

**Engaging Youth
in the Promotion
of Non-Violent and
Equitable Masculinities**

**Insights and
Recommendations**

***To all who made possible
the implementation of the EQUI-X project,
public administrations, schools,
professionals and the girls and boys
who actively participated in it***

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1. Introduction

EQUI-X Project: Background

Under the coordination of the Cepaim Foundation (Spain), five European organisations from Germany (Dissens), Belgium (Vzw Zijn), Croatia (Status M) and Portugal (CES/UC and Promundo Portugal)¹ joined forces from the beginning of 2018 until the end of 2019 to work together on the European EQUI-X project²: a project financed by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (REC)³ promoting innovative strategies to address the construction of gender identities and to engage men and boys in non-violent models of masculinity, with the aim of implementing and systemising a methodology of intervention with young people for the prevention of gender violence.

The EQUI-X project⁴ did not come about by chance, rather, it proceeds from an analysis of reality and practical knowledge from the experience of partner organisations working with the target group of boys and girls between 12 and 21 years of age. The activities and approaches of the 5 partners are diverse and complementary: they include social research (CES/UC), work with youth and migrant populations (Cepaim), social development focussing on the youth (Status M), implementation of educational projects in the fields of gender and youth (Dissens), the development of educational projects, raising awareness through campaigns, and networking and education in the sociocultural field (Vzw Zijn). One of the main objectives of the EQUI-X project was the adaptation to the European scope of the original materials of Promundo Global Consortium⁵, in order to adjust them to the specific intervention contexts of the five European organisations.

Promundo works to advance gender equality and create a world free from violence by engaging men and boys in partnership with women, girls, and individuals of all gender identities.

As of 2002, Programme H⁶ Promundo's research, programmes, and advocacy efforts show that exploring positive models of "what it means to be a man" and promoting healthy, respectful masculinity leads to improvements in the lives of women and girls, as well as in the lives of men themselves. Created in 2002, in collaboration with other organisations, Programme H is a gender transformative and integrated model of individual and community intervention aimed at

¹ CES/UC Promundo (<https://www.ces.uc.pt/en>), StatusM (<http://www.status-m.hr/en/>), Vzw Zijn (<http://www.vzwzijn.be/>) Dissens (<https://www.dissens.de/>), Cepaim (<http://www.cepaim.org>)

² 776969 REC-VAW-AG2016

³ <http://equixproject.eu/>

⁴ The name of the project EQUI-X refers to two ideas, equality through the prefix *equi* and the chromosome X common to all individuals against the dualism between the masculine pair XX and feminine XY according with the sex determination system.

⁵ <https://promundoglobal.org/about/>

⁶ H means homem, man in Portuguese.

adolescents and adult men (15-24 years old) to promote equality, prevent gender-based violence and reduce health risks⁷. From its beginnings, Programme H has been developed under three integrated components: 1) an intervention methodology with workshops that has been tested in the field and that includes a series of manuals and an educational video to promote attitude and behaviour change among men and boys; 2) community campaigns, led by the people participating in the workshops. The campaigns seek to change community norms related to what it means to be a man or a woman; and 3) the GEM Scale (Gender Equitable Men Scale) (Pulerwirz & Barker, 2008): a validated evaluation model that takes into account cultural differences according to different contexts. The GEM scale seeks to measure the degree to which young men and women change their attitudes as a result of the interventions.

Recognising the need to work with young women and empower them alongside men and based on the contributions made by the female partners of the male participants of Programme H in 2006, the original partners of Programme H together with World Education, initiated the M Programme⁸. The M programme was specifically aimed at young women between 15 and 24 years of age. Its objective was to promote health and empowerment through critical reflections.

Description of the EQUI-X Project

Gender norms are changing for many young people, however as The European Commission's Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016–2019 Report states, young people are not immune from gender stereotypes or inequalities, and thus should be considered a key target group for the EU strategies for gender-based violence prevention. Moreover, gender-based violence amongst youths is presenting itself in new ways which we still lack adequate knowledge about and tools to deal with it, such as online violence and cyber-bullying.

Addressing gender-based violence is an urgent concern, yet there is still a lack of evidence-based tools to prevent it. Similarly, although addressing the role of gender norms and limited gender identities is being increasingly recognised as imperative to gender equality and violence prevention, there is still a large problem with addressing this within the socialisation of boys and men. In other words, models of masculinity and understandings of what it is to “be a man” remain limited for young boys and are often based on gender-inequitable attitudes and behaviours. Not only does this lead to the use of violence within teenage relationships, a pivotal moment for young people to build their attitudes and behaviours towards relationships, but it can also influence the use of and exposure to gender-based violence as an adult. Limited models of masculinity do not only influence the use of violence in romantic relationships, but also between young men themselves as they seek to assert gendered identities. This can have particularly damaging repercussions in particular communities marginalised due to economic, racial, and immigration status and so on, where violence may be used to gain status (Barker, Ricardo & Nascimento, 2007). However, throughout the world, there are men and boys who follow non-violent trajectories, who participate equitably in the provision of care for children and family members, and who support women's empowerment. Challenging normalised understandings of gender and gender norms allows for a broadening of identities and

⁷ The H program is based on the concept of gender awareness that in turn originates from the idea of critical awareness developed by Paulo Freire (1970). According to the author, the awareness process, fundamental for social transformation, is linked to the ability of individuals to reflect on the world and its being in it, and to establish future actions framed in the information and empowerment given by that critical reflection. The process of critical reflection is based on the one hand on the history of cultural conditions and on the other on the class structures that sustain and frame the experiences of gender inequality and hence the tools to promote personal growth can be created, political awareness and activism and thus create the conditions to change the obligation to comply with gender mandates.

⁸ M means mulher, woman in Portuguese.



prevents violence, be it in the street between men or in the home against family members and intimate partners. Both addressing non-equitable models of masculinity and empowering women and girls are necessary to achieve broad and sustainable changes. Evidence demonstrates that engaging boys and men alongside girls and women, can prevent the intergenerational transmission of violence (Fleming et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2016).

The EQUI-X Project focuses on raising the awareness of both girls and boys about gender-based violence and preventing it at an early stage (see fig.1). It raises awareness about gender-based violence while promoting gender-equity, which is understood here to be essential to preventing gender-based violence as well as other forms of violence by applying the gender synchronised approach (see Green & Levack 2010) from Promundo Programme H/M. This means engaging both girls and boys and addressing a number of themes related to gender-based violence and inequality, including gender identities and norms. Changing rigid gender norms to promote gender inequality is increasingly recognised as an important strategy for intervention. The proposed project builds on this recognition, developing an innovative project that takes a methodology based on learning from global south experiences with the aim to adapt and pilot this to the EU context.

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 in order to achieve sustained and widespread changes. At the end of the project the team expects to have a programme that is able to: 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).

EQUI-X is designed to offer three main innovative aspects: 1) Applying a comparative, multi-tool and empirically based approach to gender-based violence prevention strategies; 2) promotion of an innovative strategy that empowers young girls and addresses constructions of masculinities and non-violent pathways in boys; and 3) building a network of European researchers and NGOs engaged in long-term implementation and scale up, including promoting the integration of the programme materials into large-scale institutions where the content can reach greater numbers and become part of the institutional culture.

Some Insights into the EQUI-X Project

Bearing in mind the current state-of-the-art on gender-based violence prevention, this project goes a step beyond the existing strategies by focusing on one central point of the European initiatives, namely the lack of engagement of boys and young men in prevention actions, so they can all be synchronized. In fact, studies have demonstrated that the role of men has not been given the necessary attention when it comes to gender-based violence prevention and gender equality promotion strategies (EU Study on the Role of Men in Gender Equality, 2012).

The different activities incorporated into the project are designed based on an evidence-based theory of change that recognises the need to work at multiple levels through a series of complementing activities, including: i) a series of educational sessions with individuals, to promote the questioning of normalised ideas on gender and challenging of gender-inequitable attitudes and behaviours; ii) community campaigns designed based on participatory methods with the goal to promote awareness on gender-based violence at the community level; iii) training of professionals and related stakeholders on the methodology in order to build capacity and create sustainable changes; iv) advocacy activities to promote changes at institutional/state/national/regional levels to promote scale ups.

The EQUI-X project has involved creative “interpretation” work to incorporate Promundo’s H/M methodology in the different work contexts of the partner organisations to a large extent. During 2018 and 2019, more than 300 workshops, were held in 13 European cities in both public and private schools, and in youth detention centres, with almost 651 young girl and boy participants, representing the diversity that characterises European society today.

Partners	No. of sessions	No. of students	Boys	Girls	Non-binary gender	Age
STATUS M	48	92	68	24		15–16
CES/UC	61	153	91	62		10–17
DISSENS	24	28	19	9		13–18
CEPAIM	250	232	129	101	2	12–18
VZW ZIJN	31	146	79	67		15–18
Total	353	651	386	263	2	

Table 1 EQUI-X project sum-up

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. Overall, participants showed commitment and interest on the issues addressed, especially those related to their age. Although this publication has been written before the analysis of the collected data, we can affirm that some differences can be appreciated in terms of the perception of the various topics addressed in the sessions (gender-based, sexual and other forms of violence, sexual diversity, identities, intersectionality, emotions and care⁹).

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.

⁹ For further discussion on the educational groups see the Discussion report n° 1 in the EQUI-X website.

Topics of Reflection

Throughout the following chapters, the partner organisations present their reflections on topics that have been identified as fundamental in the daily work practices of the EQUI-X partners. Although each organization is responsible for one chapter, the topics have been decided and discussed as a group. We hope that they will serve as a useful reference to different professionals and groups that work or interact with the target population of the project (teachers, social educators, cultural mediators, social workers).

Chapter 1, “Gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence among boys and girls in Europe” offers a brief overview about the programmes, strategies, and policies dealing with these topics in Europe. **Chapter 2**, “Socio-political context”, by Status M, addresses the current socio-political context in which today’s youth lives in and how it affects complex issues such as the ones raised by the EQUI-X project, focusing particularly on the growing threat to women’s rights, minorities’ rights, gender equality, and the risk of reversing the progress achieved with the eruption of anti-gender movements and agents. **Chapter 3**, “School: a space for the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity or for transformation?”, by Cepaim, focuses on the educational system as a space for the implementation of projects with a transformative aim, discussing the advantages and constraints of this kind of setting. **Chapter 4**, entitled “Anti-Discrimination, Intersectionality, and a Critical Approach to the Gender Binary as a Complement of Preventive Anti-Violence Work with Boys* Reflections and Suggestions for Practical Pedagogy” by Dissens, discusses, from the practical experience of EQUI-X, the need to address multiple forms of discrimination as well as the concept of intersectionality when discussing anti-violence with young people in order to be more effective in preventing all forms of violence. **Chapter 5**, “Family, networks & communities” by Vzw Zijn, addresses how to engage different groups, such as families, networks, and communities when educating young people about gender equality and violence prevention. It points out the key role that youth-led campaigns could play in achieving this engagement while also highlighting the relevance of social media, especially when it comes to quickly spreading important messages to a large number of people and initiating social change. **Chapter 6**, “Evaluating Gender Transformative Projects: the EQUI-X Experience” by CES/UC, proposes some inspiring ideas to help groups working on gender transformative programmes to conduct monitoring and evaluation, building on the example of EQUI-X.

Findings and Recommendations

During the development of the project, some ideas and recommendations have been outlined to promote gender equality and reduce violence among young people in the future. Some of them are related to the way we approach all these interrelated issues, others in the way we work, and others with the partners or allies we will need in order to reach our common goals:

- 1) Conducting a good analysis of reality which does not take for granted advances in gender equality, and identifies the threats, such as the anti-gender movement, and the opportunities of the current socio-political context.
- 2) Incorporating monitoring and evaluation as key elements in the design and implementation of programmes, projects and activities to be developed, in order to have a clear idea of what is working, what needs to be improved and what are the consequences that such actions produce. Information that is necessary to meet the objectives of transparency and accountability and to make decisions on a well-founded basis.
- 3) Encouraging networking and the creation of alliances at local, national and European levels that generate an exchange of information, good practices and lessons learned.
- 4) Keeping in mind the outstanding role that school still has in the socialisation of girls and boys, and therefore its potential towards the creation of a fair and equitable society.
- 5) Including educational actions that contribute to deconstructing not only the models imposed on girls, and the associated behaviours and ideas, but also on boys, offering alternative models of masculinity to the hegemonic model.
- 6) Working in and with schools to complement and improve ideas about gender identities to make lgbtiqpa+ identities visible and to promote healthy and safe self-identification amongst students.
- 7) Involving as many social agents as possible: schools, and the different professionals who are interacting within them, such as families, communities, social networks.

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Tatiana Motterle, PhD

2. Gender Equality and the Prevention of Gender-based Violence Among Boys and Girls in Europe



Programmes and Strategies

A broad range of different actions, strategies, and documents informs the European policies on GBV and children and young people. One example is the transversal programme Building a Europe for and with children, launched by the CoE in 2006 to promote children's rights and their protection from all forms of violence. In its first ten years, this programme stimulated a positive change in legislation and politics: The Committee of Ministers adopted two binding and 18 non-binding standards on children's rights.

