developing an awareness of the prevailing polarities in politics and society among the students and providing them with key skills to deal with them critically. To achieve this, we purpose the following goals:



- To **sensitise and train pupils to deal with polarisation** in politics and society
- To **engage pupils** as ambassadors for a united Europe. To achieve this overarching goal, the following sub-objectives were defined :
  - To **generate a general overview of the increasing polarisation** in Europe - especially from the perspective of the target groups of pupils aged 12-16 and teachers in secondary education;
  - To **develop a didactic concept** that is innovative and reflective of the target group and enables playful learning on several levels;
  - To **develop teaching and learning materials** that holistically address the increasing polarisation in politics and society. For this purpose, teaching and learning materials are developed for classical learning, experiential learning and digital learning ;
  - To educate and inform students and teachers not only about the increasing polarisation, but to **train pupils as ambassadors** against polarising tendencies in order to disseminate the content and message of this project as widely as possible;
  - To facilitate mutual experiential and **organisational learning** through a lively exchange between the project countries and between educational institutions and schools;
  - To address and work with **social media** channels and their contribution to polarisation from a neutral perspective and especially **from the pupils' perspective**;
  - To build a **community for a united Europe** through actions by students for students;
  - Actively include pupils with social or economic obstacles, educational difficulties, cultural differences, or migrant backgrounds to ensure that results will reach all pupils. The consortium sees it as essential for sustainable peace and cohesion in Europe to resolutely counter increasingly polarising tendencies. For this purpose, a target group is addressed which, on the one hand, is itself very impressionable and, on the other hand, has great influence on its environment and the future development of Europe.

## 2.2 Current situation in Projects Partner countries

The topic of polarity and polarisation was researched by the schools, NGOs and educational centres from Austria, Cyprus, Portugal and Romania, involved in this consortium. Each of these countries has specific particularities in the way the topic is approached, as it can be seen below:

### Austria

The research report "Cohesion and Division in Austria" by the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) analyses the opinions of the Austrian population regarding social cohesion and divisive tendencies. Political and social issues such as the question of immigration, the question of discrimination or trust in politics are causing solidarity to weaken. Half of the respondents said that the division of society into the political poles left and right has increased. Immigration to Austria and the acceptance of refugees is very controversial.

Due to the Corona pandemic, society was split into two camps, among other things by the discussions about vaccination.

Further main examples of polarisation are the same as in most other countries. Especially the article by Helms (2017) in the Austrian Journal of Political Science points out that political polarisation can be dangerous for democracy. In the journal of the Chamber of Labour in the article by Gunther Tichy (2021), the polarisation tendencies of the different social classes are discussed in more detail. The trend towards higher qualification also brings polarisation tendencies with it.

Recently, Austria was downgraded in terms of its democratic status by the V-Dem Institute, Gothenburg (2022). This is justified by the restriction of participation opportunities in political structures. The following problem of corruption in politics and the following critical relationship between politics and law lead to debates, radicalisation and polarisation. This also affects schools and everyday school life, where polarisation shows itself in the form of frustration and resignation.

In Austria, the framework for schooling is the Law for Schooling and Education. In some passages it is directly addresses (e.g. §§47, 51, 54, 57a, 62, 63a). To clarify what has been written, here are some excerpts from the text of the law:

- §47 advocates that a teacher should use personality and community-building educational tools in his lessons.
- §57a states that every student has the right to be heard, to make suggestions and to express opinions that are respected in the community of the school.
- §62 claims that Teachers and guardians should act as a team and work together on education and instruction.
- §63a emphasizes that schools are obliged to promote and consolidate the school community.

In addition, there are detailed syllabi for each subject that are organised by the Law for the organisation of Schools and contain explicit demands for democratic and liberal education (e.g. §2). For example, it includes the duty of the school to educate the development of the pupils according to the moral, religious and social values, as well as the values of the true as well as the good, and to support them individually in their development. The specific details can be found in the syllabi.

## Cyprus

The most prevalent examples of polarities in Cyprus society relate to race, gender and sexuality. Although Cyprus is a country that traditionally exports migrants, it has only recently transformed into one of hosting migrants. This transformation has happened at a very fast pace: in the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) the official figure of migrant workers, as

a percentage of the active work-force, was 2- 2,5% in 1990 and has risen to 5,5% by 1993 (Planning Bureau 1993).

In mid-2019, RoC recorded 191,900 international migrants, 16% of the total population, with a net migration (estimated between 2014-2019) of 25,000 immigrants, of which 55.6% were women and 44.4% men. Of these, the majority were between 20–64 years of age (80%), while 10.8% were under 19 and 8.8% were over 65.

Female migrants – that is, individuals that sit at the intersection of ethnicity/culture and gender – also pertain to exclusion and discrimination. In Cyprus, migrant women and young girls, in a number of cases, are treated as inferior, verbally and sometimes physically abused and perceived to be only adequate for specific chores such as cleaning and care-taking. This wider public perception of foreign women is intensified by the pre-determined labour categories set by the state through which they can migrate and be employed. The feminisation of entire sectors of the labour market is of particular significance. Domestic helpers / assistants consist entirely of Asian, and primarily Filipino women whilst cleaners are again mainly Asian women, from Sri Lanka and the Philippines. In addition migrant women are targeted as sexually promiscuous. In fact, in Cyprus, the prevailing view of migrant women, particularly of Eastern European origin, as more sexually available than Cypriot women.

When it comes to migrant females in school, one major issue that seems to affect migrant girls in the school context from pre-primary to secondary education is the stereotypical pre-conceptions made about them by their fellow classmates. Research has shown that native children tend to perceive migrant children in terms of racialized categories that very often are connected with the type of work and socio-economic status of their parents. In the specific case of migrant girls, race intersects with gender to formulate stereotypes on the status of these girls and their abilities.

Social tensions also exist in relation to sexuality. Cyprus was among the last EU member states to decriminalise homosexuality, doing so in 1998 under pressure from Brussels as it prepared to join the bloc. According to opinion polls, attitudes toward homosexuality have changed significantly in recent years, with recent opinion polls showing that a majority of Cypriots support legal recognition of same-sex couples in the form of civil unions. However, the innate social conservatism of Cypriot society seems to be well prevailing, as a recent media-related event demonstrates. In December 2021, when the Greek series 'Agries Melisses' [Άγριες Μέλισσες] aired on ANT1 Cyprus, a scene featuring two male characters kissing was censored from the Cypriot broadcast. According to ANT1 Cyprus, the kiss was censored due to "legislative ambiguity" regarding radio and television regulations, despite there being "no general direction or legislation banning the broadcast of any LGBTI content". This decision drew criticism from activists and on social media, who



pointed out that a violent scene featuring one of the two men being half-naked, bloodied, and tortured by his boyfriend's father was left intact in the broadcast. Furthermore, the show's broadcast was changed from 9:00 P.M. to 10:30 P.M., which activists state is not coincidental.

The socially conservative Greek Orthodox Church, which traditionally has had significant influence over public opinion and politics regarding LGBT rights, has been one of the main sources causing polarisation. In 2019, a RoC bishop said in one of a series of talks billed as “spiritual meetings of dialogue” that “gay men are recognisable from ‘particular odour’”. “It is, they say, a problem that is usually transferred to the child from the parents”...” and, they say, it happens ... when the parents [indulge] in erotic acts that are unnatural.” Relating the story of a saint and a “beautiful young boy”, he said gay men were instantly recognisable because they gave off a “particular odour”. A recent report by the activist group Accept-LGBTI Cyprus surveyed around 100 people and revealed the scope of widely discredited practices that claim to be able to change sexual orientation or gender identity still being carried out on the Mediterranean island. The report noted that some people had attempted suicide following the so-called therapies, such as being exorcised by a priest.

## Racism

Law No. 134(I)/2011 (The Combating Certain Forms and Expressions of Racism and Xenophobia by means of Criminal Law of 2011) states:

“The racist motivation for any offence constitutes an aggravating circumstance. According to the Framework Decision and to the Law transposed it, the following intentional conduct is punishable: (a) publicly inciting to violence or hatred directed against a group of persons or a member of such a group defined by reference to race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin; (b) the commission of an act referred to in point (a) by public dissemination or distribution of tracts, pictures or other material; (c) publicly condoning, denying or grossly trivialising crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes as defined in Articles 6, 7 and 8 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, directed against a group of persons or a member of such a group defined by reference to race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin when the conduct is carried out in a manner likely to incite to violence or hatred against such a group or a member of such a group; (d) publicly condoning, denying or grossly trivialising the crimes defined in Article 6 of the Charter of the International Military Tribunal appended to the London Agreement of 8 August 1945, directed against a group of persons or a member of such a group defined by reference to race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin when the conduct is carried out in a manner likely to incite to violence or hatred against such a group or a member of such a group. The legal persons are also liable for the above mentioned offences.

## Gender

In Northern Cyprus, Turkish Cypriot deputies passed an amendment on 27 January 2014, repealing a colonial-era law that punished homosexual acts with up to five years' imprisonment. It was the last territory in Europe to decriminalise sexual relations between consenting adult men. In response to the vote, Paulo Corte-Real from the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, a rights advocacy group, said that "We welcome today's vote and can finally call Europe a continent completely free from laws criminalising homosexuality".

## Sexuality

Despite the long-standing conservative perceptions on LGBT persons, since Cyprus sought membership in the European Union, it had to change its human rights legislation, including its laws regarding sexual orientation and gender identity. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in Cyprus may face legal challenges not experienced by non-LGBT residents. Both male and female same-sex sexual activity are legal in Cyprus since 1998. The current law of Cyprus only recognises marriage as a union between one man and one woman. There is no official recognition of same-sex marriages. Since 2015, same-sex couples have been able to have their relationships recognised through civil unions.

However, the law appears to be ineffective. For instance, the RoC government denounced the Bishop's comments as "insulting the dignity and equality of Cypriots." Moreover, at the request of the island's attorney general, investigators were examine whether the Greek Cypriot Orthodox prelate, known popularly by his first name, Neophytos, violated hate speech laws after he claimed that homosexuality could be passed on when pregnant women had anal sex. Yet the incident was quickly forgotten and the Bishop was never persecuted.