Moreover, the CoE supported its Member States by implementing "more than 160 activities in 28 cooperation projects", as it is recalled in the Strategy for the rights of the child (2016–2021) (par. 10). The latter is the most recent Strategy that stemmed from the transversal programme. It recalls that violence against children, especially girls, is still a widespread problem in different contexts, including the digital environment, schools, justice institutions, and care institutions. It also mentions CoE's intention to go on fighting gender stereotypes in education and media and to encourage the Member States to ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention. However, the Strategy does not mention GBV amongst children and young people, nor does it allude to the involvement of men and boys in the struggle against sexism and GBV.

On the other hand, the CoE Gender equality Strategy (2018–2023) strongly asserts the fundamental importance of the involvement of men and boys for gender equality, also emphasising the negative consequences of gender stereotypes and hegemonic masculinities on men and boys. For the Strategic objective 1: **Prevent and combat gender stereotypes and sexism**, the CoE intends to "address gender stereotypes affecting men and boys by engaging them and working in specific sectors such as education, media and the private sector" (par. 45). For the Strategic objective 2: **Prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence**, it intends to "address the role of men as perpetrators of gender-based violence and develop information tools on the role of men in preventing violence against women and girls" (par. 51).

Similarly, the European Commission Strategic engagement for gender equality (2016–2019) speaks of promoting attitudinal and behavioural change through awareness-raising activities, however, it does not make any specific reference to men's and boys' involvement. Paragraph 6 of this document (Cooperation with all actors) is a useful reading to better understand the articulation and functioning of regional policies:

Close cooperation with institutions and stakeholders active in the field of gender equality (Member States, the European Parliament, the European External Action Service, social partners, civil society organisations, equality bodies, international organisations and EU agencies) will be continued. This will take many forms, from bilateral and multilateral exchanges to structured dialogues. National strategy documents and developments in the area of gender equality in the Member States will be followed and exchanges of good practice among Member States will be facilitated through the mutual learning programme. Cooperation with Member States will also continue through the High-Level Group on gender mainstreaming. The Advisory Committee on equal opportunities for women and men composed of representatives from Member States, social partner organisations and civil society will continue to advise the Commission on policy and legislative initiatives. The European Institute for Gender Equality will continue to play an important role in developing and sharing reliable evidence and data to support evidence-based policymaking, e.g. through its gender equality index.

Finally, with regard to policies, both the EU and CoE are strongly involved in the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a global plan for action that comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets. Goal 4: **Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all** and Goal 5: **Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**, also in combination with other goals, provide for the issue of GBV among children and young people.

Implementation of Policies

It seems that the involvement of men and boys in struggling against gender stereotypes and GBV is still not a totally widespread and highly valued topic in European documents and standards. Indeed, it appears in some provisions, but it has not yet become a fixed and recurring formula. However, as already noted, the implementation of strategies and policies happens through the interpretation of different kinds of documents and standards, the cooperation of disparate entities (governmental and non-governmental institutions, organisations, civil society ...), the exchange of knowledge and experience, and, finally, the adjustment to concrete, specific contexts. The richness and complexity of this kind of processes and the large array of subjects involved in it, can be better understood looking, for example, at the list of the organisations and groups that cooperate in the EU for gender equality¹⁰. Here, the importance of exchanging experience is highlighted with respect to the Mutual Learning Programme (MLP) in gender equality, whose “ultimate aim is to facilitate the dissemination of good practice on gender equality in Europe”. By virtue of this programme, the European Commission organises seminars (about three per year) for the exchange of good practices, inspired on the principles of all the EU documents on gender equality and the EC Strategic Engagement for gender equality. One of them was dedicated to the discussion of the role of men in gender equality (Finland, October 2014).

As recalled in the study report *The role of men in gender equality*¹¹, the interest on this issue also grew in academic research and the contribution of European funding and the cooperation between academia and European institutions are highly important for its development. In particular, “a close connection between a critical scholarship, based on feminist theory and men’s studies, and the development of government policy, programmes and interventions is highly recommended” (Scambor et al. 2013: 4).

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality_en

¹¹ For a critical analysis of the study and its topic, see also Wojnicka 2017.



An example of cooperation and dialogue between academic researchers, European politicians and civil society, is the biannual International Conference on Men and Equal Opportunities (ICMEO), whose 4th edition took place in Stockholm in 2018 (after Berlin in 2012, Vienna in 2014, and Luxembourg in 2016). The focus of all these conferences is the engagement of men and boys and they are organised by a specific ministry of the host country.

Agencies and Bodies

A wide range of European bodies and organisations cooperate in the implementation of programmes and strategies. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) are two noteworthy examples of them. The FRA is a decentralised agency of the EU and is a centre of advice and expertise on fundamental rights for the EU and its Member States. It collects and analyses data and information and engages with awareness-raising and information on the topic of human rights. The FRA also works in close connection to/with other international organisations – Coe, UN, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) – governments, civil society organisations, academic institutions, equality bodies and other human rights institutions.

Children’s rights and gender rights are two topics that the agency works on, but they are rarely intersected. In a 2014 survey on violence against women (FRA 2014), which is based on interviews with women from the 28 EU states, the questions about abuse and violence towards children only regard the experiences that the interviewees suffered at the hands of adults when they were under the age of 15. *The Handbook on European law relating to the rights of the child* (FRA 2015) does not consider the topic of gender and gender-based violence amongst children, not even in the section dedicated to sexual abuse. Finally, the publication *Challenges to women’s human rights in the EU* (FRA 2017) only mentions the importance of the involvement of men and boys in its conclusions, where it talks about the area of intervention of promoting gender equality in education and life-long learning.

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is an autonomous body that operates within the framework of EU policies, with the aim of promoting gender equality in the region. The grounds of its objectives and tasks were defined by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU in the EIGE’s Founding Regulation. The Institute conducts research, collects data and offers an easily explorable archive of Member State’s good practices on gender mainstreaming and on GBV and one on methods and tools to prevent and fight GBV. Moreover, EIGE’s library gathers more than 500,000 resources on gender equality topics, in collaboration with other specialised European documentation centres. In 2013, the EIGE launched the Gender Equality Index, a measuring tool composed of six core domains (work, money, knowledge, time, power, and health) and two satellite domains (violence and intersecting inequalities) that do not impact the overall score. By assigning scores for member states (1 for total inequality and 100 for full equality), the Index helps states and policymakers to identify in which fields progress has been made and in which more intervention is needed. Starting from 2019, the Index will be updated on an annual basis.

Finally, starting in 2010, the EIGE also focused on the topic of men and gender equality. In 2012 it commissioned a study on the involvement of men in gender equality initiatives in the European Union (the results are published in the Institute website). In 2013 it stated in its annual work programme that the Institute “would integrate the perspective of men in its key activities, highlighting the part men play in supporting gender equality (EIGE 2013: 5). In the same year, the EIGE organised a meeting on men and gender equality in Zagreb, from which an online discussion forum was launched: its results

were published in the report *Men and Gender Equality* (EIGE 2013). Moreover, the Institute strongly supports the global White Ribbon Campaign and has engaged various European political leaders to become ambassadors of the campaign.

Regional networks and national NGOs

The global network MenEngage Alliance is represented in the region by MenEngage Europe, which brings together 23 countries coordinated by Men for Gender Equality (Sweden) and Emancipator (Netherlands). Men for Gender Equality conducted the study *The involvement of men in gender equality initiatives in the European Union*¹² (EIGE 2012), commissioned by the EIGE.

The White Ribbon Campaign is spread throughout Europe, engaging city councils, universities, and trade unions. A branch of the WRC in the European region is WRC United Kingdom¹³ (UK). Its principal activity is awareness-raising, for example, engaging men from different fields (politics, music, sport) in the campaign.

The European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence¹⁴ (WWP EN) was founded as a formal association in Copenhagen in 2014, and it currently joins over 50 members from around the region. Its central aim is to prevent GBV in intimate relationships by working with (mainly male) perpetrators of domestic violence and to foster gender equality. WWP recognises the direct connection between GBV, gender stereotypes and imposed gender norms, but its activity is more focused on the work with perpetrators than on prevention and awareness-raising at the educational and school level. MenEngage Europe and WWP EN are part of the European Coalition to End violence against women and girls (VAWG), convening more than 25 NGOs, including the European Women's Lobby (EWL), the WAVE Network (Women Against Violence Europe), the European Disability Forum (EDF), the European Forum of Muslim women (EFOMW), the European Network against Racism (ENAR), the European Network of Migrant Women (EnoMW), the European Roma Information Office (ERIO), the European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA-Europe), Transgender Europe (TGEU), and others.

The Involvement of Men in Gender Equality Initiatives in the European Union (EIGE 2012) provides the most up-to-date and complete review of the organisations working with men in 27 EU countries (in 2012 Croatia had not yet joined the Union). Among the 240 organisations directly or indirectly working on men and equality that the study took into consideration, 33 % were working on gender equality in general (with a sub-focus on men), 16 % on violence prevention, 9 % on gay, bisexual and trans (GBT) issues, and 9 % on education and learning. In respect to the work with boys and young men, numerous programmes and initiatives have been reported, but it is also noteworthy that, in some countries, this specific topic has no implementation at all. Some of the mentioned programmes entail anti-violence (including the one on homophobia) and education initiatives. The report appropriately explains the different orientations and approaches in the work with young people: some approaches aim to convey a supposed masculine energy to specific contexts and activities (mainly sports), thus risking fostering a stereotyped vision of genders; others focus on the problematic and negative implications of toxic masculinities; others are more prone to listen to and value young men's lived experiences, without condoning potential negative behaviours.

¹² <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/involvement-men-gender-equality-initiatives-european-union>

¹³ <https://www.whiteribbon.org.uk>

¹⁴ <https://www.work-with-perpetrators.eu>



In order to update these pieces of information, we resorted to the research tool of the men and gender equality section of the EIGE website, which is updated to 2015. Amongst the available search criteria (target group, country, type), we used the first one and selected boys (under 15), social workers, teachers, and young men. The results gathered 113 different projects, activities, NGOs, governmental bodies, etc. Around 20 of them explicitly mentioned educational work and other actions involving boys and young men. Almost all of them are still active and continue implementing this kind of projects. Some of them also do that by coordinating or working as partners in EU-funded projects, as Dissens (Germany), Asociación de Hombres por la Igualdad de Género – AHIGE (Organisation of Men for Gender Equality) (Spain), European Anti-Violence Network (EAVN) (Greece).

EU-funded Projects

EU-funded projects represent the actual and material implementation of EU policies, so we will conclude by mentioning some of them.

We took into consideration the main EU funding programmes¹⁵ that support training and awareness-raising, mutual learning, studies, and research on the topics to which this chapter is dedicated.

Daphne III

The Daphne programme is a fundamental reference for projects that aim at fighting and preventing violence against women, children, and young people. The one-year Daphne Initiative was launched in 1997 and was renewed twice. The Daphne Programme was launched in 2000 and reached its third edition (2007–2013), before merging with the below-mentioned Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme. We resorted to the Daphne Toolkit (a research tool that allows to browse through the whole array of projects funded by Daphne, from 1997 onward) in order to have an idea of the projects funded for its third edition, since there is no similar tool for the period 2014–2020, yet¹⁶.

The research in the Daphne Toolkit was conducted browsing by category. The beneficiaries chosen were: Children, adolescents/young people, people in shelters/institutions, violent men; the topics: Gender violence, violence in school, and violence in institutions. The results showed 161 projects (the actual number is smaller since many projects appeared more than once). Amongst them, we focused on the ones that started at least from 2010 onwards that work on GBV (particularly amongst children and young people) with a gendered approach that takes into consideration the importance of tackling gender norms amongst young people and children of all genders.

The results brought us to around five projects, the most recent of them being **Gender Equality Awareness Raising against Intimate Partner Violence – II (GEAR-IPV II)**¹⁷, which run between 2014 and 2016 and involved six organisations from Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Spain, and Romania. The aim of the project, which resumed the first project, GEAR-IPV, was to empower teens between 12 and 16 years of age in order for them to recognise intimate partner, dating, and sexual violence. Its approach was to raise awareness on the causal connection between gender stereotypes/roles and violent and unequal relationships, and teenagers' contribution to the prevention of GBV. The project's activities were training seminars for teachers and awareness-raising workshops for adolescents, where they were encouraged, through experiential activities, to identify and challenge gender stereotypes.

¹⁵ Formally, the funding entity is the European Commission.

¹⁶ For an overview on the implementation of the Daphne programme, see Book et al. 2019.

¹⁷ <http://www.gear-ipv.eu/index.php/the-gear-against-ipv-ii-project/project-identity>

The educational material produced – one master package and seven adapted national packages – is available on the project's website¹⁸.

The other projects cover the issues of domestic violence and intimate partner violence amongst young people (**REaDAPt!** - *Relationship Education and Domestic Abuse Prevention Tuition*¹⁹), gender-related violence against and by children and young people (**GAP Work: Improving gender-related violence intervention and referral through youth practitioner training**²⁰), sexual bullying (ASBAE – *Addressing Sexual Bullying Across Europe*²¹), and awareness-raising on the causes of GBV from a peer-education approach (**Youth4Youth: Empowering Young People in Preventing Gender-based Violence through Peer Education**²²).

Erasmus+

The Erasmus+ Programme supports training, education, young people and sport. It was launched in 2014 and absorbed the well-known student exchange Erasmus Programme. It also carries on the work of the Youth in Action Programme, which ran from 2007 to 2013, promoting mobility and non-formal learning, particularly amongst young people between 13 and 30 years of age, and supporting youth workers and civil society organisations through training and networking. For our inquiry, we used the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform, which allows browsing through its whole database. We looked for ongoing projects in the present year (2019), using different combinations of the keywords: Boys, gender equality, gender violence, school, and young men. We found 28 projects and selected 13 of them. Five out of 13 mention gender and gender equality not as a central topic, but together with (or in a minor position with respect to) other issues such as school dropouts, racism, poverty, etc., sometimes with an interesting intersectional approach. Six projects mention GBV, and two of them treat it as a central issue. Five projects focus on the importance of challenging gender stereotypes and generally mention the importance of working with boys and young men.

Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC)

The REC Programme 2014–2020 replaced three earlier funding programmes: Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme, Daphne III Programme, Progress Programme: Anti-discrimination and Gender Equality strands. The programme entails nine specific objectives: to promote non-discrimination, to combat racism, xenophobia, homophobia and other forms of intolerance, to promote rights of people with disabilities, to promote equality between women and men and gender mainstreaming, to prevent violence against children, young people, women and other groups at risk (Daphne), to promote the rights of children, to ensure the highest level of data protection, to promote the rights deriving from Union citizenship, and to enforce consumer rights. This programme is an essential reference to get to know the implementation of EU policies in such topics, but unfortunately, as noted above, currently there isn't any available data on the whole set of funded projects, so it was not possible to draw a complete analysis from them.

The three resumed below are recent examples of REC-funded projects.

18 <http://www.gear-ipv.eu/educational-material>

19 <https://www.readapt.eu>

20 <http://sites.brunel.ac.uk/gap>

21 https://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants/results/daphne-toolkit/content/asbae-addressing-sexual-bullying-across-europe_en

22 https://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants/results/daphne-toolkit/content/youth4youth-empowering-young-people-preventing-gender-based-violence-through-peer-education_en



Boys* and Culture of Care, a supportive environment to face sexualised violence²³

focused on awareness-raising for the issue of male children and adolescents as victims or potential victims of sexualised violence (including violence amongst peers, which is nonetheless a small part) and on their protection. Five partners from Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, and Spain worked on this project, which ran from 2017 to January 2019 and implemented different kinds of interventions with boys and young men and professionals working with them in different venues and contexts. The project's approach gave great importance to the issue of gender stereotypes and the construction of masculinity, and it paid attention to the fluidity of gender identities (that is why the asterisk is used on the word 'boys').

The project **LOOK WIDE – Developing a working method to support LGBTI victims of gender-based violence by integrating gender and sexual diversity**²⁴ started in 2018 and is still going as we write this report. It involves five partners from Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, and Spain and aims at supporting LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex) victims of GBV by raising awareness on this topic amongst professionals working with GBV. Each partner has been providing training programmes and sessions to different kinds of professionals working in different contexts (from schools to anti-violence centres).

Finally, the Maltese **Breaking the Cycle of Violence**²⁵ national project (2018–2020) is coordinated by the Ministry for Social Dialogue and the Civil Liberties, in partnership with the Malta Girl Guides, the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, the Migrant Women Association Malta, and the Malta LGBTIQ Movement. Its main aims are to empower and raise awareness amongst victims and potential victims of VAW, especially from vulnerable groups (women with disabilities, migrant women, and lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex women). In the description of the project, considerable space is dedicated to the issues of prevention and awareness-raising amongst children and young people through educational programmes and by actively engaging boys and men.

Concluding remarks

Gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence are crucial topics in the system of European politics and policies, as are the rights of children and young people. However, a proper intersection of these topics is rarely found, even less in a form that gives centrality to the question of gender norms, roles and stereotypes as concurrent causes of GBV and to the active role of boys and young men in the fight against it.

As shown in this report, strategies and actions that take into consideration the above issues as a whole, are slowly appearing, as are their implementation through many EU-funded programmes. Moreover, we are aware that the reality we have described above only represents a small part of a much larger world of local, national and regional projects, actions, and activities happening around the EU. Nonetheless, we cannot help but point out that much more work on these topics is needed, especially in a time of political and social turn towards conservative and reactionary values, where precisely the achievements in the field of gender equality and sexual rights are under attack.

23 <https://boyscultureofcare.wordpress.com>

24 <http://www.lookwideproject.eu>

25 <https://meae.gov.mt/en/BCV/Pages/Breaking-the-Cycle-of-Violence.aspx>

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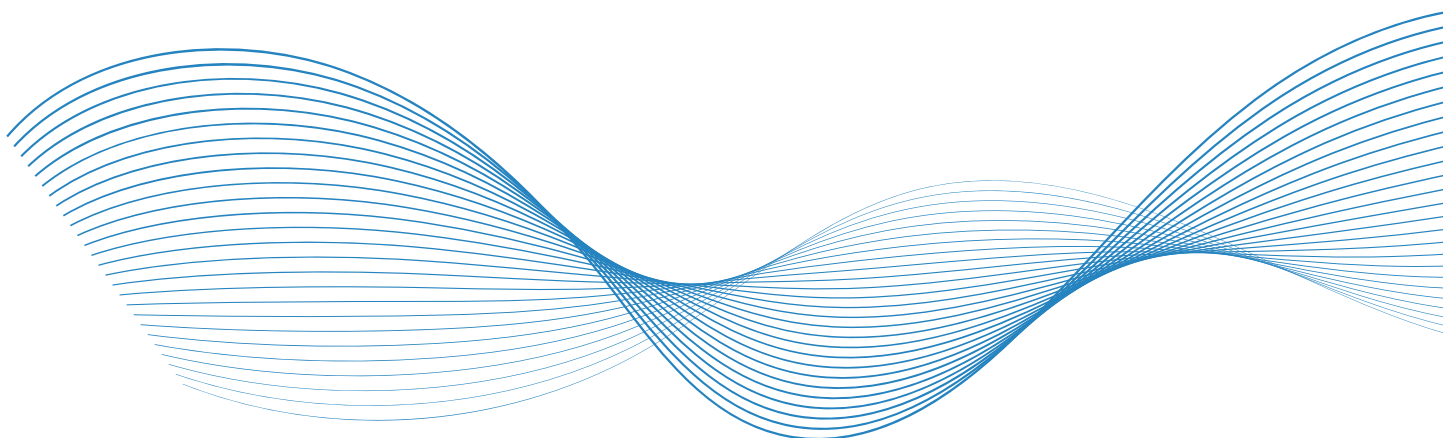
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3. What is going on with the Gender Equality Hot Potato?

*Current socio-political
context in Europe*

Nataša Bijelić



Introduction

Working on the issues of gender equality has always been challenging, and this holds true especially in recent years. Despite significant advances in legislation, strong declaratory commitments from policy makers, and the general understanding and awareness of the issue, we have seen a rise of oppositional forces across Europe which threaten to undo decades of hard work and progress. Whether you are a campaigner, researcher, youth worker or an educator, you are likely, more often than not, to meet resistance which will make your life difficult. The work of the EQUI-X partner organisations in their respective countries and local communities is often facing challenges due to the ongoing rollback of the established human rights and women's rights standards. Working with young people in schools can be a particularly sensitive issue and organizations focusing on gender equality often find themselves ignored by educational institutions and confronting distrusting faces of head-teachers, teachers and parents. Therefore, it is crucial to be aware of the current socio-political developments in the human rights and gender equality sphere in order to be able to prepare and respond adequately.

European countries have different circumstances surrounding gender (in)equality, while having different measures and policies aimed at the promotion of gender equality, which are the result of specific historical trajectories and welfare traditions. At the EU level, progress towards gender equality has been rather slow in the past years, according to the Gender Equality Index. It covers six domains (work, money, knowledge, time, power, health) complemented by two additional domains relating to violence and intersecting inequalities. The Gender Equality Index demonstrates that across all areas of life, inequality prevails. With an average score of 66.2 for gender equality, the EU is still a long way off from reaching a gender-equal society. The three Nordic EU member states and the Netherlands were the most gender-equal in 2015. Sweden and Denmark have been the most gender-equal societies throughout the 10-year period of 2005 to 2015 (EIGE, 2017). Another measure related to gender equality, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Gender Index, shows that an average regional index score for Europe is 79.1 out of 100. The highest ranked are the Nordic countries while Eastern European countries on average perform worse across most SDGs than other countries in Europe (Equal Measures 2030 report).

Although progress towards gender equality in the EU remains slow, it is also further obstructed or halted by new societal developments. In the European socio-political context, gender equality and respect for minority rights have become highly contested issues. After decades of progress on human rights, especially women's rights, minority rights, and gender equality, we are witnessing a backlash in the recent years, especially since the 2010s. At the European level and national levels (but also internationally), an organised opposition to democratic values and global human rights agenda has become increasingly visible, influential and well-connected transnationally. The common

trait of these anti-gender instigators and movements is high-jacking and manipulating the concept of human rights and using similar tactics, discourses, argumentation and mobilisation strategies. This aims to undermine the consensus on equality and undo decades of progress in human rights. Anti-gender movement is attempting to impose personal religious beliefs on others by influencing public policy and law. This means, more specifically, that this movement would force women to carry unwanted pregnancies, restrict access to contraception, decide who can marry or call themselves a family, but they also target divorce and IVF treatment, among other things (Datta, 2018).

These resurgent threats have sought to call into question and erode long-standing commitments to gender equality, the universality of human rights and especially women's rights. The Commissioner for Human Rights (2017) reported that in some countries, damaging rhetoric regarding gender equality and sexual and reproductive health rights had been used by politicians and other policy makers, including those at the highest levels of government. Public representatives have maligned the concept of gender equality, describing it (and other relevant human rights protections) as a form of "gender ideology". They also co-opted language surrounding "human rights", "traditional values" or "protection of the family", to reinforce gender stereotypes and assumptions about women's roles in society, while encouraging discrimination on grounds of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. At times, public representatives have also wrongly identified gender equality and increased protection for women's sexual and reproductive health rights as a prominent cause of declining birth rates and other demographic concerns. In some member states, threats have extended beyond rhetoric and discourse, with the adoption of laws and policies rolling back existing protection for women's sexual and reproductive health rights. Although legislative retractions have specifically targeted women's access to legal abortion services in many European contexts, other aspects of women's sexual and reproductive health rights have also been affected, such as legislation around emergency contraception.

One of the "threats" that the anti-gender movement has identified in national contexts but also in the European context is the arrival of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants seeking protection in Europe. This "threat" is often framed in terms of "rights" – protection of religious freedoms of European citizens, protection of Christianity with an omnipresent anti-Islamic discourse. This anti-Islamic discourse is based on the defence of a Christian Europe against Muslims and the stereotyped notions of Muslim masculinities as being "biologically superior" (i.e. having more children, and wives) or being aggressive and violent. On the other hand, European governments are ambivalent about migrants and slow in improving their integration policies. Most frequently, an anti-immigrant sentiment prevails, and restrictive policies may reinforce public distrust and xenophobia. According to the Commissioner for Human Rights (2016), it is necessary to prevent misleading propaganda about immigration and to tackle racism and xenophobia to counter the most common stereotypes which propagate notions that migrants are associated with crime, violence, drug abuse or disease. The Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018–2023 highlights the importance of mainstreaming gender equality in all integration measures, so that both migrant women and men are aware of the need to respect and uphold gender equality law and policy, even if they do not correspond to the situation in their countries of origin. This would foster integration in European societies. The Strategy thus promotes actions targeting migrant men and boys in order to change stereotypical norms and practices for the advancement of gender equality benefiting both women and men. However, we must not forget that much work on this front remains to be done domestically, targeting men and boys in local communities across Europe.

The backlash has significantly affected the work of many professionals, activists, human-rights defenders and health-care providers working to advance human rights and gender equality. In many European countries, these professionals are in a position to defend themselves and their work,



forming false accusations, manipulations and defamations by anti-gender campaigners. Thus, these developments need to be considered when working on, advocating for or educating about gender equality issues, women's rights and particularly sexual and reproductive rights and LGBTIQ+ rights. Dealing with those attempting to embed traditions and religious beliefs that violate human rights into the laws and policies is essential if we want to safeguard a tolerant and progressive Europe. It is crucial to expose tactics and methods of work in anti-gender movements in order to make their political agenda visible to the wider public and to the progressive political forces at the European and national levels.

Anti-gender Agenda

The proponents of anti-gender agenda are opposing feminism, gender studies, gender equality, LGBTIQ+ rights, gender mainstreaming, the struggle against gender-based violence and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, abortion, contraception, sexual education, civil partnerships and same-sex marriage. The anti-gender or neo-conservative political agenda has been establishing itself as a struggle to defend and protect “endangered” value categories of “life” (from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death), “family” (exclusively heterosexual, with a man/father as a head of the family), and “religious freedoms” (including the so-called right to conscientious objection) (Datta, 2013).

However, the ultimate argument is “gender ideology”. This pseudo-scientific term is created to oppose women's and LGBTIQ+ rights activism as well as the scholarship deconstructing essentialist and naturalistic assumptions about gender and sexuality. This is a Catholic invention coined by the Vatican in response to the outcomes of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) and the Fourth International Women's Conference (Beijing, 1995). It has been designed as a political tool to stop further development and exercise of sexual and reproductive health choices (Paternotte, 2014). As explained by its creators, “gender ideology” threatens most societies and endangers mankind with its negation of sexual differences and gender complementarity. It is said to be particularly threatening to children, who would be indoctrinated from a very early age in schools, often without their parents' awareness.