## Portugal

Portugal has made recourse to a supra-national support on three occasions since the advent of democracy: in 1977–79, 1983-85 and in 2011–14. The first two were an IMF (International Monetary Fund) intervention and the last was a troika intervention, thus also including the European Central Bank and the European Commission. In fact, the first and second IMF interventions in Portugal were held in a period of preparation for joining the European Economic Community with the membership application process running from 1977 through to accession in 1986. For the last intervention, Portugal was not only integrated into European Union but was also a Eurozone member-state, which meant it was particularly exposed to the crisis due to the interdependences within the Eurozone.

There are no major restrictions on personal social freedoms. Portugal legalized same-sex marriage in 2010 and extended adoption rights to same-sex couples in 2015. A 2018 law eliminated the need for transgender people to obtain a medical certificate to formally

change their gender or first name. Domestic violence remains a problem despite government efforts aimed at prevention, education, and victim protection.

Portugal is a stable parliamentary democracy with a multiparty political system and regular transfers of power between political parties. Civil liberties are generally protected. Ongoing concerns include corruption, certain legal constraints on journalism, poor or abusive conditions for prisoners, and the effects of racial discrimination and xenophobia.

According to a survey of Portuguese schools carried out in January 2020 by Professor Alexandre Henriques, a specialist in conflict management, cases of indiscipline begin to be visible in the 2nd cycle (around 34.2%) but it's in the 3rd cycle that problems get worse: 63.2% of cases were registered among pupils from the 7th to 9th years. "Society is extremely violent and the school is a reflection of society. The children come to school more violent and aggressive", said teacher Sandra Lourenço.

Looking at the difficulties arising from the pandemic, the one that was immediately evident, by its scope or the resources that governments mobilised, was that of access to technology. *However, other concerns, including the well-being of children and young people, were seen as a challenge to overcome:*

The domains for which most people considered that an education response involved the most challenges were the availability of technological infrastructure, addressing student emotional health, addressing the right balance between digital and screen free activities and managing the technological infrastructure (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020).

In Portugal, with the reopening of schools in mind, and aware that the pandemic and the confinement aggravated social inequalities, that there was learning that was not achieved and students who had no opportunity to keep up with their peers, the Ministry of Education provided a roadmap with Guidelines for the recovery and consolidation of learning throughout the 2020/2021 school year (August 2020). Similarly, through the Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 53, of 20 July 2020, the Government requested the Institute for Educational Assessment I.P. (IAVE, I.P.) a study to assess the development of learning, carried out in the school year 2019/2020. It also determined the creation of a team, which would have the mission to define a strategy to combat early school leaving in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, coordinated by the Directorate General of Education and Science Statistics (DGEEC).

In Portugal the Decree-Law n.º 55/2018 of 6th July, defines the curriculum of basic and secondary education and has the option of implementing the Citizenship and Development component, as an area of work present in the different educational and training offers, with a view to the exercise of active citizenship, democratic participation, in intercultural contexts of sharing and collaboration and of confrontation of ideas on current affairs. It is constituted as a transversal work area, of disciplinary articulation, with

an interdisciplinary approach. It is up to each school to approve its strategy for Citizenship Education, defining:

- The areas, themes and learning to be developed in each cycle and year of schooling;
- The way of organizing the work;
- The projects to be developed by students that implement in the community the learning to be developed;
- The partnerships to be established with entities in the community in a networking perspective, with a view to accomplishment of the projects;
- The assessment of students' learning;
- The evaluation of the strategy of education for citizenship school.

#### **Thematic areas:**

- The european dimension of education
- Environmental education
- Consumer education
- Financial education
- Intercultural education
- Education for security, defence and peace
- Education for gender equality
- Education for risk
- Education for development
- Education for entrepreneurship
- Education for volunteering
- Education for human rights
- Education for media
- Road safety education
- Education for health and sexuality

The Media Education Referential for Pre-school Education, Primary and Secondary School from 2014 underlines the importance of Media Education in Schools. That comes from the fact that children and youngsters are increasingly constituted as media consumers and producers. It is therefore important to provide them with knowledge and abilities to a more informed consumption and knowledge, especially considering the growing complexity of these media and the contexts in which they appear and are developed. The Ministry of Education and Science has associated itself to the Communication and Society Studies Centre of the University of Minho, an institution with a proven research work in this area, preparing this reference tool which will serve as a guidance document for schools regarding Media Education. It can be used in a variety of contexts, with adaptations, in whole or in part.

## Romania

A common manifestation in democratic states is political polarisation. This requires reform of the whole system in order for society to function in the best interests of the citizens. The current political landscape appears after the 1989 revolution and the adoption of the 1991 constitution, when a single party, the PCR, became several major parties following different ideologies: PSD - social democracy, PNL - liberalism and PC - conservatism. The reconstitution of political formations thus took place against the background of the disappearance of the Communist Party: The post-communist parties have largely "emerged from ad hoc groups that are axiologically and politically inconsistent, driven by the voluntarism or opportunism of occasional leaders, based on an often extremely narrow, patronage interest and characterised by a lack of political judgement". Political polarity prevents Romania from taking measures in favor of society, leading to a decline in cultural and moral values, but above all in the fundamental rights of citizens, who have neither the means nor the opportunity to free themselves from the trap of political polarisation.

In a context where political life is deteriorating, where the instability of the political scene can no longer be solved by organizing elections, because their correctness is doubted, the concern arises to mitigate, in the political, social, educational, economic, etc., these pressures that lead to a change of the quality of life of the citizen caused by the significant increase of the effects of polarity.

### Legislation framework

- Emergency Ordinance no. 69/2016 for the completion of art. 84 of the National Education Law no. 1/2011 and art. 45 of the Law on local public transport services no. 92/2007, as well as for the abrogation of art. 15 of the Government Ordinance no. 29/2013 regarding the regulation of some budgetary measures;
- Decision no. 829/2002, regarding the approval of the National Plan against poverty and promotion of social inclusion;
- Government Decision no. 136/2016 regarding the approval of the methodological norms for determining the standard cost per pupil / preschool and establishing the basic funding from the state budget, from amounts deducted from VAT through local budgets, based on the standard cost per pupil / preschool, for all preschoolers and students in general compulsory private and denominated compulsory education, as well as for those in accredited vocational and high school education, private and confessional;
- Law no. 18/1990, for the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Law no. 268/2003, for the amendment and completion of the Education Law no. 84/1995.



### There are some examples of practices that integrate polarisation in Romania

- Strategy for Reducing Early School Leaving in Romania, 2015–2010.
- National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights, 2014–2020.
- National Strategy for the Protection, Integration and Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, 2014–2020.
- The National Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Romanian Roma Citizens, 2012–2020

## 2.3 Pan-European view

The polarity is becoming more and more apparent in society and in politics, which has led several countries to advocate for an effective approach to this issue. It was concluded that the effects of polarisation should not be prevented or fought, but rather accompanied and accepted. In this context, more and more states have made efforts to offer examples of good practices based on the cooperation and partnerships needed for a successful approach. Belgium, the Netherlands, Turkey, Sweden, Ireland, Austria and Norway propose a series of national programmes to help understand the dynamics of polarity and find ways to make students aware of its effects.

As the educational environment is currently facing increasing polarity, education experts in more and more countries are trying to find solutions to this, which is why they are proposing changes in the way society is approached by raising students' awareness of polarity. These practices focus on developing working groups for a multidisciplinary environment involving external partners, such as local authorities or community police, to formulate topics of interest to students and related to the reality that surrounds them, as well as establishing national programmes to prevent problems caused by polarity.

Due to its increasing polarity, **Belgium** has adopted intercultural and interreligious dialogue as an educational practice, with a focus on active citizenship.

The year 2016 is witnessing a peak of polarity with the coup attempt in **Turkey**. With the formation of two pro-Erdogan groups and those supporting Gulen, the government decided to hold teacher training courses on depolarity and introduced a school day where all students study the history of the Ottoman Empire.

As a result, it was found that most of the students are no longer afraid of such situations, as the knowledge they gained gives them confidence and the opportunity to deal with this topic. On the other hand, the teachers who participated in the in-depth training programme found new resources for effective communication.

**Sweden** is another country with high polarity, especially in the poorest parts of the cities. In fact, the greatest ethnic and cultural diversity is found in the outskirts, where there is a tradition of welcoming people from different cultural backgrounds, leading to strong social tensions. In this context, the school decided to work with the police to resolve conflicts as efficiently as possible. Communication takes place daily and is based on a system, a traffic light symbol, which is meant to describe the problem depending on its severity: green, yellow or red.

**The Netherlands** wants to promote tolerance through the Dare to be Grey programme, as there is an open conflict between most moderate thinkers and extreme voices. The campaign takes place online, through videos and imaginary campaigns for a grey history. In addition to online activities, which are the main goal of the organisation, the campaign regularly organises local debates and participates in events. Dare to be Grey organises and actively participates in a number of educational workshops.

*The family-centered Mother School programme* is implemented in **Austria** to prevent the radicalisation of young people. In this way, concerned and worried mothers who expose their children to such influences develop the necessary skills to react appropriately to difficult situations. They take time, listen, gain trust, empathise and offer emotional support. Mothers need structural and emotional support to reconnect with their children during the challenges of adolescence.

**Ireland** has implemented a system called *Dialogue Circles* where people are encouraged to come and share their experiences. Although it is a lengthy process of building trust, they go through a dialogue process of first listening and then speaking to reflect on their own experiences and to be able to integrate into the community.

Similarly, **Finland** organises *Community Dialogues*, that promote cooperation between people, authorities and communities and support the family in particular. In a participatory process, the police, social and youth services, education and health sectors, religious communities and NGOs are called upon to prevent stigmatisation and not to "target" certain groups.