“Gender ideology” has worked to construct a single enemy out of groups and movements that, in reality, are quite varied (Garbagnoli, 2016). It manages to assemble both religious and non-religious actors, legitimising itself as a discourse defending “what is human”, which is difficult to respond to because of its flexibility. The Vatican has managed to reframe the debate by putting in centre stage the concept of gender as a target (and not feminism or abortion or homosexuality).

“Gender ideology” is an empty signifier used in various countries by the anti-gender movement as a catch-all term, because in this way they are able to foster mobilisations against gender equality, feminism, women's rights, LGBTIQ+ equality but also gender studies departments at universities. Topics that trigger the mobilisation vary from country to country, and also in terms of timing (e.g. one year it might be marriage equality, the next year sexual education). The most common triggers are abortion rights, LGBTIQ+ rights, marriage equality, adoption by same-sex couples, comprehensive sexual education, gender studies, and reproductive technologies. Some of the examples of such mobilisation in Europe are French movement against marriage equality “La Manif Pour Tous”, the online petition platforms “CitizenGo” and “HazteOir” in Spain, Croatian initiative opposing marriage equality “In the Name of the Family”, etc. The main anti-gender organizations in Europe are Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), European Dignity Watch, Federation of Catholic Family Associations

in Europe (FAFCE), Ordo Iuris, Federation Pro Europa Christiana, World Youth Alliance, European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ), Novae Terrae Foundation. Some of the main transnational networks are World Congress of Families (WCF), Political Network for Values, Agenda Europe, Citizen GO, One of Us, Tradition, Family, Property (TFP) and the already mentioned ECLJ and ADF International.

The anti-gender movement brings together heterogeneous conservative and religious forces under one banner and it is a completely new form of opposition to progressive gender and sexual policies. It is of transnational nature where a national framework is insufficient for explanation. It is also important to be aware of subtle distinctions between anti-gender campaigns in “Western” and “Eastern” European countries, as most anti-gender strategies and language are used similarly across Europe, Latin America and Africa. Although the Vatican played an important role in the creation of the discourse and theory, the anti-gender movement was never exclusively a religious movement. There are many non-religious conservative actors involved with links to the rising right-wing populism in Europe (Kuhar, Patternote 2017).

The anti-gender movement reinforces, supports and promotes gender stereotypes. They are in line with the traditional Roman Catholic teaching on the essential and intrinsic biological differences between men and women, stressing the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman. The Vatican’s doctrine of the complementarity of the sexes, under which the sexes are essentially different and thought not unequal, which underpins the discourse on “gender ideology”, is an invention of the twentieth century in response to feminist claims and politics (Case, 2016). The differences the Vatican has in mind as essential include most of what secular law, policy makers and gender theory would characterise as gender stereotypes. Gender-based stereotypical views on masculinities and femininities prevail: male and female roles are determined by their nature. Men are breadwinners and “by temperament more suited to deal with external affairs and public business” and women have “a deeper insight for understanding the delicate problems of domestic and family life, and a surer touch in solving them” (Case, 2016:164).

The Vatican considers gender as an analytical tool and a threat to Divine Creation. More specifically, gender is perceived as holding the power to destroy Divine Creation (Bracke and Paternotte, 2016). The Vatican claims that gender posed a threat to traditional families and ignored the natural differences between men and women. They also warned that gender theory could cause confusion among young people and the erosion of the family. Confusion over gender has destabilised the family as an institution, bringing with it a tendency to cancel out the differences between men and women, presenting them instead as merely a product of historical and cultural conditioning (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2019).

One of the statements by Pope Francis stressed that gender theory was part of a “world war against marriage” and an example of the “ideological colonisation” that has been spreading in many parts of the world (Pullella, 2016).

One of the most important targets of the anti-gender movement in Europe is educational system, educational process and knowledge production. Gender departments and gender studies courses at universities have been attacked and denounced as nests of “gender ideology” and non-scientific work. Gender studies are criticised as being non-academic, ideological and in conflict with the allegedly unquestionable findings of biology, such as differences between male and female brains. Therefore, the anti-gender movement has ambitions to become an alternative field of knowledge production. Likewise, targets are also public schools that include “gender ideology” in their curricula. Different types of actions have been organised to resist teaching gender equality in schools. Civic initiatives of the so-called “concerned parents” have tried to put pressure on educational authorities



and teachers to not address certain topics, such as same-sex families, gender roles, sex education, homosexuality, etc. (Kuhar & Zobec, 2017).

Recent research identified several types of resistance against public schools, attempting either to put pressure on educational authorities to prohibit certain topics from being discussed in schools, or to concretely intervene in the educational process itself. These types of resistances include general protests against sexual education, denouncement of certain textbooks as promoting “gender ideology”, and organised mass protests to keep children home from school. The opposition to sex education in school is not a new phenomenon and in the recent past we have witnessed protests against sex education in different European countries. Opponents claim that such education sexualises children at an early age, increases the rate of teenage pregnancies and normalises homosexuality (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017).

Opposition Discourses

The discourse of the anti-gender movement is essentially old ideas with new branding – more secularised to fit with modern human rights language. They send out positive messages in favour of “human dignity” and “life” (that oppose abortion, euthanasia, contraception), “family” (that oppose comprehensive sexuality education, trans rights, feminism) and “religious freedom” (i.e. freedom to disregard the law in certain areas and to discriminate in regard to abortion, contraception provision and marriage equality services).

Anti-gender and ultra-conservative campaigners have developed and employed a range of discourses with the goal to undermine rights related to gender and sexuality. They speak the language of human rights while co-opting human rights discourse, terminology and norms in a misleading and innovative way. In addition, we are witnessing a rise in the development of and recourse to regressive arguments based on the so-called “social science”. Recent research (Shameem, 2017) identified the following key opposition discourses in the international human rights system:

Protection of the Family – It affirms the role of the family in social cohesion and in preserving morality, religious and cultural traditions. This discourse is framed to endow patriarchal institutions and regressive traditions with human rights protections. The rhetoric is opposed to human rights standards in a number of ways: violating the rights to anti-discrimination and equality, to freely consent to and choose one’s marriage partner, to marriage for all on the basis of non-discrimination, to bodily autonomy and the protection from partner and domestic violence, including child abuse; and opposing the principle of diversity of family structures worldwide, obligations of the state to respond to and prevent all forms of harmful practices, the elimination of gender stereotypes and discrimination against women in all matters relating to family relations.

Right to Life – It is being appropriated in service of the anti-abortion mission. The attempt is to couple the right to life with the Vatican doctrine that human life begins at the moment of conception. No universal human rights instrument has provided that the right to life applies before birth, meaning that a foetus does not enjoy the right to life.

Sexual Rights including Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity – Sexual rights are being undermined suggesting that they do not exist, that they cause harm to children and society or that they are in opposition to culture, tradition and national laws. The claim is that comprehensive sexuality education violates “parental rights”, harms children, and is not an education but ideological indoctrination. The most common arguments are

that comprehensive sexuality education represents a risk because it: teaches children to masturbate, promotes high-risk sexual behaviours, promotes sexual pleasure and promiscuity, encourages acceptance and exploration of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, promotes condoms to children without informing them of their failure rates, promotes abortion as safe and without consequences and promotes disrespect for parents and religious and cultural values.

The discourse on **sexual orientation and gender identity** is founded on the arguments that same-sex attraction is morally wrong, dangerous to one's sexual health and best "fixed" through "conversion therapy" because it is a deviation caused by some problem or abuse during childhood. These arguments are often substantiated by opposition's pseudo-science journals and conservative think-tanks.

Reproductive Health and Rights – The dominant narrative is the one opposing abortion that includes misinformation about the impact of abortion. The claim is that abortion poses significant health risks, including complications during the procedure, and that it increases the risk of cancer and long-term damage to reproductive organs, along with an inevitably devastating psychological trauma.

Protection of Children and Parental Rights – Children's rights are perceived as threatening to the hierarchical and traditional concept of the family. Children's rights undermine the rights of parents – particularly fathers, who are considered the head of the family. The argument is that the rights of children can only be achieved in a traditional family setting. The related discourse that was also developed is the "protection of children". The argument is that children are aggressively sexualised, manipulated and indoctrinated at a young age in radical ideologies and behaviours with the purpose of completely changing the sexual and gender norms of society.

Violence Against Women – The argumentation is structured around fixed gender roles and traditional families claiming that the family is the key and strategic point of entry for eradicating violence. It is stated that non-traditional families are the source of violence against women and children and that fathers play a necessary and protective role in preventing violence in families. Hence, marriage and fathers are crucial to the prevention of violence against women. Additionally, intimate partner relationships outside the sphere of heterosexuality are considered as risk factors for violence.

Gender and "Gender Ideology" – This is the term under which fall sheltered sustained opposition to women's rights, sexual and reproductive rights, and LGBTIQ+ rights. The argumentation is fixated on gender identity and trans rights claiming that the traditional family is under attack and that people can voluntarily decide for themselves whether they are a man or a woman.

Complementarity and Human Dignity – Complementarity of the sexes is a discourse developed in response to the claims for equality. Men and women are meant to have different but complementary roles in marriage and family life, and with respect to their engagement in social, political and economic life. This gender essentialist and heteronormative discourse justifies the existence of prejudices and practices based on stereotyped roles for men or women. The argument on **human dignity** is that it arises from the moment of conception and that abortion is therefore a violation of dignity. Furthermore, it is stated that men and women have equal dignity as persons, but this equal human dignity is premised on and manifested in complementary differences. In this way, the discourse attempts to reverse the meaning of the human rights principle of human dignity – to justify differences and stereotyping rather than equality and freedom.



Religious Freedom – The argument is that religious liberty is threatened and undermined by outside forces and other human rights, particularly those related to gender and sexuality. Under this theory, protecting, promoting, and fulfilling rights for non-discrimination block the right to religious freedom. It is used to justify discrimination against women, the LGBTIQ+ community, etc.

Culture and Traditional Values – The concepts of culture and tradition are often used to undermine the right to equality because they stand in opposition to the rights of women and individuals with non-conforming genders or sexualities. The claim is that gender stereotyping and discriminatory practices and policies are justified in the name of culture and traditional values.

Additional documented discourses, mainly in Eastern Europe, include secular or radical feminist totalitarian discourse and a discourse based on nationalism and historical revisionism. The first one encompasses the notion of imposing beliefs on the majority, whereby SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) and women's rights are attributed to being equal to Nazism or communist rule. The second discourse combines nationalistic rhetoric and historic revisionism with opposition to SOGI and women's rights in the context of restitution of the social position of religious institutions in post-communist countries (Bosanac & Miošić, 2018).

Strategies of the Anti-Gender Movement

Some of the main features that have been repeatedly highlighted as typical for the anti-gender movement and their actions are good organisation and networking, increasing professionalism, and often, the lack of financial transparency. The significant influence they exert is a result of a successful use of modern IT and communication technologies, as well as civil and political instruments complemented with generous use of manipulation and misinformation techniques. It is important to note that they are manipulating the religious discourse while claiming the legitimacy of the “moral majority”. They also position themselves as “the people”, as opposed to the political elites, whom they accuse of passing laws and policies that endanger “traditional family” and/or “national values”, doing it all under the influence of the “gender ideology”. However, parallel with the rise and multiplication of their civil initiatives and civil society organisations, anti-gender agents also try to exert their influence through formal political processes and systems. (Hodžić & Bijelić, 2014).

The tactics and approaches often used by anti-gender campaigners include false accusations and slander of SRHR organizations (e.g. Defund IPPF campaign) and equating gender equality and sexual and reproductive rights with sexual deviations. Personal attacks and smear campaigns against individuals are also used to discredit professionals, experts, and politicians. Another tactic is misrepresentation of legal and scientific facts which includes presenting falsified, misinterpreted or selectively chosen facts and incorporating them in well-researched reports, expert opinions and publications designed to mislead the target audience. Redefinition and misuse of commonly agreed concepts such as human rights are a tactic employed to effectively manipulate the public discourse and to undermine the work of pro-SRHR and gender equality organizations that are in a position to constantly defend themselves and their work from false accusations.

Anti-gender campaigners have demonstrated an ability to mobilise citizens across Europe using social media campaigns, mass-emailing (e.g. e-mails of “concerned” citizens that flooded the MEPs inboxes as opposition to the Estrela report on SRHR in European Parliament) but also political means such as European Citizens' Initiative (e.g. anti-choice initiative One of Us), alternative resolutions, strategic litigation, etc.

Detailed analyses of the “Agenda Europe” (Datta, 2018), a Vatican-inspired network of over 100 organisations opposing human rights, women’s rights and LGBTIQ+ rights from over 30 European countries reveals their strategies to halt and roll back human rights. The first proposed strategy is **“Use the weapons of our opponents and turn them against them”**. The goal is to debunk the opponents’ claim to victim status and to position religious people or Christians as the new, real victims, meaning that the very progress on the front of sexual and reproductive rights would constitute a form of discrimination against religious people. The examples of this strategy include the denial of homophobia in Europe when criticising the report by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency on homophobia across Europe in 2014, and the concept of “discrimination and intolerance against Christians”.

The second strategy is **“Like our opponents, frame our issues in terms of ‘rights’**”. This strategy involves a contortion of religiously-inspired positions on sexuality and reproduction to artificially resemble classical human rights discourse. Examples include “the right of fathers to prevent the abortion of their children, the right of parents to be the first educators of their children, the right of children to receive correct information and not propaganda on sodomy”. Sometimes, it can be an existing human right applied in new contexts, e.g. freedom of conscience applied in reproductive health, specifically in regard to abortion and contraception, allowing professionals a legal right to deny sexual and reproductive care. An important aspect of this strategy is redefining human rights language and terminology and creating an alternative meaning for established human rights and having these appear in academic papers so as to influence academic debate.

The third strategy is **“Malign opponents and non-conductive institutions”** aiming to proactively defund the “gay and abortion lobby”, to use strategic litigation wisely and call into question the legitimacy of statements and decisions that are not in line with “Natural Law”.

The final strategy is **“Become a respected interlocutor at international level”**. This strategy entails infiltrating key institutions and key positions, including key UN personnel, such as in Treaty Monitoring Bodies, Special Rapporteurs, judges on the European Court of Justice, EU institutions, etc.

Agenda Europe produced concrete results, such as bans on equal marriage in several Central European countries, Polish bill to ban abortion in 2016 and a dozen acts at national level and in European institutions striving to limit women’s and LGBTIQ+ rights.

Advancing Gender Equality in Europe What Can Be Done?

Advancing gender equality in Europe is a key component of member states’ human rights obligations, public health commitments and sustainable development objectives. As resurgent threats to gender equality emerge across the region, concerted efforts to reaffirm the importance of women’s human rights and minority rights are crucial if the progress towards the realisation of these rights is to be maintained (Commissioner for Human Rights, 2017).

Lessons learned on anti-gender movements so far include the fact that this is a new development in European societies and in the long term there are no quick solutions. For this reason, if human-rights organisations or different progressive campaigners want to advance gender equality through education or advocacy work, it is necessary to integrate this in their work and be aware of



the opposition to gender equality and of the attempts to halt progress on gender equality. Based on the transnational nature of the anti-gender movement, it can be observed that whatever happens in one country has happened before in another country. An example of this is citizens-initiated referendum initiatives against same-sex marriage in Croatia and Slovenia, where they succeeded in collecting signatures and initiating and ultimately winning national referenda against same-sex marriage. Later on, the same happened in Slovakia and Romania but they failed to meet the minimum participation threshold requirement. It is also important to understand strategies of the anti-gender movement in order to be better prepared to neutralize their progress. Anti-gender actors should not be underestimated nor ignored, for the actions of those groups/initiatives/movements result in concrete social and political consequences.

With the objective of limiting the influence of anti-gender campaigners regarding gender equality and sexual and reproductive rights, **future work on advancing gender equality should include the following:**

- Monitoring and documenting their actions and informing decision-makers, the general public and specific target audiences with the purpose of raising awareness and discrediting opposing reasoning, manipulations and misrepresentation of facts. This also involves proactive investigative research on anti-gender movement, i.e. into funding, personalities, national and transnational links.
- Promoting and re-affirming the values of gender equality and human rights. This also includes reclaiming values and terminology in advocacy. It is crucial to refute and denounce their discourses, manipulations and fact twisting by presenting accurate information. It is essential not to be complacent and think that gender equality, sexual and reproductive rights or LGBTQ+ rights have been won once and for all.
- Communication strategy that includes presenting your messages in a clear, understandable and coherent way. In order to convey positive messages on gender equality or sexual and reproductive rights make full use of social networks and online campaigning. It is important to use these spaces to counterbalance the anti-gender movement's messages.
- Networking and building alliances means creating a proactive approach to gain support and new allies, and include citizens into human rights/gender equality agenda. It is significant to invest time and effort in detecting new alliances and building networks of various partners and supporters. It is equally important to maintain or ensure better connections between organisations that advocate for gender equality in national, regional and European level and exchange information, examples of good practice and lessons learned.

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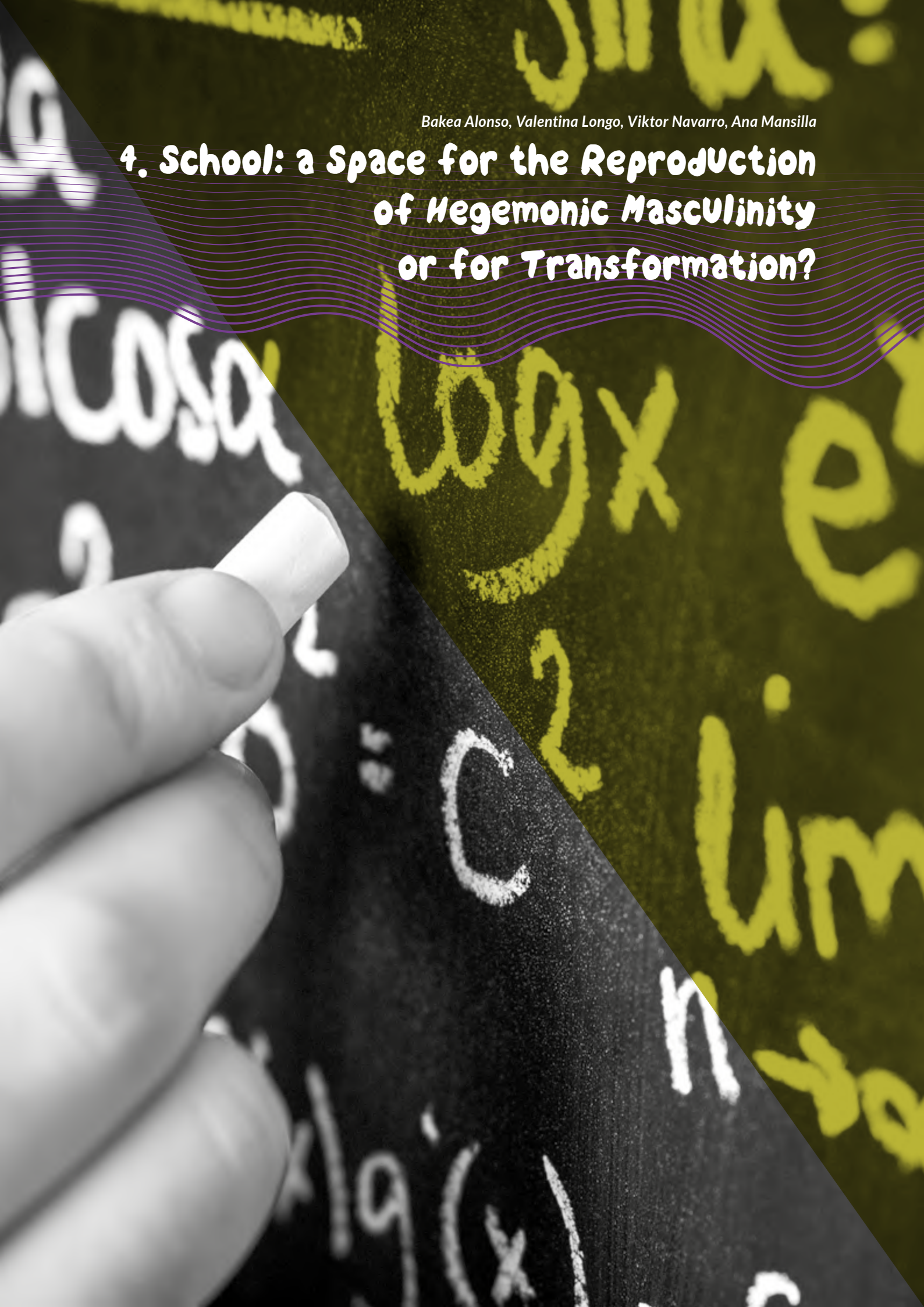
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4. School: a Space for the Reproduction of Hegemonic Masculinity or for Transformation?



Context

In reality, the question could be: is school teaching children to adapt to society or to transform it? The answer could be both, as schools move between disciplinary and emancipatory practices.

In school, students learn from teachers, classmates, and books about how schoolwork is organised and carried out, and is where you learn to relate to other people. School is where you learn your place within a social structure, in life and within the world, you develop hopes and expectations, and you acquire skills and competencies.

The school is one of the fundamental socialisation institutions, along with the family, the media and peer groups. The school is conceived as a socialising institution since it transmits social norms and values that will help the student to live in a group and to integrate into society respecting its norms, laws and values (Giddens, 1982).

When the school systems were set up in the nineteenth century, both sexes were separated. This option was for moral reasons – promiscuity should not be encouraged – and also for educational reasons – the purpose of boys’ education was different from that of the girls: the former should be given the necessary training to engage in productive work; the latter should be provided with the useful knowledge to be good mothers and wives.

By the mid-twentieth century, the formula of mixed education, in which boys and girls share space and curriculum, spread. However, mixed schools do not necessarily entail coeducation, understood as the educational method that is based on the principle of gender equality and non-discrimination on the basis of gender. To coeducate means not to establish relationships of domination that subordinate one gender to another, but to incorporate, in equal conditions, the realities and the history of women and men in order to educate, in equality, from difference. Placing boys and girls in the same spaces does not per-se avoid relationships of domination, since it does not act as a basis for the power structure that sustains this model of social relations, hierarchies and privileges.

Although we consider that the ultimate objective should be the dissolution of the boundaries between genders, without such dissolution resulting in a simple aesthetic screen, but through the elimination of the violence derived from a patriarchal, binary²⁶ and a hetero-centric social structure, we have different approaches to the coeducational perspective. Some definitions consider that

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²⁶ Schools teach binary gender system, strengthening and replicating it, although there are other genders, they remind invisible and face structural violence. This chapter focuses on the way schools work with boys and girls and on the most discussed topics related to it. There is still much work to be done on this subject. See chapter **Anti-Discrimination, Intersectionality, and a Critical Approach to the Gender Binary as a Complement of Preventive Anti-Violence Work with Boys*** *Reflections and Suggestions for Practical Pedagogy* for a deeper insight on the diverse gender identities in the school context.

coeducation means overcoming the androcentric perspective, that is, the premise that being male and masculine is the universal. Boys and girls do not necessarily have the same needs and interests and it is not a matter of promoting one over the other but of accommodating all of them at a level of equality. Being equal and different would be the starting point. Equal in rights and opportunities and, as long as socialisation differentiated by sex continues to exist, attending to the specific needs derived from it without this implying a cause of discrimination.

Another facet of coeducation includes the principle of equivalence, replacing that of equality. It is not a question of educating girls as if they were boys, or of making women like men, but of giving boys and girls a vision of the world that includes women as citizens, beyond gender stereotypes (Saldaña, 2018).

However, despite the growing interest in coeducation in recent years, the numerous studies published report the general failure of the effort to co-educate (Silva-Peña, 2010). After decades of almost universal mixed schooling in some countries, gender differences are still frequently and intensely observed in the school context, affecting student performance and well-being: why do girls study more and get better results than boys? Why are the repeaters and protagonists of the punishments mostly boys? Why is there still so much gender violence, why so much bullying and homophobia?

There is a debate about whether it is preferable to work in educational contexts with mixed groups, or with non-mixed groups. In relation to the non-mixed groups, we find both more conservative positions, which continue to sustain the need for segregation by sex of the students for moral reasons, and positions close to the feminism of difference that argue for greater performance if working with non-mixed groups. However, this is a delicate matter, especially considering that coeducation in schools during the 20th century allowed girls to have access to scientific, philosophical, literary and technical-practical knowledge when they were incorporated into the study curriculum used for boys. However, in the context of the EQUI-X project, we are talking about extra-curricular workspaces focused on the prevention of gender-based violence that seeks to directly challenge boys in order for them to question their model of masculinity. Within this framework, we have found that it can sometimes be appropriate to hold workshops or sessions aimed only at girls or boys.

One of the core objectives of the project is to create safe spaces for boys who feel uncomfortable about their level of socialisation to share, but who cannot fully name the discomfort, and also for those who have voluntarily decided that they would like to build healthier, affective relationships with their friends and partners. In order to work on issues related to hegemonic masculinity that will take boys on an emotional education, thus exposing their own vulnerabilities, it is sometimes preferable that the groups are only composed of boys. This allows for an atmosphere of intimacy and trust, which would make boys feel more comfortable about sharing their thoughts and feelings. In other cases, with boys whose gender expression is not typically masculine, or who do not comply with the typical gender mandate of masculinity, mixed groups may make all participants feel more comfortable, even if this is not always the case.

With girls, there are also differences when it comes to working in mixed or non-mixed groups. On many occasions, they do not feel comfortable talking about situations of violence experienced by them or by friends, or about sharing about their own sexuality in the presence of boys. When asked why they prefer a non-mixed group, one of the main arguments is that sometimes they perceive complicity between boys as a threat. They feel exposed to judgement and disparaging comments. Moreover, the way boys view female sexuality makes girls feel uncomfortable, even if their comments are not explicitly addressed to them, or they even perceive their opinions as violent.



Returning to the question of the role of the school in the elimination of gender-based violence, what does the school do, for example, in relation to separating the students depending on their gender? what does the school do, for example, in relation to the sexual division of labour? Does it reproduce it or confront it? And in the face of men's violence against women? Bourdieu (1986) pointed out that educational institutions reproduce social inequalities, thus fulfilling their ideological function and legitimising the status quo. The school would thus act as a mechanism of social, economic and cultural reproduction.

Popular opinion often maintains that the problem of sexism lies within the education that children receive, placing school and families at the centre of blame for the reproduction of violence. The problem with this view is that it means that the issue lies under the educational process and not the educating agent, thereby, changing the contents and procedures of the educational process could produce a substantial change in the model of gender relations. A structuralist analysis of this matter shows that a person is the direct result of a socialisation process that operates in a unidirectional manner. Faced with a socialising input, for instance, boys playing with typically male toys, we will obtain an output of integration of certain gender roles and behaviours, such as typically male behaviours and gender stereotypes. By changing the input, we will obtain other different outputs. Thus, there is nothing, natural or "irremediable". The behaviours, attitudes and roles of women and men, and boys and girls are culturally constructed (taught and learned) and can therefore be modified (or reconstructed) by different socialising agents such as the school.