## 3 Dealing with the topic in secondary school education

### 3.1 Methodology of qualitative data collection

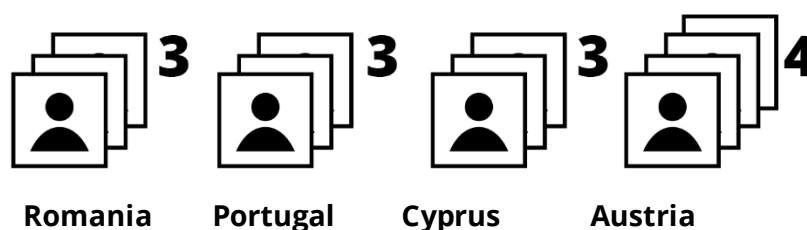
Interviews were conducted with teachers in each partner country of the project. The interviews enabled the partnership to collect practices in the schools and to create a standard procedure for sharing these practices, which is done at local and national level in dealing with polarities and their effects, as well as integrating the issue in the classroom. The analysis of the interviews served as a reference to develop a report that includes the current practices per country with recommendations for the following activities of the project, as well as some policy recommendations to influence policy makers and school quality and equity. The purpose of the interviews was to find, share and transfer practices that have a positive impact on dealing with polarisation in schools. The aim was to collect data not only from the partners' school but also from other local schools.

The result leader provided an interview template in English. Each partner could translate the interview to their own language or used it in English and apply it in their local schools. Data could be collected in online format (sending an online form to the participants, e.g., via Google forms), face-to-face interviews and interviews via telephone or Skype, Zoom, etc.

### 3.2 Results of the interviews with teachers

Considering the difficulty of the subject (polarisation) and the emotional impact of observing and integrating the topic into everyday school life, we consider that secondary level can make a valuable input if it has a good understanding of the definition and aspects of this topic.

#### Persons interviewed per Partner Country



The following results were found when analysing the interview questions:

### 1. How is polarisation manifested in your school?



The answers to this question cover all levels: from “no polarisation” to adult or peer polarisation in terms of accountability, assessment, racism, bullying.

Polarisation is evident in terms of financial status, cultural/religious prejudice, stereotypes related to assessment and technology, measuring what matters should be a priority rather than measuring what can be measured.

There is also a polarisation in terms of the power of the school, which attributes great importance and an overwhelming burden to the school and its staff in addressing issues such as nutrition, health and financial aspects. The school is of course responsible for bringing about change, but this should be done within reasonable demands.

Students with high scores develop pro-school attitudes and behaviours, while students with low scores reject the school. The polarisation is evident in the attitudes and values of the students compared to the attitudes that the school represents. The students do not have a life project, they lack life perspectives and this creates a big difference between them.

### 2. What school subjects is the theme of polarity being dealt?



When we analysed the answers, we observed that cases of polarity can occur in all school subjects. Therefore, there are aspects of polarity in social studies, foreign languages, but also in mathematics or natural sciences. This aspect did not seem to be relevant in polarity.

### 3. To what extent does the theme of polarity retrieve in your school curricula?



Most answers responses point out that there is no or very little interest in the subject in school curricula. Thus, seven answers deny the re-introduction of this topic in school curricula and the other answers stress the lack of an evident focus on this topic. Only four answers refer to specific areas of the curricula dealing with aspects of polarity: the use of adapted curricula, violence prevention, the inclusion of some elements of social learning and the use not of specific content but of specific perspectives/attitudes in dealing with aspects of polarisation.

#### 4. With whom do the pupils talk regarding their attitude?



The first option for the pupils is to talk about polarity among themselves, then with teachers they trust or tutors. Some answers mention the class teacher, the counsellor or the head teacher. As an observation, we can say that the best way to integrate aspects of polarisation in school is to adopt peer-to-peer learning based on specific and clear rules that come from the social and political polarisation curriculum assessment.

#### 5. Do you see the effects of polarity (violence, bullying, and school dropout)?



With the exception of one answer stating that there are not many effects of polarity in the school, all other answers confirm the visibility of the effects of polarity: bullying, violence, mobbing, dropping out of school. The frequency and intensity of these impacts are different from school to school (from "sporadic, not extremely high", to "often" ).

##### a. If so, which ones take place in your school?

The types of polarisation cover areas such as: financial aspects, performance, accountability, equal treatment in the workspace. Aspects mentioned were: violence, bullying, school anxiety, school refusal, dropout, insults, cyberbullying. Aspects related to ethnic, cultural and religious differences that become polarising phenomena were also mentioned. It was explained that competition is natural and cooperation requires "work". It is thus mentioned that polarisation occurs as a "natural" trend especially for young adolescents who adopt adult perspectives on competition and differentiated access to resources.

#### 6. What kinds of polarisation do you find? Where do you see them? (Income, achievement, technology, assessment)



Aspects of polarisation exist in all the exemplary areas mentioned. In income, there is a differentiation between men and women and in equality of employees in general.

Some pupils cannot afford to attend school events or buy branded outfits.

There are difficulties in accessing resources in all school areas for both students and teachers (low boundaries in some countries). School dropouts continue to be a major problem for children in rural areas. There are also several issues related to their possibilities to go to school if they live a long distance from school. Looking at life from



the survival level, there are also limitations in terms of life goals or strategies to achieve a better social position.

In terms of assessment, there was an increased interest in filling the gaps that some pupils have: restoring the most impaired skills, investing in social and emotional wellbeing, empowering through strengthening resources and means, and not only that.

Of course, there are inequalities regarding access to all resources for low-income pupils, and this unfortunately leads to low self-esteem and poor choices in finding the best school and career.

### 7. What is the first example that comes to your mind?



In fact, there are specific aspects of school life that can become triggers for the development of polarisation tendencies (the failure of government to deal with poverty, social conflict, unequal access to resources) - all of which impact on the school as a national institution and add aspects of intellectual achievement. In the interviews, the following areas in particular were mentioned in which polarisation can manifest itself:



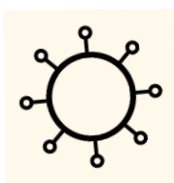
**Bullying**



**Unequal  
treatment**



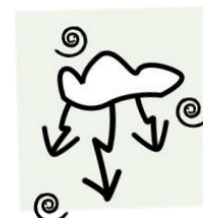
**Non-acceptance  
of other  
nationalities**



**COVID-19**



**Grading**



**Social problems**

### 8. What do you think you can do to reduce polarisation in the class? Exemplify.

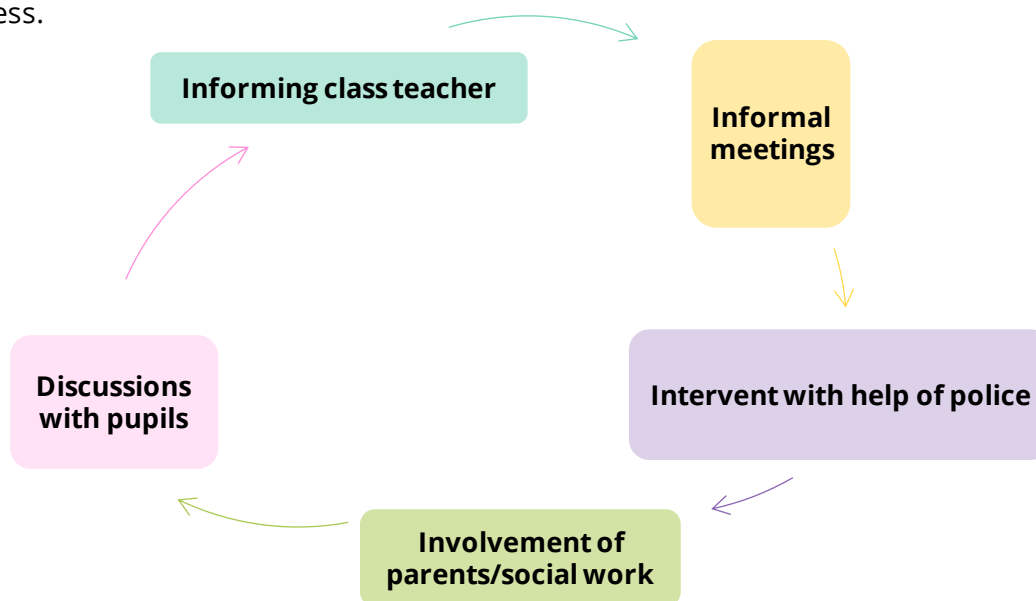


In reducing the level of polarisation, the focus is on communication skills, promoting a healthy organisational culture and creating best practices.

### 9. What individual/collective measures have you taken to reduce them? (Discussions with lead teacher, school counsellor)



There are individual and collective measures which bring to attention the necessity of having a continuous, good communication between all those involved in the educational process.



### 10. Can you name a law/programme to prevent and combat these polarisations?



There are four answers that say they do not know of any prevention programme for polarisation and some answers that were mentioned: "Violence Prevention" in school, Early School Leaving Prevention National Programme, The Education Law, Establishment of clubs in the school, National Reading Plan, The new stage of the PNL for 2017-2027 (PNL 2027), National Strategy of Education for Citizenship (ENEC), Erasmus+ Programme Youth2Unite.

### 11. Are such practices carried out at the level of the educational institution of which you are a member? (Prevention and control)



At the level of prevention, the answers range from "no prevention at all"( 3), to "no answer", and "a lot of": There is a lot of openness to mitigate polarisation (supplying all deprived students with computers during Covid period). There is a lot of openness to innovation, for example through the implementation of clubs (Drama Club, Green Commitment, Philosophy Club), in citizenship (prevention of aggression, promotion of healthy coexistence, cyber-security), preventive and control measures, coming mainly

from the Headmaster's guidelines in communication with the school counsellor and deputy head teacher, preventive measures and proactive action, but we could do more and have a more dedicated strategy.

## 12. Which of the activities dedicated to lowering the level of polarisation would best meet the needs of the students in your school?

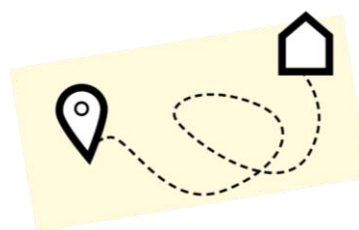


From the answers received, we can conclude that there are some good practices in terms of activities that serve to reduce the level of polarisation:



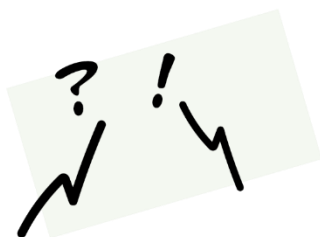
### Requesting support

from people who correspond to this problem area



### Joint excursions

to strengthen the class community, open discourse involving school social work and the class teacher



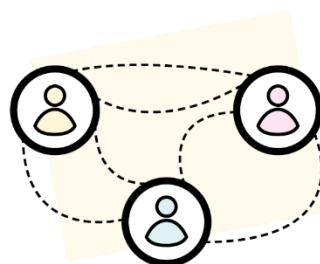
**Meeting families,  
emergency number,  
counseling of the families**



**Specially designed lessons &  
guest speakers**



**Activities of cooperation**  
common projects where pupils and teachers will provide their best

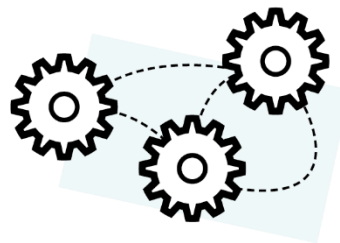


**Activities that privilege  
student interaction**  
and stimulate debates on various topics



### A fresh look at the curriculum

what gaps has it got and how can we improve it?