However, when we say that the "problem" lies within education, we are also presuming that the socialising agents, including the school, are free from prejudices and stereotypes about what it means to be a woman or a man, and that what they are going to pass on to the new generations will always be full of values of respect, equality, solidarity, justice and empathy. We fear that this is nothing more than an idealistic dream. In fact, another of the socialising agents, the family for example, is considered one of the most oppressive social institutions for women and children.

Referring back to the school, it is imperative to know what the function of school as a social institution is, so that we can analyse what role it plays and can play with respect to inequality/equality between women and men. From a liberal perspective, the school's function is to educate and to teach certain skills and competencies to children which are necessary to compete in a highly selective and increasingly restricted labour market. Good school education must guarantee the functions of selection, classification and hierarchisation of the applicants in future employments. For neoliberals, this is the "social function of the school" (Gentili, 1995).

From an eco-feminist perspective (Herrero, 2015, 2016; Puleo, 2011), the school can be a powerful agent of social transformation and change. A school that is committed to peace and the promotion of empathic relations and the care of all its members, and to "building" citizens who care for their environment with community values that are based on the common good. As Freire (1979) says, we need an education that is capable of making inequalities visible, becoming aware of them, breaking away from the mechanisms of their normalisation and creating, generating and constructing action alternatives.

Curriculum, Teachers, Use of Space and Pedagogical Dynamics

Flood (2019) points out several dimensions of the school curriculum that need to be taken into account:

- Curricular contents *per-se*
- The pedagogical methods used
- Curricular structure (duration, timetable, composition of the group, etc.)
- The teaching staff

In relation to these dimensions, the experience of the EQUI-X project shows that schools continue to use sexist textbooks that do not show human diversity. Men continue to appear as a universal reference for humanity and history classes continue to teach the history of great events, wars, national heroes, etc.

On the other hand, there are few male teachers in nursery and primary school, with separate genders continuing in secondary school. In addition, adult role models in positions of responsibility in schools, especially management teams, often continue to reinforce gender stereotypes in power, where low and middle management positions are occupied by women in a highly feminised profession, and high management positions by men.

In addition, teachers continue to be trained with an androcentric view which is supposedly neutral, and they continue to use the sexist language that maintains the invisibility, exclusion, subordination and devaluation of women.

Teachers often relate that they struggle with the prejudices that children bring in from outside school. However, there are families who are very concerned with teaching their children non-sexist views within the family environment, and who criticise schools because they notice sexist or stereotyped behaviour with regards to gender within their children that they did not show before attending school.

In terms of pedagogies and skills, schools encourage competitiveness, a value traditionally associated with masculinity, rather than cooperation, a value more associated with femininity. However, a change in models of hegemonic masculinity must involve linking boys with values and behaviours related to caring and empathy.

Emotional and sexual education is scarce in school despite UNESCO's call to make it a compulsory subject. The early uses of mainstream porn, especially by boys, which offers a reified view of women, is phallogentric, heteronormative, and always prioritises male desires over women's desires, is worrying, but at the same time, it is important to talk about the need of boys and girls to explore sexuality from a positive point of view. Such an approach is nowadays confronted by "antifeminist" and "anti-gender"²⁷ discourses that permeate some social groups leading some families to prohibit their children from learning about certain issues.

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²⁷ An internationally organised current that rejects the argument that men and women are culturally constructed and sustains that there is a kind of essence that makes men and women completely different thus justifying differentiated places and positions that they occupy in society. It considers feminism as an enemy of the family and it is also markedly homophobic. In many places these currents are religious driven and they are supported also by ultra-conservative extreme right political parties. See the chapter **The socio political context of this publication for further discussion on this topic.**



Another important issue is how boys and girls use public spaces. In recent years there have been studies about playgrounds²⁸, leisure and learning areas, and also places for the construction of gender identities and reproduction of inequalities. In general, boys occupy a bigger portion of the playground than girls do. Usually, the forms of play chosen by children are invasive to other people's activities in adjacent spaces. Girls often occupy corners and peripheral spaces. Their play modalities are largely static and non-invasive, such as symbolic play, talking or sitting (Saldaña, 2018).

These are clear examples of the fact that schools continue to reproduce and perpetuate a rigid gender system that discriminates girls and harms boys' vital development. And there is no doubt that teacher training becomes an essential element for empowerment and the construction of citizenship in equality and that is why the EQUI-X Project has also included training teachers and professionals within the schools where the workshops have been carried out.

But the school, as Connell (2000: 152) reminds us, is not only a powerful socialising agent, but it is also the space where other agents operate: the students themselves and without going any further, their families.

Boys and the Construction of Masculinity

The school has been recognised as a key social context in the production of hegemonic traditional masculinity. **Hegemonic masculinity**, a concept proposed by Connell (1987), is a concrete way of expressing the male gender. It is commonly accepted as the one that legitimises patriarchy, which is the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. Conceptually, hegemonic masculinity proposes to explain how and why men maintain dominant social roles over women and other gender identities, which are perceived as "feminine" in a given society.

The notion of hegemonic masculinity proposes the existence of different forms of masculinity and that not all its forms are in the same position of power, since the concept is always constructed in opposition to several subordinate masculinities (Connell, 2009). In this way, Demetriou (2001) identifies two functions of hegemonic masculinity. The first would report the "external hegemony" of male domination over women; the second is an "internal hegemony" of social predominance of a group of men over other men. Therefore, masculinity is not constructed solely in relation to female subordination, but also by the subordination of other forms of masculinities. Everything that moves away from the dominant group (white, bourgeois, male, adult, cis heterosexual man) is crossed by experiences of subordination that intersect.

Hegemonic sports, such as football, allow hegemonic masculinity to oppose femininity and alternative forms of masculinity. In the field of education, schools not only construct a certain type of masculinity and femininity, but also emphasize the contrasts between different masculinities; those that are appropriate and those that are not. Abril (2017) following Connell, points out 4 typologies of masculinity: the hegemonic one, the subordinate one (e.g. homosexual), the accomplice one (they do not strictly comply with the model but benefit from it) and the marginal one (poor men and men from ethnic minorities who do not have "power").

As for the role of the school as an agent of social transformation, it seems that with the girls the objective was clearer: the school had to correct the "disadvantages" from which they departed and train them towards empowerment so that they would get a place in the world on an equal level to men. However, the objective and intervention with boys is not so clear.

²⁸ See, among many others: Paechter, C. & Clark, S. (2007) and Saldaña, D. (2018).

We know that boys are much more likely than girls to be: 1) excluded from school, 2) be defined as having Special Educational Needs and 3) be defined as having behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Most boys seem to be affected, in some way or another, by anti-school peer groups. Boys seem to be hugely influenced by their peers and many of the masculinities on offer seem, in some ways, to be defined in opposition to formal education.

However, there is also controversy about whether to consider boys as a “disadvantaged group”. While it is true that boys, as noted above, are also harmed by certain patriarchal dynamics and some types of masculinity present harm to them, Connell criticises those who place boys as a disadvantaged group and believes that they are actually “an index of the short-term cost of maintaining a long-term privilege” (2009:167).

What seems to happen with boys is that the school creates an “institutional” definition of masculinity and boys can adapt to the model, rebel against it or try to modify it. According to Connell (2009), boys sometimes break the formal rules of school as a way of constructing their “masculinity”.

Homophobia is another point that we would like to address in relation to violence and its link to certain aspects of masculinity. Following Guash (2000, 2006), homophobia is a constituent element of masculinity as a device of opposition to the feminine and rejection of femininity. On the one hand, we find that homophobia is behaviour of explicit or discreet rejection of men who have sex with or love other men. On the other hand, it is a form of suspicion about the expression of masculinity, whether it be by homosexual or heterosexual men. It is not a question of judging who they go to bed with, but how much they fulfil the gender mandate they are supposed to fulfil. Thus, homophobia is the consolidation of the control of hegemonic masculinity, through the fear of being accused of not being man enough.

Finally, we would like to close this section by reflecting briefly on the heterosexual (although not only) relationship model and the erotica of hegemonic masculinity. It is evident the damage that the myth of romantic love causes in the education of young people, offering a model that continues to classify boys and girls in separate roles where jealousy and control prevail as a supposed expression of love and desire. The gender system is relational; therefore, a movement in one of the parts causes an effect in the other. For boys to be able and willing to identify with other models of masculinity distanced from violence, toughness and power, it is necessary that girls also aspire to share their lives or relationships with men who do not conform to the traditional model.



In the development of the workshops aimed at adolescents of the EQUI-X Project²⁹, formal education spaces such as schools were chosen in most cases. Placing the intervention in the school has had its advantages and disadvantages. In general, the evaluations of the project's partners focus on the following aspects:

Interventions in schools have meant access to a large number of boys and girls. In the case of EQUI-X, almost 600 children have attended the workshops, 60 % of them boys and 40 % girls. On many occasions, EQUI-X sessions have been developed within the framework of specific subjects related to ethics or education for citizenship.

- The schools have made the facilities of the centre available to trainers and participants, in many cases providing many possibilities to work with ICTs.

Contrarily, other aspects of the evaluations have not been as positive. Below, we point out some of the limitations that the project partners pointed out regarding intervention in schools:

- Being limited to one subject has narrowed the time frame of the sessions, which in many cases was less than 60 minutes.
- Including the EQUI-X workshop programme within a curricular subject means that attendance is no longer voluntary, as in many cases students had to stay during school hours at the centre and had no alternative if they did not want to participate in the workshops.
- In many cases, the teacher's presence in the classroom during the sessions was usual. This meant that students often felt coerced or limited in their interventions as they felt as if they were still being evaluated, and the teachers' attitude actively reinforced this idea. On other occasions, however, teachers could become mediators and even disseminate the programme after the workshops.

One of the conclusions we have been able to reach through work in schools, which was already present in the specific literature, is that for schools to play an active role in the transformation of the prevailing gender regime and in the prevention of gender violence, they must start from a "whole institution" approach (Flood, 2019: 186).

In this sense, although we are not referring to an institution in particular, but rather to the model of gender relations, the term dual strategy has long been used when it comes to intervention. This term refers to the combination of specific equal opportunity policies and the gender mainstreaming strategy. We understand that the incorporation of the gender perspective does not simply consist of adding a "female component", nor a "gender equality component", to an existing activity. It is more than just increasing women's participation. It means incorporating the experience, knowledge and interests of women into the common knowledge, and at the same time working with men in the understanding that they are a social subject, multiple, and the result of a binary, hierarchical and culturally situated gender system. The objective of the incorporation of the gender perspective is to reveal how the interaction between genders takes place from a systemic conception, with the objective of transforming the current model of gender relations, implicitly hierarchical and violent, into a more equitable one.

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²⁹ Each project partner has elaborated a Methodological Guide in its own language where they could propose further recommendations and keys for the development of gender violence prevention sessions with adolescent population. These materials can be found on the project website: equixproject.eu.

The Council of the European Union (2006)³⁰, seeks to incorporate gender equality into every aspect of education: from legislation to teacher training; from curriculum design to school governance and organisation.

The different strategies range from making the work and knowledge generated by women in mathematics, philosophy or science visible, to proposing models of men who move away from heroic figures circumscribed to violent contexts. From introducing music or art created by women, to rethinking competitive models of physical education and introducing bodily activities that value the expression of emotions and feelings (Díez, 2019).

Thus, when we say that it is necessary to incorporate a gender perspective in education, we must be clear about what we mean by “gender perspective”. This means that we must not automatically identify the strategy with women, as if they alone had gender. Following Marcela Lagarde (1966), if we do not start from the feminist philosophical-analytical content and if by gender we mean woman, we neutralize the analysis and understanding of the processes, as well as the feminist criticism, denunciation and proposals. Therefore, let us never forget that men (and boys) also have gender (Salazar, 2013).

We cannot expect a single syllabus to work for all groups of boys. We should rather design policies which encourage a range of educational programmes for gender equality. Some may be “gender-specific”, designed for a group of boys or a group of girls. Others may be “gender-relevant”, designed for a mixed group but dealing with gender equality issues. Some may be school based, while others (including successful peer education programmes) are based in health centres, or neighbourhood or social movements (Connell, 2004).

Although the debate regarding the teaching and school model is far from over, this institution remains one of the predominant agents in the process of the socialisation of boys and male adolescents. It is for this reason that, because it constitutes a space in which boys spend hours and hours, interact, integrate intellectual and emotional experiences, situate their relationship with authority, find reference models in the construction of their masculinity, and validate or discard it according to how it is received by their peers, the education system does not cease to be a central element of intervention in the construction of a more egalitarian and just society.

Thus, one of the new challenges of education for equality is no longer to overcome the archetypes imposed on women, but to overcome the male archetypes and stereotypes. It is therefore urgent to implement specific educational actions with boys, which help to deconstruct the ideas and behaviours associated with hegemonic masculinity and, at the same time, contribute to showing them other ways of being men outside the traditional archetype of virility (Díez, 2015).