### Collaborative projects & encouraging community-family/parent activities

withing the school, to bring awareness at a local level, and allowing for bonding, community building and families coming from different cultural and other back-grounds to have a voice and revert stereo-types other families, students and teaching staff may have

## 13. Does your school have a strategy to address polarities?



From the answers received, we can conclude that there are some good practices regarding the activities to reduce the level of polarisation. For example, a **teacher could be trained** for this purpose and offer support and help in different problem situations. In addition to professional mechanisms such as further training, **a team of psychologists, educational counsellors, school chaplains**, etc. could also be an effective strategy. Another strategy mentioned is the **possibility for pupils to talk to people they trust**, e.g. liaison teachers or school social workers. Offering **workshops for pupils** to deal with the topic is also a great support. Another example are **school projects** – one teacher interviewed reported educational projects that promote multiculturalism, democratic concepts, educational inequalities and the reduction of absenteeism and school dropouts. It was also mentioned several times that a **joint constant discussion** is the most important thing so that teachers are able to deal with polarisation individually.

*“ We have a general directive and policy, but not like a definite manifesto of sorts. Sometimes we take initiatives, and in general, we take proactive measures, we try to work preventively, by having regular staff meetings where the issue is raised and we try to address it proactively, through organising cultural events, we also try to engage interaction and collaboration between students of different grades and classes, Guidance to teachers mostly, how to respond to certain incidents ”*

*Interviewed teacher*

### 3.3 Conclusion of the interviews

The answers offered a wide image of the issue and the possibility of a deeper analysis of the tools and strategies needed for a good integration of social and political polarisation in school activities (curricula, participants/students, teachers, stakeholders, community), structured interventions or the teaching of specific attitudes to students, teachers, parents, and the community.

**Austria** – The answers are from secondary level. The main effects of polarisation are bullying, racist remarks, violence, school dropouts, school anxiety and school refusal. These may be seen in social studies, Biology and German. Pupils may address to teachers they trust to each other and to their parents, and if the situation becomes more complex, they can turn to specialized experts. Interventions take place as soon as possible in the form of discussions, meetings, exercises, and excursions where pupils work together. There are some strategies regarding polarisation and trained persons are brought in to train the teachers in this aspect.

**Cyprus** – In the primary school, polarisation is not addressed in a relevant way and it does not appear as a must topic in the curricula. Students talk to their class teacher or counsellor about bullying and violence as effects of perceived differences in the financial area, cultural and religious prejudices, or inequalities in the use of technological resources. There are also effects of polarisation appeared in the assessment and power of the school.

Teachers use group activities, discussions and periodical meetings between the head teacher, teachers, and the counsellor. At the secondary level, aspects of polarisation are evident in foreign languages, social studies, history, the way they look or different social categories and poverty.

**Portugal** – The survey responses were collected from secondary schools. Polarisation is evident in student’s values and attitudes, in the way they view educational poles – regular or vocational – and in the way school views itself, considering social inequalities. These are evident in social studies classes as well as in History, Geography, and foreign languages. The curricula offer a goal in the subjects regarding polarisation.



Students may talk to their trusted teacher, counsellor, or head teacher about bullying, cyberbullying, violence, and dropouts. Informal meetings, discussions at the end of lessons and methodology in Socratic environments are used as interventions.

There is a great openness to cooperation and interaction between students, and schools have educational projects that privileges multiculturalism, democracy, diversity, and innovation.

**Romania** – The answers are from secondary school. There are aspects of polarity regarding the position of the school (urban/rural), accountability, the power/limits of the school and the level of assessment. These aspects were visible in the subjects of social studies, Mathematics, and Literature. Adapted curricula were used. Students may talk to their trusted teachers, the class teacher, and the counsellor about bullying, violence, and dropouts as effects of social problems in the family. Interventions include the following: Creating lessons and materials, which may help, various programmes and more time of counselling. In Romania, there is also interest in creating a prevention strategy based on cooperation.

School offers the circumstances for a solid cognitive community based on the authority of the teacher. This may be the nest for the development of illusory profoundness. The attitude needed is that of questioning the reasons, following the causes and their consequences so that the connection to reality can be restored. (We do not follow axioms but real processes.) There are real dangerous effects of polarisation, but there are also many means to recognise, analyse and integrate attitudes on this subject.

Even if there are no structured strategies yet, there is a good sense of how to deal with the situation in many schools, in every school object, for every child, for every teacher, for the parents and for every member of society.

## **4 Good-practice-examples: Initial ideas on how to integrate the issue of increasing polarisation into teaching**

### **4.1 Methodological approach**

The outcome of "Think about Polarity!" aims to explore the problem from the perspective of the target groups to learn about the awareness of the problem and the requirements for solutions. The research and good practice form the basis for further solutions and provide an overview of country-specific differences.

The research allows the partnership to study the current handling of polarities, the past and future development of polarising tendencies and actions, and their effects. The topic of increasing polarisation is dealt with in general terms and the focus is on how the topic is dealt with in the classroom. This report reflects the handling of increasing polarisation in politics and society in the partner countries and in the EU as a whole.

Each partner conducted desk-research to provide a national picture in terms of context, i.e., educational policy, legislation and good practice related to increasing polarisation in schools. The leader of the result provided a tool to map current practices that deal with polarisation in policy and society and how they are integrated into schools at national level, which all partners used in the search for good practices. Each partner country proposed 3–4 good practices at national level, of which two were selected.

## 4.2 Collection of good-practice-examples from the partner countries and EU as a whole

The activities in the "Bye, Polarity" project are addressed to pupils aged 12 to 16. The first phase of this project was to carry out a research. The aim of the research was to learn about problem awareness and the requirements for solutions. The four partner countries - Austria, Cyprus, Portugal and Romania propose a collection of good practices to serve as a basis for further solutions and to give an overview of country-specific differences.

### AUSTRIA

#### 1. School workshop "Love is ..."

The LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\* and intersex) interest group in Styria PinkPurple Panthers lead the workshop. The diversity in our society is growing, so that questions about these new family forms and role models inevitably arise and are dealt with in the workshop. The association has been offering workshops especially for young people since 2007. There is a fee of 4 EUR per participant. For all secondary schools and integration institutions in Graz (capital city of Styria), the workshop costs are covered by the city. For workshops outside Graz, travel costs of 20 EUR apply.

It is a part of curricular or extracurricular activity and also a practice that responds to community involvement. This workshop will make young people sensitive to the fact that there are different, but still more equal ways of loving and living.

The activity is designed for young people at the age of 13. The Education Department of the Province of Styria supports the activity and confirms that there is no reason to disagree with the workshops of the PinkPurple Panthers association. Other schools that have already worked with the association also recommend it and have written statements of support.

The aim is to inform the young people about different ways of life, to break down stereotypical thinking, to work out the legal situation in Austria and globally, to take a closer look at historical developments, to answer questions and to offer them the possibility to ask questions in an anonymous way.

The workshop is made up of individual blocks so that it can be adapted to the interests of the class or the time available. Brainstorming together with the students at the beginning. The legal

situation is worked out with a questionnaire. The global situation is worked out with the help of a game.

The workshops are held in Styria, in the Graz area (for example the NMS Markt Hartmannsdorf eastern Styria). However, there are also some workshops in Vienna.

The workshops are open and individually designed. The problems and topics that interest the young people in particular are addressed. In addition, the contents are worked out together in order to especially sensibilise them for the topics. Tools such as computers with beamers, flipcharts, a blackboard or a whiteboard support the process.

Same-sex marriage and also adoption for gay and lesbian couples are possible in Austria. Equal rights have already come a long way in Austria. But laws alone do not create social acceptance. One of the challenges is to create acceptance among teaching staff and parents so that these workshops can take place at all. The fact that the Directorate of Education has confirmed the quality of the workshops helps to promote acceptance.

For this you can find letters of recommendation from various institutions on the association's homepage. The letter of recommendation from the secondary school also includes feedback from the young people. They said that after the workshop they knew better and were more careful about what they said. The participants from other institutions were equally impressed and were able to learn new things about equal rights. In addition, the association is a member of the Sexual Education Network Styria, which is concerned with quality assurance in sexual education.

The finding of the young people's own identity should be empowered and supported in everyday life through acceptance. Education and knowledge are the way to more equality. The workshop offers this opportunity. Broad sexual education reduces sexual risk behaviour, sexually transmitted infections and teenage pregnancies. In contrast, it contributes to more responsible and empowered sexual choices.

Few teachers have specialised training in sexual education and there are few official teaching materials. There is a lack of expertise and experience in teaching sensitive and controversial topics. Therefore, this activity could be improved by having professionals work together with teaching staff or by promoting relevant additional training in teachers' studies. Further legal steps would provide the basis. Furthermore, it must be noted that young people with disabilities are often excluded from the activities. Furthermore, Network Styria notes that young people with a migration background or financial problems also have more difficult access to sexual education.

## 2. Counselling Centre on Extremism

Materials, Examples and pedagogical advice for confronting extremism, radicalization and polarisation in society. Main topics are conspiracy theories, political extremism, antisemitism, hate speech in the internet. Is an Institution of the National Network for Open Youth Work in Austria (bOJA), part of the international Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN).

The beneficiaries are teachers, youth workers, parents, children and the aim of the practice is to support in raising the awareness of the multiple faces of radicalization and polarisation. Some activities consists in materials, links, workshops, network, further sducation on the topic.

Beginning with a helpline a teacher, for example, is supported in recognizing problems of polarisation or becoming aware of them as well as in addressing them and creating educational units for students. Also the bOJA provides teachers with additional experts and workshops. The resources needed are money and time, the main obstacles for teachers. Most schools only have limited fundings for external projects and the bureaucratic process of inviting external experts is very exhausting.

The impact consist in raising awareness, showing possible reactions to polarisation, giving additional materials to students and teachers.

Repeating of the workshops is always possible, also implementing the provided materials in lessons is very easy.

### **3. Further education and advanced vocational training in educational colleges for teachers**

Each federal state in Austria has its own Educational College for Teachers where teachers can further their education through seminars and sourses. There are courses in the prevention of polarisation.

Furthering the education and raising the awareness of teachers for processes of polarisation in our society and strengthen them in implementing these topics in their lessons in school. The beneficiaries are teachers and, via them, students.

Aim of the practice are brief workshops, prolonged courses, providing of materials for teachers to broaden their stand on the multiple topics of polarisation. The methodological approach are based on teachers teaching teachers.

Activities consists in workshops and courses.

Time is the main obstacles for teachers. Most schools only have limited ressources for external education of their teachers and the bureaucratic process. Every absent teacher visiting such a course or workshop has to be replaced by a colleague, it is not possible to just cancel a lesson in school. This is why further education for teachers is only available in very strict borders.

The impact is a direct manifestation of the topics in school classes. The program of further education is there. The bureaucratic possibilities are the problem.

## **CYPRUS**

### **1. Imagine**

*Imagine* aims to promote a culture of peace and anti-racism. *Imagine* was launched in October 2017, and involves primary schools, gymnasiums and high-schools across the Cyprus' divide. The 'Imagine' Project is implemented by the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research and the Home for Cooperation under the auspices of the Bicommunal Technical Committee on Education and is funded by the Federal Foreign Office of the Republic of Germany. The project is also supported by the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and the UN Office of the Special Advisor (OASG).

### **Is an Educational Program targeting school students and takes place within school hours**

– firstly, at the school's premises and, thereafter, at the 'Home for Cooperation', which is located at Nicosia's buffer zone. Participation in the project is completely voluntary and free-of-charge. The main beneficiaries of the 'Imagine' project are students of both primary and secondary levels

– that is, students aged 6 to 18 year-old. Teachers are indirect beneficiaries as they are involved in the process, on the one hand, and they escort their students during the time of the activities, on the other. In addition, during the academic year 2018–19, 'Imagine' also introduced the training of teachers. The overall aim of the teacher training is to help increase contact and cooperation between Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot teachers, based on a holistic understanding of developing their knowledge, skills and attitudes on education for a culture of peace and non-violence.

*Imagine* has also led the way with headteachers. The first Head Teachers' Conference in the context of the 'Imagine' Project was held yesterday, December 16th, at the UN Buffer Zone in Nicosia with the participation of 100 school leaders of all educational levels from around the island. The event took place in the presence of the leaders of the two communities, Mr. Akıncı and Mr. Anastasiades, and the co-Chairs of the Bi-communal Technical Committee on Education, Dr. Zembylas and Dr. Onurkan-Samani. The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of Mission of UNFICYP, Ms. Spehar, the Deputy Head of Mission of the German Embassy, Mr. Peitz, and AHDR co-President, Mr. Pachoulides, were also present.

The program aims to increase contact between Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots and, in doing so, to promote peace, understanding and anti-racism on the island in the context of a holistic understanding of a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence inspired by UN documents, resolutions and plans of action.

The Program takes place, firstly, at the school's premises and, thereafter, at the 'Home for Cooperation', which is located at Nicosia's buffer zone.

The program aims to decentralize and reach rural areas in the island which have fewer opportunities to engage in activities that bring members of the two communities together.

Initially, the 'Imagine' trainers visit classes interested in participating in the bi-communal activities and create safe spaces for discussion about stereotypes, discrimination and racism as components of the prevailing culture of violence and also facilitate experiential activities exploring these concepts. An important aspect of this activity is also to prepare students for contact with fellow students from the other community.

At a second stage, classes from the two communities are paired and asked to choose between

two options of activities at the Home for Cooperation in the buffer zone: (1) “Visit at the Home for Cooperation and Anti-racist Workshop”, where students in mixed groups engage in experiential activities related to anti-racism under the umbrella of Education for a Culture of Peace; or (2) Sports activities with NGO Peace Players Cyprus, where students develop skills for teamwork, tolerance and trust through sports activities.

Interested groups of students have the option to further their participation and build on their established contact by taking part in sustainability actions, educational walks in Nicosia or study visits across the island. The sustainability workshops which are offered to primary, lower secondary and upper secondary educational levels in the form of both monocommunal and bicommunal workshops, include a diverse range of activities such as cooking, crafts, stencil-making, drama and photography.

To be successfully replicated, this type of program requires the support of the authorities and education stakeholders. ‘Imagine’ required a lot of groundwork - it was after many months of efforts and with the agreement of the leaders of the two main communities on the island - that is, the Greek-Cypriot and the Turkish-Cypriot community - that ‘Imagine’ was launched.

The ‘Imagine’ project has systematically been mentioned in the United Nations Secretary General reports since its initiation where it has received recognition and appraisal.

As per 2020, 5091 students, accompanied by 582 teachers were trained in the Imagine Project. Another 340 teachers were trained in Peace Education both mono-communally and bi-communally and another 92 head teachers participated in the ‘Imagine’ Head Teachers conference.

For the activity to be replicated, after being adapted, to another context it is necessary that it is supported by authorities and stakeholders. Given the recent pandemic, it is vital that social and physical restrictions are not in place. This is because students engage in a culture of peace and challenge stereotypes by coming in contact.

## 2. CONVEY – Digital education for gender equality

In September 2016, Partners from 6 EU countries (Cyprus, Italy, Greece, Ireland, Bulgaria, United Kingdom) came together to work on the prevention of sexual violence/harassment and on promoting change in violent behaviours against women through online educational tools. The project raised awareness of gender stereotypes and the sexualisation of women in digital media. Targeting young people (aged 14 to 18), CONVEY aimed to educate on gender stereotyping and sexualisation in digital media, using a simulation game to promote gender equality, sexual education and digital media literacy.

Project partners were: Gender Alternatives Foundation (Bulgaria), Hope for Children (Cyprus), The Smile of the Child (Greece), Sexual Violence Centre Cork (Ireland), Westminster City Council (UK).

The project tried to foster the respect of women’s rights and to change the behaviour of young people that reinforces gender stereotypes and leads to gender violence.

Explicitly, the objectives of the project were to:



Develop peer-to-peer approaches to education and awareness-raising on sexual violence and harassment against women by training young people on the effects of gender stereotyping and sexualisation in digital media;

Educate and contribute to the behavioural change of young people in the field of sexual violence, harassment and gender stereotyping by developing an educational simulation game and a pilot creative program of gender equality and sexual education, critical digital media literacy;

· Foster the respect of women's rights and dignity in schools through a train-the-trainer program for teachers on the prevention of gender stereotyping and sexualisation in the digital society.

*CONVEY – Not A Game* is an investigation adventure into terrible crimes. Across 5 chapters, through mini-games, flashbacks and videos based on real testimonies of violence survivors, you become the detective looking for the people responsible for the crimes committed against a child, a girl, a woman and a student, while your own history of violence as the detective comes to surface.

#### **The game features the following:**

- 5 Chapters with more than 3 hours of gameplay;
- 11 mini-games;
- Achievements;
- Team set-up and “invite friends into your team” feature;
- 9 video-stories with real testimonies of survivors of sexual violence and of gender-based violence;
- 4 languages.

Through the development of the game and the implementation of a training programme for teachers and students of secondary schools, the project aims to foster the respect for women's rights and to change the behaviour of young people that reinforces gender stereotypes and leads to gender-based violence.

#### **Impact:**

– 354 young people reached to be able to challenge gender stereotypes and myths related to SVH, to reflect critically about the sexualisation of women and to identify links between gender stereotypes and gender-based violence;

– 93 young people creators of an innovative gaming resource;

– 38 teachers/educators were able to use *CONVEY – Not A Game* and the non-formal CONVEY Pilot Programme to train young people on critical digital skills, critical thinking on issues stemming from gender roles and gender stereotypes, on preventing sexual violence/harassment and gender-based violence;

– 12 survivors of sexual violence/harassment empowered through a process of video development and sharing of their testimonies;

- Around 140,000 people were exposed to information, testimonies, experiences to fight and prevent sexual violence/harassment and gender-based violence;
- Policymakers and education-sector representatives from 5 project countries informed about the achievements of the project, the methodological approaches and their efficacy in preventing and fighting sexual violence and harassment.

## PORTUGAL

### 1.EQUI -X Engaging Youth in the Promotion of Non-Violent and Equitable Masculinities

Funded by the European Commission through the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Commission, EQUI-X took place in four European countries besides Portugal (Germany, Belgium, Croatia and Spain) and aimed to develop innovative strategies to promote gender equality and the involvement of boys and men in non-violent models of masculinity.

The EQUI-X manual is one of the main results of the project with the same name, which was developed in Portugal by CES-University of Coimbra and Promundo Portugal between January 2018 and December 2019. It aimed to promote gender equality among young people aged 12 to 18 in public schools of the 2nd and 3rd cycle of basic education and young people aged 14 to 17 years old serving educational measures in Educational Centres in Coimbra, Lisbon and Vila do Conde.

EQUI-X - based on the H|M|D programme of the international NGO Promundo, developed in Brazil in 2002 and recognised as evidence-based good practice in promoting gender equality and preventing gender-based violence – combines group education sessions, local campaigns and political activism, and has been tested and adapted to the local context of each country.

It is a Training Manual which offers real support tools for working with young people between 12 and 18 years old in formal and non-formal education contexts, enabling them to question the stereotypes they live with, which limit them and reproduce in their daily lives. And these tools are unique because they are based on structured and tested methodologies, and substantively comprehensive, ranging from concepts to practical exercises, concrete questions, alternative scenarios and resources. This manual was developed based on the experiences CES-UC gained during an extensive pilot phase and the implementation phase of the workshops in the context of schools and educational centres. In total, the ETUC team conducted 52 educational sessions

with 122 young people, 63 boys and 59 girls. Topics such as gender, identity and discrimination, violence, sexual and reproductive health and care were discussed.