³⁰ *Recommendations to the Governments of Member States on Mainstreaming Gender in Education.*



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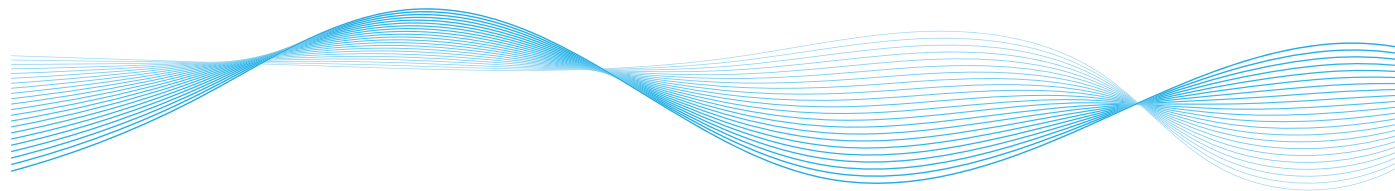
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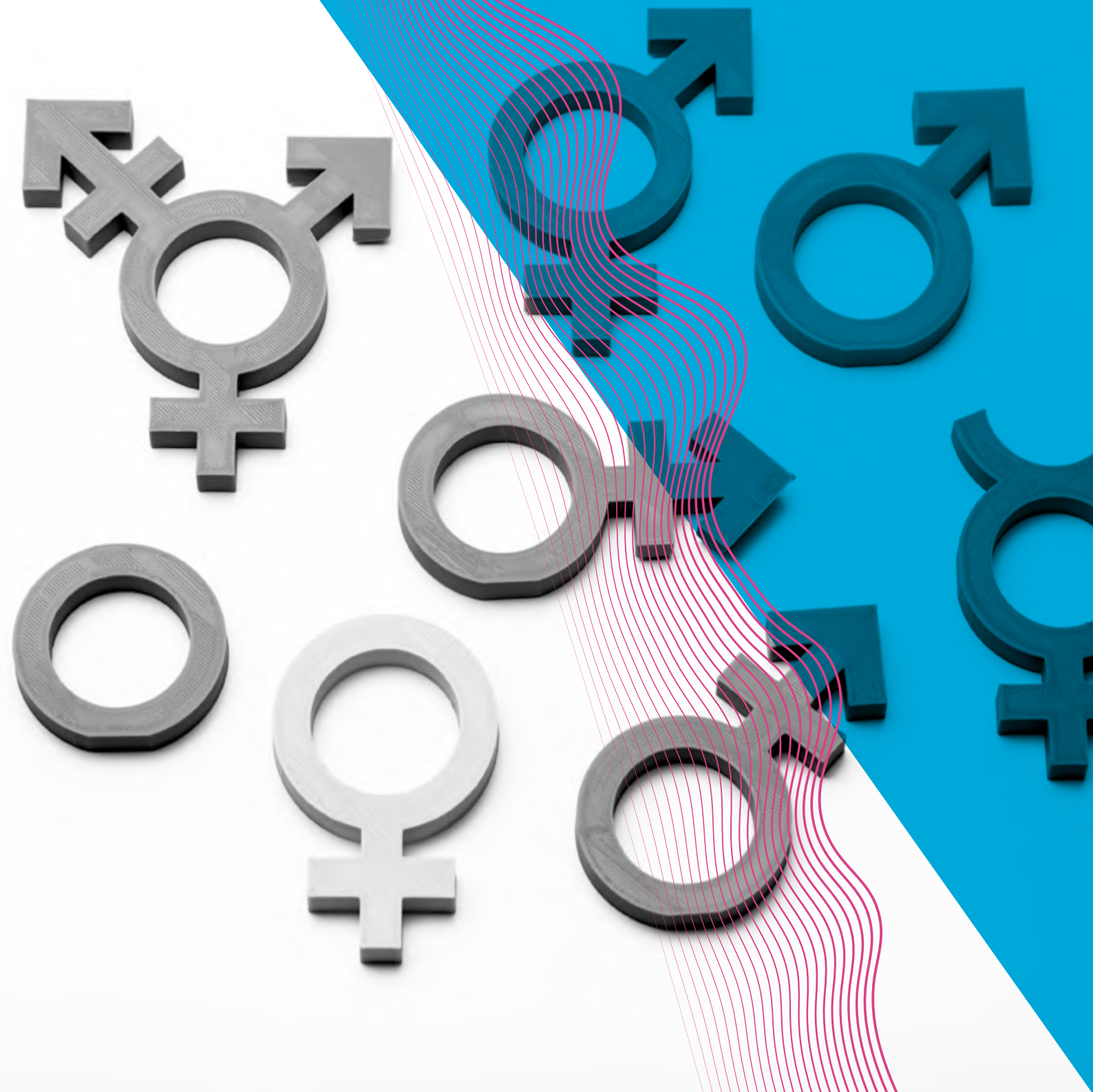
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**5. Anti-Discrimination, intersectionality, and a Critical Approach to the Gender Binary as a Complement of Preventive Anti-Violence Work with Boys*
Reflections and Suggestions for Practical Pedagogy**

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Why Anti-discrimination, Intersectionality, and a Critical Approach to the Gender Binary is Needed within Violence Prevention?

The issue of intersectionality, basically denoting the interwovenness of different forms of power relations along different categories which result in discrimination such as racism, transphobia, homophobia etc., does not yet seem very popular in the practice of social services and youth work. Only specific anti-violence services take the analysis of discrimination as a starting point for combating violence: They generally consider sexism and misogyny as causes for the violence that cis³¹ men* inflict on cis women*. Promundo Programmes H and M were way ahead of their times when they were published in 2002 and continue to be the standard-setting methods in this field of work. To follow in these footsteps with project EQUI-X and evolve these methods into something intersectional was both a challenge and a joy to do.

During the pilot phase of our work with young people, it had already become clear that most of the participants had been experiencing intersecting difficulties spanning a range of complex topics including gender and sexuality, ability, class, race/ethnicity, migration, religion, age, and others. For example, a girl of colour might experience harsher forms of racism when perceived as queer. In such cases, preventive anti-violence work with young boys* (and young people in general) needs to tackle much more than misogyny and sexism.

Throughout the EQUI-X workshops the facilitators encountered certain situations often enough for it to become clear that anti-violence work with young people needs to address multiple forms of discrimination as well as the concept of intersectionality in order to be more effective and help prevent all forms in which violence can occur. This also involves uncovering the societal structures behind instances of discrimination and violence, instead of addressing problems as individuals' fortunes.

The majority of gender related anti-violence work that focuses on the protection of women* from gender-based violence faces challenges such as how to include other forms of discrimination and other axis of oppression. We have implemented EQUI-X in a way that has included other inequalities, because restricting the perspective to only gender and sexuality makes other aspects of the human condition invisible, e.g. being poor, Black, disabled, young, or elderly. People and their social interactions are far more complex than their gender and sexuality. Because of that, youth work and violence prevention programmes need to be extended so that they can take into account as many inequalities as possible, which is where the need for the integration of an intersectional approach arises - realising that when different forms of discrimination come together, a new situation

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<sup>31</sup> See Glossary.

presents itself. Different types of oppression and disadvantages cannot just be added together, but must be considered within their entanglements and interactions, creating an intricate web of social dynamics. The intersectional perspective makes it possible to analyse multiple relations of inequality and oppression that cannot be explained by one category alone (e.g. when sexism and racism meet, the phenomenon that occurs cannot be satisfactorily explained by only analysing either sexism or racism). The risk of exposure to violence increases the more affected by discrimination a person is. This is true for violence in relationships as well as in street violence or peer violence. But this is also important to consider when programmes or facilitators only focus on one form of discrimination: They may reproduce discrimination with regard to other characteristics, or don't (fully) understand how multiple discrimination works and what kinds of effects this may have. Thus, intersectionality is important because violence may surface as being racist, classist, and/or ableist discrimination - and vice versa. The complexity of different forms of oppression and privileges should always be integrated. This perspective can also prevent picturing the group of men\* as people who only hold privilege (namely white, heterosexual, middle-class cis men\* without disabilities etc.).

Masculinity doesn't mean the same thing for everyone and, although every person who is perceived as a man\* and is performing certain kinds of masculinity holds male privilege, there are differences youth workers need to be aware of. To benefit from the power that masculinity promises, a man\* must be as close to the "ideal" and "hegemonic" masculinity as possible. The sociologist Raewyn Connell (1999) coined the term "hegemonic masculinity" and showed that masculinity must also be looked at through an intersectional lens for more than one reason: The ideal masculinity that promises power forms a system of masculinity norms. These norms are not the same for every man\* and boy and differ according to context. This results in different expectations which are brought to young boys\* and which find expression in different educational styles that parents and teachers impersonate.

Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity also shows very clearly that men\* are distinguished and hierarchised within the category of men\*. A Black man\*, a gay or a disabled man\* are devalued and discriminated against within the category of men\*. In addition to their male privileges, there is discrimination based on race, sexual orientation, disability or other societal categories. Because of this, it also depends on how a man\* is positioned according to other social categories like race, disability, religion and sexual orientation. Many masculinity concepts and images also contain cissexism (that devalues trans and inter people), and white supremacy (which is the basis of most forms of racism) etc.





## Recommendations for Social Workers and Facilitators

While implementing a series of workshops with young boys\* during the EQUI-X project, several pedagogical questions around the topics masculinity, intersectionality and discrimination arose from this perspective. Below are the questions we faced and the solutions we came up with, which we hope can be inspirational.

- **How to deal with the fact that boys\* within boys\*-only groups hierarchise and devalue each other – and how to understand that this is a form of interaction they were taught by society?**
- **How to intervene without shaming someone for this behaviour whilst making them aware of the consequences? And how to slow down such dynamics?**
- **How can intersectionality be considered within boys\*-only groups?**

The implementation of EQUI-X in Germany was challenged by a dynamic typical for groups consisting only of boys\*: There is a constant fight for dominance. The boys\* are attention seeking: Who is the most distracting and the loudest? They compete to see who best fulfils the norm of hegemonic masculinity in order to get to the top of the ladder of the group hierarchy. This is constantly changing, depending on who is participating in the session. So, in one session boy “A” is at the centre of attention, but next week he isn’t because boy “B” is participating. The position of boy “A” will now change: He will either become silent and accept the new hierarchy, or he will get even louder to outdo boy “B”. This dynamic is so distracting that none of the boys\* can stay focused. One possible solution is to work with this dynamic and not against it: Instead of punishing this type of competition and rejecting the boys\*, trainers can work with this behaviour. For example, it would be useful to take the contents of the boys\* derogatory jokes seriously and start a discussion about it. This way it is possible to empower the boys\* – the ones who are joking and the ones who are silently listening. In this way, it is possible to show the first ones that the facilitators meet them at eye level, and show the second ones how to set boundaries to inappropriate behaviour. In these situations, facilitators can use the dynamic to teach the boys how to set and respect boundaries. This is a very important issue in the sessions. Through the dynamics mentioned above, boys\* usually do not learn to treat each other respectfully, to ask for someone’s consent before touching someone, and to treat their own boundaries and those of others respectfully.

To be able to respect others’ boundaries, you must be aware of and be able to feel your own. But this can be a difficult task because in the traditional male gender role and the hegemonic masculinity boys\* are constantly trained not to feel. They are taught that boys\* are not allowed to share and to show their emotions, but instead that they should compete in “serious games” like sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1997) called the dynamics typical for groups consisting only of boys\*. During the sessions we took small steps to create a safer environment for the boys\* to express their emotions and to try to show them how to live a life more connected to themselves.

Moreover, facilitators can promote collaboration: one can bring along methods that require cooperation and in which the boys\* must relate positively to each other in order to solve the task together. Relaxation or warm-up exercises, which also require cooperation and teamwork,

contribute to a less hierarchical atmosphere. Methods which mean that the boys\* have to compete against each other worsen the dynamics in our experience even further.

- **How to deal with boys\* who are affected by racism but show sexist behaviour?**

In recent years, right-wing forces in Europe have become stronger. These effects were also felt in the EQUI-X workshops. Right-wing conservative politicians often say that immigration is the only reason for sexism, homophobia and transphobia in Europe. This propaganda is intended to suggest that there is no sexism, homophobia or transphobia that emanates from white European citizens

These discourses are racist because they reduce the responsibility for problems in European societies to individual groups. Black boys\* and men\*, and men\* of colour become “the bad”, and white boys\* and men\* become “the good”. In this way, feminism, equality and LGBTIQPA+<sup>32</sup> rights are played off against rights of Black people, indigenous people and people of colour. These discourses make the concerns of Black, indigenous women\*, women\* of colour and also the concerns Black, indigenous LGBTIQPA+ and LGBTIQPA+ women of colour invisible.

It also has consequences for working with young people. If white facilitators carry out the workshops, it could mean that the boys\* participating in them who experience racism in their everyday lives become more resistant to discussing sexism, homophobia and transphobia. They might be fearful of being addressed as “the bad guys” in the workshop. One solution to this problem would be to hire facilitators of colour. Another solution would be to discuss racism and the arguments of right-wing conservative politicians with the group before discussing sexism, homophobia and transphobia.

By doing this, they will know they are not being portrayed as “the bad guys” and don’t have to defend themselves. They can participate in the discussion about sexism, homophobia and transphobia and show themselves with their own topics. When they see that the facilitator empathizes with and understands them and they see how the facilitator deals with racisms personally, they will become more open to questioning their (un)conscious sexist, homo- or transphobic behaviour. In the EQUI-X workshops it was clear to see how boys\* who experience racism in their everyday lives started to get more involved during and after the workshops which addressed racism and right-wing policies. It became visible to the boys\* that as workshop leaders, we are supportive allies against the racism they experience. As a white facilitator, this requires a high level of awareness of racist structures within society, which must not stop at one’s own self: all people carry unreflected bias with them. These biases must be reflected upon so that young people feel that they are in a safer space.