The EQUI-X Handbook is divided into 6 sections/thematic blocks: Gender; Masculinities; Media and Masculinities; Sexual and Reproductive Health; Violence and Diversity; and Fatherhood and Caregiving. Each module contains: 1. a table summarizing the workshops it contains; 2. an introductory text; 3. a supporting text; 4. session plans for each workshop (indicating the objectives, recommended duration, required materials, operational tips and also materials to support the activities); 5. resources to support the topic (including, for example, newspaper articles, videos, films, infographics, relevant institutions and/or information on how to ask for clarification or obtain legal and psychological assistance); 6. further reading and at the end a glossary.

The 42 workshops contained in this manual have a recommended duration of 15m to 2h. These activities can be developed in a variety of settings, including schools and education centres, for which they are designed, but also in youth clubs or associations, and are most productive when conducted with small groups of 10 to 20 participants. The goal of the workshops is to provide a safe space for discussion where young men and women feel comfortable reflecting on gender norms, masculinities, relationships, gender-based violence, health and caregiving, as well as to provide opportunities to reflect on the skills needed to minimise risk-taking behaviour and encourage young men and women to act in more equal ways.

This manual has been developed for professionals who work with young people on a regular basis and who want to address or discuss issues related to promoting gender equality and preventing gender-based violence, among others.

The target group of the EQUI-X project is made up of girls/women and boys/men, aged between 12 and 18, who are attending compulsory schooling; are institutionalised in educational centres; living in shelters or lodgings, or refugees/refugees or migrants.

The selection of participants was made by the institutions that decided to host the programme. The workshops were implemented in the institutions that accepted to be part of the project. In schools, most sessions took place in the context of the Citizenship Education subject and participation was voluntary. In the educational centres, the sessions were scheduled in good time according to the institutions' programming.

**Note:** They do not recommend working with young people aged 12–18 years within the same groups. They recommend age homogeneous groups.

One of the main objectives of the EQUI-X project was the adaptation to the European scope of the original materials of Promundo Global Consortium, in order to adjust them to the specific intervention contexts of the five European organisations.

The objective of EQUI-X was to promote equitable masculinities and gender equality among young people aged 12 to 18 in public schools of the 2nd and 3rd cycle of basic education and young people of the same age spectrum serving educational measures in educational centres in Coimbra, Lisbon and Vila do Conde.

The manual aims to support educators and other professionals, based on a gender approach and a learning process that builds on girls' and boys' personal experience and training, to develop the necessary skills to question unequal and harmful attitudes that contribute to situations where gender stereotypes and even gender-based violence are reproduced, tolerated

or even accepted. With the help of this manual, it is intended to make it possible for schools or other organisations to implement the EQUI-X programme in an autonomous and adapted way.

The activities that form EQUI-X are grounded in an evidence-based theory of change that recognises the need to create change at varied levels to achieve sustained and widespread changes. At the end of the project the team expects to have a programme that can: a) be replicated in different European contexts, and b) be incorporated into the EU level strategy on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention, 2016).

Boys and girls have been involved in the educational sessions in different time frames and formats. In some cases, students were involved in the workshops throughout the whole school year, but in other cases the course of the sessions was compressed into a few weeks or days. The educational sessions ended with the creation of a youth-led campaign. Due to the locations of these sessions, such as schools and youth detention centres, trainers faced difficulties in promoting a safe space in which participants could work on the proposed issues. Nevertheless, their active involvement in the construction of the campaign showed that the issues raised during the workshops have had an impact, motivating them to take action on what they experienced beyond the strict school framework.

Students and facilitators could create five dissemination and awareness campaigns to be carried out in each partner country, each with a unique artistic focus: light-hearted activities that involve the school community in Portugal, urban action in Croatia, a forum theatre play in Spain, a memes workshop in Germany, and finally, various resources through social networks including videos and music that will be soon implemented in Belgium.

In order to implement the project in other countries the EQUI-X team gives some recommendations for the implementation, before starting the workshops.

### **They are:**

#### **1 – Formative research: diagnostic study**

In case you do not know the population with whom you will carry out the EQUI-X programme, it is important to carry out a diagnostic study. In the course of EQUI-X, we used qualitative methods, such as focus groups, interviews with key informants and with potential participants: interviews with teachers from the schools covered and with monitors and other professionals from the educational centres which hosted the project.

#### **2 – Selection and training of the facilitation team**

Choosing the right facilitation team is central to the success of educational groups such as those proposed in the EQUI-X programme. It is recommended that the facilitation team should include at least two people in the case of groups of 10-15 young people and at least three in larger groups. Throughout the EQUI-X programme, mixed facilitation teams were chosen, which proved to be a good choice in most contexts.

#### **3 – Implementation phase**

**3.1 Identify participants/participating group** (Will it be volunteer-based or by invitation? In case it is by invitation, will it involve a specific group of young people, a class for example?).

**3.2 It is important to make sure whether permission needs to be sought from the school,** or organisation/association concerned to implement the workshops. Once this question has been resolved, it is important to note whether parental or guardian consent is required for participation in the workshops.

**3.3 Identify budget, materials and logistical conditions required** (Consider also mapping local organizations with expertise in the areas of work of the workshops, with a view to identifying available expertise, resources, additional information or even creating partnerships with these organizations to carry out the workshops).

**3.4 Recognise and reward the participation of young people in the TEQUI-X workshops** (It is also necessary to consider, in addition to the participation of young people in the design and implementation of the final community campaign, ways of recognising their participation in the workshops, through, for example, the  
(It is also necessary to consider, in addition to the participation of young people in the design and implementation of the final community campaign)

**3.5 Prepare to deal with disclosures of sensitive information**

**3.6 Evaluate the workshops**

The EQUI-X methodology results from a combined approach, which combines the delivery of group workshops with young people, local campaigns created by young people and activism at a more macro and formal political level. The 42 workshops contained in this manual have a recommended duration of 15m to 2h. These activities can be developed in a variety of settings, including schools and education centres, for which they are designed, but also in youth clubs or associations, and are most productive when carried out with small groups consisting of 10 to 20 participants.

The methodological strategy is twofold: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative approach will be based on the application of questionnaires to primary and secondary school students, while the qualitative approach will include focus groups with teachers from the schools involved in the project. The questionnaire surveys will be conducted by a specialised technician, who will be present during the application of the pre- and post-questionnaires and available to answer any doubts and questions that may arise, as well as to guarantee the confidentiality and anonymity of the questionnaire.

The methodologies of the educational groups proposed by the EQUI-X project are based on a tested and widely adapted curriculum, consisting of activities designed to engage young men and women in critical reflection and dialogue on gender equality through participatory sessions.

Different educational workshops address topics such as caring; sexual and reproductive health; women's rights; the various forms of violence, including gender-based violence (with an

emphasis on dating violence, bullying and cyber-bullying), racism and xenophobia; emotions and non-violent communication; relationships and sexual diversity, empathy and concepts of gender and other identities. EQUI-X also includes the training of key professionals, teachers and other school professionals on the project methodologies, with a view to promoting sustainable and permanent impacts of the project.

Identify budget, materials and necessary logistical conditions: before starting the sessions, ensure that all resources and materials necessary to carry out the workshops are available (i.e. room or other suitable space to hold the workshops; board or flipcharts; photocopies of support materials, etc.). Consideration should also be given to mapping local organisations with expertise in the areas of work of the workshops, with a view to identifying available expertise, resources, additional information or even creating partnerships with these organisations to carry out the workshops.

Evaluating the workshops based on the participants' opinions is essential, as well as assessing what they have learned, what skills they have developed and what kind of content and formats they liked most and least. It is also essential to think about the format of the facilitation team's self-assessment. This information should be the basis for future adaptations or reformulations. In the course of EQUI-X, it was decided to make a self-assessment questionnaire to be filled in by the facilitation team, which functioned as a "field diary".

The results show that both boys and girls shared positive attitudes from the beginning on objective issues (division of domestic chores, decision about having children, use of condoms, etc.). There was also improvement in more subjective attitudes (not agreeing with the following statements: "a man needs to be tough"; "boys who behave like girls are weak", for example).

For monitoring and impact evaluation, the EQUI-X used instruments such as field diaries of the facilitation team and/or face-to-face monitoring sessions with the facilitation team, where there will be an opportunity to reflect on the progress of the sessions, the challenges encountered and the necessary adjustments. In order to evaluate the impact of these educational sessions on the attitudes and behaviours of the participants, we carried out an impact evaluation survey applying a pre and post test to each young person in the first and last sessions, with the following results in the schools:

The GEM (Gender-Equitable Men) Scale is one of the tools that measures attitudes towards gender norms in intimate relationships or different social expectations for men and women and boys and girls. Developed by the Population Council/Horizons and Promundo, the scale consists of 24 statements about gender norms, sexuality, masculinity, violence, and health.

For more information on the results of the Monitoring and Impact Assessment of the EQUI-X programme, please contact the team at [equix@ces.uc.pt](mailto:equix@ces.uc.pt).

The facilitation team should choose the workshops according to the group and the time available for its application, as well as the space where it will take place. For this reason, it is recommended that the facilitating team previously run the workshops included in each section and use this opportunity to reflect on their knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors about the topics addressed and to imagine the group's reaction to the activity. This reflection should guide the decision regarding the choice of workshops and their adaptation to the context. It is important to stress that the instructions for each workshop are only guidelines and suggestions, which should be adapted, and even, to a certain extent, bypassed, whenever necessary, to better meet the needs of the



group or logistical constraints, among others. For example, the facilitation team can use the basic idea of a workshop and its objectives and adopt the method used in another session. Many of the topics in the EQUI-X manual are sensitive and complex, so it is important to pay attention to whether the participants are comfortable with the topics and activities. In some situations, it may be necessary to refer a young person in the group for some more specialised accompaniment, such as psychological counselling. Prepare in advance and have support services in mind to suggest. Ideally, prepare a leaflet with existing support services and make it available to the group from the first workshop. It is important to be aware of the realities of the participants and to understand the challenges and dangers they face in trying to make changes. Changing attitudes and behaviours is a long and difficult process.

## **2. MOOC** (Massive Open Online Course) "Bullying e Ciberbullying: Prevent & Act" (2019)

### **ENABLE** (European Network Against Bullying in Learning and Leisure Environment) (2016)

Developed by the Portuguese Directorate General for Education, in the context of the SafeNet Awareness Centre and the Health Education Team, starting on 13 May and ending on 1 July 2019. This course aims to raise participants' awareness of the issue of bullying and cyberbullying. It is also intended to be an opportunity to deepen knowledge and develop skills to identify, prevent and intervene towards these behaviours.

**ENABLE** is an EU-funded project which combats bullying and contributes to the wellbeing of young people aged 11–14 through social and emotional development and peer education. The translation and adaptation of this manual into Portuguese is part of the MOOC training "Bullying and Cyberbullying: Prevent and Act."

This Open Online Course is structured in four modules and focuses on topics such as: bullying, cyberbullying and communication through the screen, internet safety and cyberbullying, intervention approaches towards bullying and cyberbullying.

This MOOC is intended for teachers, educators, parents/carers, psychologists, security forces, other professionals working in educational settings and all those interested in this subject.

ENABLE takes a holistic and sustainable approach to reducing bullying through involving students, staff and parents/carers. A set of 10 social and emotional lessons (SEL – Social and emotional learning) influences student's behaviour by helping to develop their social and emotional skills and encouraging them to reflect on their own and their peers' behaviour. ENABLE also educates staff, students and parents/carers about what bullying is, how to deal with it and effective measures that can be put in place to prevent it happening and minimise the impacts on the individual.

A set of 10 one-hour sessions, campaign material and peer reflection activities provide staff with a suggested progressive structure and activities to run with their selected group of student Peer Supporters. Peer Supporters run campaigns and activities which educate the whole community (including parents/carers) about bullying, encourage students to reflect on their behaviour and ultimately create a culture where students speak out about bullying, support each other and respect each other's differences.

ENABLE aims to combat bullying and contribute to the well-being of children through a holistic approach that tackles bullying, not only in school but also in outside contexts that impact on

well-being, engages students, parents/carers and key actors in schools, and builds on an empirical understanding of the causes and effects of bullying and effective countermeasures. The objective is to empower and inform young people, using proven holistic approaches and innovative resources, to monitor and reflect on their own behaviour and deepen their understanding of its impact on others. It addresses victims, bystanders and perpetrators who are often victims themselves of bullying.

A set of 10 Social & Emotional Learning Lessons aimed at combatting bullying in a school environment by developing the social and emotional skills of young people aged 11–14.

**Lesson One: Who am I?**

**Lesson Two: How are you? Really?**

**Lesson Three: The nature of bullying**

**Lesson Four: Reading emotions in social situations**

**Lesson Five: It's not bullying; it's only...**

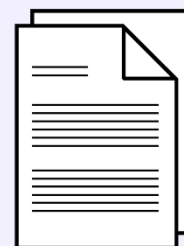
**Lesson Six: How to steer my emotions towards a positive mindset**

**Lesson Seven: Sowing the seed; how to shift the balance**

**Lesson Eight: Stealth & tactics: how to make a difference**

**Lesson Nine: Foundations for change**

**Lesson Ten: What happens next?**



The lessons are accompanied by an overview document which aims to help staff understand the intentions behind the general structure of each lesson. Each lesson is clearly broken down into an introduction, some learning activities, and a closing and is accompanied by a range of further opportunities for learning, such as websites, apps, films etc. It is anticipated that those delivering the lesson will use their own professional judgement and select activities suitable for their learners, adding any experiences or activity ideas that they may personally bring.

With all sequences of lesson plans, it is expected that schools and staff members will adapt and amend the resources to meet the needs of their learners. The lessons have been designed as a sequence of lessons, building skills in Self-Awareness and Social Awareness, followed by Self-Management and finally Relationship Management. However, this does not mean that the sequence is prescriptive, but that schools should ensure that in adapting this resource to fit their school and the needs of their learners, due care and attention is given to ensuring that students skills are nurtured in accordance with the planned sequence.

Within each lesson, a range of activity suggestions has been provided. This is not an exhaustive list, nor should it be treated as a checklist within a lesson. Staff are encouraged to use their own professional judgement to plan activities suitable for their learners. This may mean adapting the proposed idea by using a different learning approach or incorporating one of the suggested activity ideas from the end of the lesson plan. We cannot stress enough the value of making provision for school staff to adapt these resources to suit their context.

The Enable project was implemented in Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Greece, United Kingdom. The Portuguese directorate general of education translated the Enable manual to Portuguese and made available the MOOC training.

ENABLE provides ready-to-use materials for a one-day training and a set of 10 weekly, one-hour lessons, as well as other materials for implementing a campaign and peer reflection activities, providing teachers with a step-by-step structure, as well as activities they can carry out with their selected group of Peer Support Leader students.

Peer Support Leaders can run educational campaigns and activities aimed at the whole school community (including parents and guardians) about bullying, encouraging students to reflect on their behaviour and ultimately creating a culture where they talk to each other about bullying, supporting each other and respecting each other's differences. Peer Support Leaders are responsible students who represent the student population and want to make a difference at their school for a particular cause or issue. They receive training and support to perform their role effectively, as well as ongoing support and guidance from a teacher or another adult from the school.

All students involved in this project receive a guide for parents and guardians, with proposals for activities to broaden their knowledge of what bullying is. A Parent/Carer Pack is provided to all students which includes activities to extend their learning into the home and informs parents/carers of how they can keep their child safe, both online and offline.

### **Steps for implementing ENABLE**

- Identify who will lead the ENABLE programme in your school;
- Use the Features and Benefits to explain to your senior leaders why your school should adopt ENABLE;
- Identify which staff members will be responsible for Peer Supporters and which for SEL;
- Recruit the Peer Supporters, using the section below entitled 'Recruiting students to be Peer Supporters';
- With the ENABLE Peer Supporter trainer, plan your Peer Support programme;
- With the ENABLE SEL co-ordinator, plan the implementation of the SEL modules;
- Use the one-day 'Peer Support Student Training Plan' from the 'Resources' section to start the initial training with your Peer Supporters;
- Deliver the Social and Emotional Learning modules with students, additional to Peer Supporters, aged 11 to 14;
- Over the course of 10 weeks, meet for an hour every week with the Peer Supporters to run each of the 10 one-hour Peer Supporter sessions;
- Support and encourage the Peer Supporters to run some of the suggested extension activities labelled;
- 'Bright Ideas' which are attached to each of the 10 Peer Support sessions;
- Based on their work and findings from the 10 sessions, Peer Supporters use the Campaign Material Pack and Peer Review Challenges provided to continue to educate their peers and promote a culture of respect and tolerance;
- Share best practice, learning and training with a neighbouring school. E.g. the Peer Supporters visit local primary schools or train secondary school students;
- With the support of staff, Peer Supporters train a new set of Peer Supporters each year to ensure the scheme is sustainable.

As with any strategy or intervention, it is important for schools to assess the impact of the approach on students and record any progress made. For this type of programme it is important to consider capturing both qualitative and quantitative data to build a complete picture of the impact. Therefore, in addition to the questionnaire (whether it is selected for use or not) there are a range of mechanisms schools could adopt to measure the impact of the ENABLE programme. **For example, staff could:**

- Record observations;
- Support the creation of student logs;
- Hold a series of interviews or discussions;
- Look for a range of indicators such as reduced numbers of recorded bullying incidents, or trends in truancy;
- Seek student evaluation.

Impact Assessment Kit: Contact [info-enable@eun.org](mailto:info-enable@eun.org)

To be able to make ENABLE work there is a guide for adults, with all the information needed to replicate.

## ROMANIA

### 1. National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights.

The strategy is being implemented at national level, by the Ministry of Education for the period 2014-2020. It aims to prevent and combat early school leaving, through closer monitoring of absenteeism and early school leaving, and through programmes to support schools in caring for children at risk.

It is a national programme aimed at preventing early school leaving, a serious effect of educational polarity. Its activities include continuous monitoring of school attendance, identification of students at risk of dropping out through psycho-educational counselling and support programmes.

The strategy provides for an integrated approach including the child, his/her family, the community and the school. Training is also provided to all teachers, including specific aspects of preventing and combating early school leaving.

#### **Aim of the practice:**

- a) Facilitating and ensuring the enrollment of all children of compulsory school age;
- b) Decreasing the dropout rate in the compulsory cycle;
- c) Relaunching post-compulsory education, giving greater importance to technical and vocational education;
- d) Improving conditions in the school system in the rural environment and emphasizing school and professional orientation;
- e) Free access to the pre-school preparatory year;

- f) Facilitating access to education for children with special needs, as well as promoting social inclusion.

#### **Activities (If it applies):**

- a) Carrying out an information campaign to raise awareness in order to prevent and reduce the phenomenon of early school leaving;
- b) Organising community meetings: setting homework, making materials, announcements, inviting teachers, local authorities, parents, community members, disseminating information materials;
- c) Creating a network/partnership between school, local/county institutions, social services, employment and health, as well as promoting the principle of equal opportunities and gender, sustainable development.
- d) Continuous monitoring of school attendance;
- e) Monitoring students identified at risk of dropping out of school through psycho-educational counseling;
- f) Remediation programmes;

Being a long-term national strategy, it has been implemented throughout the country, especially in rural areas, where the dropout rate is high.

#### **Methodological Approach:**

1. Regulations on the supervision and accreditation of social services, specific methodologies and working procedures, as well as those aimed at assessing the degree of implementation of the legislation;
2. Working methodologies developed and disseminated at the level of SPAS and DGASPC;
3. Elaborated inter-institutional collaboration methodology;
4. Methodology for monitoring cases of violence.

Human resources (a strategic mandate was given in human resources management to cover the lack of staff with specific training in the public social assistance system) and adequate economic resources (structural funds or international organisations) were allocated for the implementation of the strategy, ensuring its application in a consistent manner.

As the strategy proposes an integrated approach, including the child, his/her family, the community and the school, the main challenge was to convince parents to actively involve in the implementation of the strategy.

In 2016, Romania had one of the highest dropout rates in the European Union: 18.5% of young people aged 18 to 24, according to Eurostat statistics. Despite the fact that the entire European Union aims to reduce the dropout rate as much as possible, this does not seem to be the case in Romania. The following year, 2017, the dropout rate fell to 18.1%. According to Eurostat statistics, Romania is far below the European average when it comes to the dropout rate of young people.

The strategy had a positive impact on the population, as the dropout rate fell by a few percentage points. Even so, the goal of reducing the dropout rate below the 10% threshold by 2020 was not achieved.

**Although the National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Child was implemented in 2014–2020, there are currently other national programmes that aimed at preventing and combating early school leaving:**

1. The Corn bread and Milk Program, where P-VIII students receive these products daily;
2. The Free School Supplies program, addressed to students in state, primary and secondary education, full-time courses. At the beginning of each school year, packages are distributed with school supplies specific to each class;
3. High School Money Program - financial support is provided to high school students in order to continue / complete their studies. Following the adoption of Government Decision 712/2018, starting with the 2018-2019 school year, each beneficiary will receive monthly, for the entire duration of the courses, in case of compliance with all legal conditions, the amount of 250 lei / month;
4. The Euro 200 program - which is based on law no. 269/2004 regarding the granting of a financial aid in order to stimulate the purchase of computers, approved by the Government Decision no. 1294/2004.

**Legislation framework**

- a) OMEN no. 1409/2007, regarding the approval of the Strategy for reducing the phenomenon of violence in pre-university education units, with subsequent amendments and additions;
- b) OMENCS no. 5079/2016, regarding the approval of the Regulation on the organization and operation of pre-university education units, with subsequent amendments and additions;
- c) OMENCS no. 4742/2016, regarding the approval of the Student Status;
- d) OMEN no. 4831/2018 regarding the approval of the framework code of ethics for teaching staff in pre-university education;
- e) Law on increasing safety in educational institutions (Law no. 35/2007 supplemented and amended by Law no. 29/2010)

**2. Law no. 221/2019, for the amendment and completion of the National Education Law no. 1/2011 on psychological violence-bullying**

Law no. 221/2019 on preventing and combating bullying in educational spaces, the provisions of which adopted on June 10, 2020, aims for the establishment of an anti-bullying action group with a maximum of 10 members. Among them are the director of the educational unit, the school counsellor, three teachers trained on the issue of violence, including psychological violence-bullying, two or more representatives of the students, a representative of the parents, representatives of the local authority. The role of this group is to prevent, identify and resolve acts of bullying between students through physical, verbal, relational and/or cyber actions. With this law, the Ministry of Education wants each school to adopt measures and sanctions against bullying in its internal regulations, by establishing clear intervention procedures and organising activities with students and their parents.



The sums necessary for organising training, counseling or information/awareness programmes come from the state budget and are reflected in the local budgets of the administrative-territorial units/subdivisions, on the revenue side.

This is a law aimed at preventing and combating bullying in educational spaces, a phenomenon of educational polarity, that has gained momentum in the last decade. **The types of intervention in the case of bullying that appear in the methodology of this law, are:**

1. Collaboration with the National Federation of Parents in Pre-University Education and informing parents about the services that the school can offer in order to prevent bullying actions and improve parent-child relationships (counseling, psychological assistance, mediation);
2. Involvement in such activities of specialized personnel (school counselors, psychologists);
3. School collaboration with the families of students with violent potential to find and apply solutions to prevent bullying;
4. Involvement of the National Council of Students in the design and development of activities to prevent and reduce bullying manifestations;
5. The inclusion, on the agenda of the school's formal meetings (Board of Directors, Teachers' Council, Student Council, Parents' Committee), of topics related to bullying actions, aimed at raising awareness of the size of the phenomenon and analyzing the forms, of the actors and the causes of the situations at the level of the respective institution.

Law 221/2019 proposes an integrated approach, which includes the child, his/her family, the community and the school. Also, the training of all teaching staff takes place, by including the specific aspects of preventing and combating bullying in spaces intended for education.

#### **Aim of the practice:**

1. Promoting positive relationships throughout the school, improving the school climate and promoting a favourable learning environment;
2. Implementation of strategies for education, prevention and combating intimidation and bullying-type behaviours;
3. Ensuring and facilitating access to support and specialized services for all children from the families of those involved in bullying situations (victims, witnesses, siblings of the victim);
4. Consolidation of attitudes that are incompatible with bullying, with an emphasis on inclusion, acceptance and respect;
5. Promoting relationships of respect and school communion, based on encouraging school inclusion.

#### **Activities:**

- a) Carrying out preventive information activities at the level of the educational unit, in order to prevent the spread of similar facts;
- b) Proposing and applying ameliorative measures, especially in cases where bullying situations also involve people from outside the school or are manifested outside the school;

- c) The intervention carried out by the Community Police, acting according to the provisions of the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, in conjunction with other relevant provisions. For minors under the age of 14, the police structures must notify the DGASPC;
- d) The teaching staff (teachers/leaders) will organize, with the support of the school counselor, discussions with the group of students, with the role of raising awareness of the negative effects of this behavior and promoting a positive, constructive school climate, the feeling of solidarity between students, with the aim of making abusive behavior intolerable.

The methodology appears in the Draft Government Decision for the approval of the Methodological Norms for the application of the provisions of Law no. 221/2019, for the amendment and completion of the National Education Law no. 1/2011 on psychological violence-bullying, available on the website <https://www.edu.ro/etichete/norme-metodologice-antibullying>.

The levels at which intervention is carried out in the pre-university educational system to prevent and combat bullying are the educational unit, the school inspectorate, the resource and educational assistance center - CJRAE/CMBRAE, the teaching staff's house - CCD, and the Ministry of Education and Research.

The multidisciplinary intervention in bullying situations is carried out inter-institutionally, through the cooperative action of competent institutions – educational unit, general direction of social assistance and child protection, police, etc. The members of the specialized multidisciplinary team, the family and the teaching staff contribute to the integration of the child victim - witness or aggressor - in the educational unit, respecting, in all interventions, the best interest of the child.

Bullying situations at the level of the educational unit are reported to the management of the educational unit, teaching staff, school counsellor, the European helpline for children 116 111, other entities with responsibilities in the field.

Since an integrated approach is proposed, which includes the child, his family, the community and the school, the biggest challenge is convincing parents and students to participate in training activities in the field of preventing, identifying and combating bullying, as a form of violence manifested in the school environment.

At the national level, there is still no statistics regarding the decrease or increase in the rate of the phenomenon, given the fact that the norms of Law no. 221/2019, which prevents and combats bullying in educational spaces, was approved on June 10, 2020, and at that time, students were in online education, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, at the level of educational institutions, there are visible changes regarding the activities carried out in this regard, through an integrated approach, which includes the student, his parents, the school and the community.

Law 221/2019 has a positive impact on students, as it builds a safe and balanced school climate, by bringing a systemic approach in case of bullying. In order for Law 211/2019 to be properly applied, the student, the family, the community and the school must take joint steps, respecting the methodology of the Government Decision Project for the approval of the methodological norms for the application of the provisions of Law no. 221/2019, for the amendment and completion of the National Education Law no. 1/2011 on psychological violence-bullying.

## 5 Conclusions and next steps

All countries involved in the project face the effects of political and social polarisation.

The common concerns of **Austria and Cyprus** are noteworthy, as they have numerous practices to prevent radicalization and hatred. We want to raise awareness of all forms of exclusion and marginalization and promote self-acceptance and neighbourliness, regardless of nationality, gender or sexual orientation.

In this context, **Austria** seeks to prevent and combat anti-Semitism and violent extremism - Counseling Center on Extremism, while the Imagine program in **Cyprus** promotes peace and raises awareness of the dramatic effects of contemporary racism.

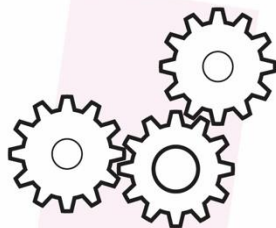
Both **Portugal** and **Romania** are faced with a political and cultural system of polarity, that has made them the poorest countries in Europe: excessive foreign debt, large numbers of migrants, corruption, violence, etc.

The phenomenon of bullying is a major concern for the educational systems in **Portugal** and **Romania**, which are facing an accelerated increase in the cases of students who were have been victims of bullying.

In this context, the similarities between the national program - MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) "Bullying and Cyberbullying: Prevent & Act" (2019) ENABLE (European Network Against Bullying in Learning and Leisure Environment) (2016) and Law no. 221/2019, for amending and supplementing the National Education Law no.1 / 2011 on psychological violence-bullying, through which the Portuguese and Romanian authorities want to prevent and combat the phenomenon, through activities that involve counseling parents, students and teachers.

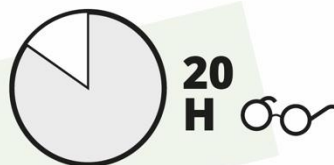
Polarity in the educational environment manifests itself through intolerance, unjustified violence, malice in all its forms, discrimination, etc. In this research we have focused on two manifestations that are considered a threat to the values promoted by Romanian education.

**We have identified the causes and illustrate the practices addressed in both situations and are going to use the results of the report for the development of our further project results.**



### **An innovative methodological - didactical concept**

based on the needs of the target group

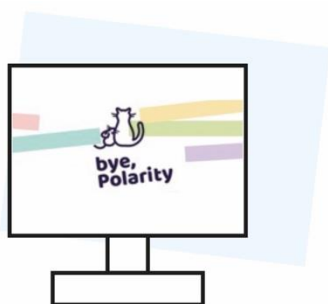


### **Learning material in printable & digital form**

for at least 20 learning hours

### **Teaching & learning material**

for at least 20 contact hours (*workshop settings*) as digital & analog resources



### **A website with resources**

that provides all information and resources



### **A guide to train students**

to deal with increasing polarisation on social media and to train them to be ambassadors for a united Europe

*Bye, Polarity* will not only provide awareness and know-how for pupils and teachers on how to deal with increasing polarisation, but also focuses on concrete possibilities for action to counteract the increasing polarisation. Our intended impact is to initiate a broad debate on the increasing polarisation and to equip as many young people and teachers as possible with the tools to resolutely counteract the increasing polarisation and to stand up for a united, strong Europe.

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