- **How do we work with mixed ethnic groups? We often find ourselves in a situation where we need to call out the white kids for their racism while boys\* affected by racism are sitting in the next chair. How do we empower them at the same time?**
- **How can we empower girls\* and provide feminist content in mixed-gendered workshops while addressing the (un)conscious sexist behaviour of boys\* and giving them knowledge, input and sensitisation at the same time?**

These questions illustrate just two examples for one common problem:

Both young people who face discrimination and those who are privileged sit in the same workshop, and privileging and discriminating categories are united in individuals. For example, there is a white non-visible-disable poor boy sitting next to a boy of colour from a middle-class household, the racialized seemingly white lesbian cis girl sitting next to an asexual Black trans person from the working class. For the facilitator only some of these identities may be visible.

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<sup>32</sup> See glossary.



The simplest solution for this circumstance is at the same time the most difficult: speaking and working in such a way that as little discrimination as possible is reproduced by us as facilitators.

This requires a facilitator team as diverse as possible, as well as a fundamental awareness for all forms of discrimination, so that every method, every speech and every action can be done in the most non-discriminatory way possible. We are aware that this is a high, perhaps utopian claim, but we believe in the power of the process, in the effect of following the path and of becoming more and more sensitive in view of the perhaps unattainable claim.

At this point it is important to emphasize that young people learn from us, and in turn we learn from them. An open atmosphere in which young people can show themselves if a facilitator is at eye level with the young people, he\_she can accept such statement and apologise. He\_she thus validates the feelings of the young person, expresses empathy and empowers the young person to address discrimination in the future as well as in situations outside the workshops. The facilitator unfortunately learned through this experience at the expense of the discriminated young people. But leaving guilt and shame aside and taking responsibility (apologising by himself\_herself without putting his\_her own feelings in the centre), models good behaviour that young people can adopt once they are in the situation of accidentally having discriminated against someone.

This forms the basis for a new way of dealing with discrimination in society as a whole, that focuses on respect and responsibility rather than silence and ignorance.

Ultimately, this is the core of intersectional work: categories like race, ability, class, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity etc. are always trying to think along. Even if all young people in the room are white, whiteness and racism play a role, even if all young people in the room are hetero, homophobia and compulsory heterosexuality play a role. If educational contexts are not anti-discriminatory, there is a great risk that discrimination will be learned inadvertently through basic assumptions that are not always openly visible.

Our most important piece of advice is: Avoid stereotyping. In the methods and in the examples. If you work with stereotyping, make it an issue according to the method.

Many methods of gender-reflected pedagogy work with stereotypes. First, we collect what is typically female and what is typically male, and then talk about the fact that the characteristics on either side that all persons have, can have and may have.

Young people who do not correspond to these stereotypes are often teased or bullied. During the collection of these stereotypical characteristics, the method brings up many of the young people's experiences of violence. These young people are once again told that they are not "normal" (in the sense of not corresponding to the norm). Young people who believe in the norms get (inadvertently) told once again that these stereotypes are "normal" and the young people who have internalised these norms feel confirmed in their world view by the collection of stereotypes. The rigid gender norms have thus also been refreshed by this method: they have been conveyed as existing. Here, the method must be used to make sure that the message is well received by all young people: the two sexes, man\* and woman\*, are culturally shaped ideal conceptions that no one fulfils and no one is supposed to fulfil at the expense of one's own health and one's own relationships.

An intersectional work always involves thinking in line with one's own positioning as a facilitator: one's own position has an impact; one's own view always has a bias. The own position has several levels:

Even the facilitators don't belong to just one social group. Everybody experiences both privilege and discrimination. Depending on the situation, one or the other may be more involved in the outcome

of the situation. This is also called situational privilege or situational discrimination: Depending on the context, the privileged or discriminatory parts of a person are more relevant. If the facilitator is white and trans and the group that he/she works with is of colour and cis-gendered, there are many possible dynamics. Maybe the dynamics between the facilitator and the group will be more strongly structured by the power relationship that equips the white facilitator with privileges. Or, the dynamic will be more structured by the power relationship that equips the cis youth with privileges. If a facilitator is white, visibly disabled and trans, and in the group all of the young people are non-disabled, the category of disability can be decisive. It is important for the facilitator to notice such dynamics and to react appropriately. One possible way of dealing with this can be to put together a team of facilitators from varied backgrounds. Several facilitators should conduct workshops with the same group, so that different perspectives are represented in the space and the young people have more diverse identification possibilities in the facilitator team.

Another way of dealing with this can be to name the subjectivity of what you say as a facilitator: “I, as a white, invisible disabled trans person see it this way and that”.

Additionally, different perspectives can be made visible. On the other hand, caution is also required here: If facilitators show themselves with belongings for which they are discriminated against, this can also lead to the group breaking up the workshop. This can happen, for example, if the facilitator and the group do not yet know each other well. Showing a discriminated belonging can lead to young people reacting to the facilitator with stereotypes. Yet they do not know the facilitator enough to know the stereotype does not apply. Therefore, in our experience, it is important to be careful with one’s own topics- in both cases: when naming topics without showing oneself as belonging to this category or when coming-out. Our experience showed that it is advisable to establish a stable connection to the participants of the group and to first establish a trusting atmosphere. If a coming-out takes place later, the young people will exactly see that the stereotype does not agree with the image they have of the facilitator. They see that the stereotype is wrong (or at least not as derogatory as they were taught by society). This can counteract stereotypes and thus also the stigmatisation and tabooing of issues. If the image that the group has of the facilitator is not yet sufficiently consolidated, this effect may not be achieved.

- **How do we work with groups when we want to include trans and non-binary children? What if we want to bear in mind that not all boys\* in the boys\*-only group will be living their adult-life as men\*? What if they do not all identify as boys\*, but their identity remains invisible for the facilitator? What if not all of them are heterosexual, but bi, pan, homo, queer, asexual or aromantic<sup>33</sup>?**

When it comes to gender issues in pedagogy, many people prefer to separate children and adolescents according to gender. This has many advantages: it creates a safe environment and young people are less reluctant to address certain issues<sup>34</sup>.

However, it also has major disadvantages if we want to include trans\*, gender non-conforming and non-binary young people.

In every classroom there are LGBTIQPA+. This means there are gender non-conforming and non-binary children as well. They might not yet know these concepts and some might not be aware that they are LGBTIQPA+ yet, or that they might be gender non-conforming or non-binary, but some might be aware.

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<sup>33</sup> For definition of these terms go to the glossary at page 81.

<sup>34</sup> See chapter, *School: A Space for the Reproduction of Hegemonic Masculinity or for Transformation?*



When facilitators separate a group according to gender, these children are put in one group with other children who got assigned the same sex at birth. This means trans\* girls have to be in a group with cis boys\*. It also means that a gay cis boy\* has to be with the hetero cis boys\*. And inter\*, non-binary or gender non-conforming children are with girls\* or with boys\* as well. This can lead to very strong emotional and psychological stress because it happens constantly in school life: they are forced into a box in which they do not belong. When pedagogues come to a school and want to talk about gender based and gender related violence, it is likely that these children will feel hopeful to be seen and supported. Repeating the separation according to the sex assigned at birth, this situation can have severe consequences for their emotional and mental wellbeing. By forcing them in two groups (“boys” and “girls”) again, and everybody who is neither a boy\* nor a girl\* is forced into one of these groups, facilitators repeat a certain kind of gender-based violence. Furthermore, they might be grouped with their bullies. They likely won’t find a safer space because they cannot choose which of the other children they want to work with. A trans\* girl might want to be with the other girls. A gay cis boy\* might have many female friends etc. This is a huge disadvantage of separated groups we must appreciate.

If the trans\* girl wants to work with the other girls, she is forced to come out. This may have negative effects for a very long time after the workshops are done. In this case, facilitators are responsible for an early coming out, yet the child carries the aftermath.

All these things have to be considered as well.

One solution is to keep all of them together, but this has disadvantages as well. Another solution would be to offer to talk about different topics: these can be gendered and then the children can choose. The way a closeted trans\* girl who might have more female friends can stick with her friends and nobody will realise she is trans\*.

There is no “right” solution to this dilemma. Depending on the situation, the topics and context of the workshops, the various advantages and disadvantages of dividing into groups should be considered. Above all, one thing is particularly important: choose gender-transformative methods, as they can be a helpful tool. After using a method that reproduces binary ideas of gender and/or only talks about heterosexual orientation, it is important to expound the problems of this reproduction. As our colleague and fellow pedagogue Katharina Debus describes in her article “Dramatisation, de-dramatisation and non-dramatisation. Dramatisation of gender and sexual orientation in gender-reflected education” (translated), after an exercise that names boys\* and girls\* as the two existing genders, another exercise needs to follow that doesn’t use gender as the organisational characteristic. Exercises that talk about sexual orientation should not only mention heterosexuality. If they did, it is important to expound the problems of this reproduction and discuss other sexualities like homo, bi, pan, asexual or aromantic. Another gender-transformative action is an approach called “go beyond binary” that is based on the idea of setting it as a primary goal of pedagogy to avoid the binary mindset during all exercises, helping people break out of binary thinking altogether.

Next to the struggle with the reproduction of patriarchal ideas concerning gender and sexuality when working with these topics, the struggle of disobliging parents needs to be addressed. There are several misconceptions coming from concerned parents and other outsiders that educators have to deal with. (see chapter What is going on with the gender equality hot potato? Current socio-political context)

When confronted with the accusation of promoting non-heteronormative sexualities, such as homosexuality by so called “concerned parents” and other people non-familiar with or non-accepting

of LGBTIQPA+ identities, it is vital to emphasise the importance of an education that promotes diversity, equal rights, access to knowledge and acceptance for different people. Especially when working in schools, it is important to keep in mind that school is a normative institution that helps manifest heteronormative conceptions of gender and sexuality (see chapter School: a space for the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity or for transformation?). So, it is vital that out-of-school educators come to schools to complement and/or correct ideas about sexual and gender identities to make sure that LGBTIQPA+ identities are visible and become realistic options for selfidentification for students.

Another misconception is the idea that it is too complicated for children to grasp the “complex” topic of non-normative gender and sexualities. Our experiences have shown that it is not too difficult for children to understand the topic as long as the parent or educator talking to them uses comprehensible, age-appropriate language and keeps a calm and non-dramatic attitude whilst explaining ideas. Studies show that children as young as three years old can recognise discrimination and learn how to reproduce it. It is therefore important that facilitators include these topics. In fact, this article has shown that it is necessary to include sex, gender, diversity and anti-discrimination as part of a professional attitude because, like social work, anti-violence education is a human rights profession

## Resources

This video explains intersectionality in a simple way.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmUT7hwnzlo&t=60s>

The homepage of an educator who shows how discrimination can be talked about with children.

<https://www.teachandtransform.org>



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# 6. Family, Networks & Communities

Jill Michiels







## “It takes a village to raise a child”

Based on our observations and the challenges we encountered during the EQUI-X project, we will address the issue of engaging families, networks, and communities when working with young people on gender equality and violence prevention.

Families, networks and communities can have a major protective function when it comes to the development of violent behaviour. A vast network, belonging to a community, parental supervision, a good relationship with one or both parents, a strong school bonding, and non-deviant peers all contribute to a decreased risk of engaging in violent behaviour (Lösel & Farrington, 2012). On the other hand, these social bonds with the people close to us can also enhance the risk of engaging in violent behaviour. A lack of parental affection and support, family problems, and a weak bond with school are all risk factors in youth violence (Saner & Ellickson, 1996). Even more so, the family, community, and peers seem to be the most influential risk factors for youth violence (Reese, Vera, Simon & Ikeda, 2000). Furthermore, (gender based) violence often occurs in the families, networks and communities that young people live in. Exposure to such violence at a young age increases the likelihood of both victimisation and perpetration at a later stage in life.

The ideas and beliefs that young people have about gender norms also originate, for a large part, in the stories that are told within families, networks and communities. We learn about what it means to be a man/woman through the messages we receive from the people surrounding us, and the messages that are passed on from generation to generation. All of these different messages that young people receive in the various settings are not always congruent, and they often conflict with one another. It isn't easy for young people to navigate their way through these differing viewpoints and to reconcile different opinions.

All of the above indicate how important it is to include and engage families, networks and communities when implementing a gender transformative violence prevention programme.

## Family

The role that family members play in the development of certain attitudes and beliefs is unmistakably very important. However, their role changes over time. While family members, especially parents, have a big influence on and even serve as role models in the lives of young adolescents, this influence diminishes as young people grow older. Families and parents often lose their leading position and the peer group, social networks and communities become more of an important influencing factor in the daily lives of young people.

Still, parents and family members should be considered as important allies in violence prevention programmes regardless of the age/developmental stage of young people. This creates the opportunity to on the one hand address certain risk factors related to violence and on the other hand, to increase the protective features of the family (Reese, Vera, Simon & Ikeda, 2000).

## How to Involve Parents and Other Family Members?

When considering parents and other family members as allies, first it is key to provide accurate information and raise awareness on the importance of the topics at hand (be it gender, discrimination, or gender-based violence). Not only do we want to offer them information, but we also want them to speak up and to talk to their children and/or other parents about these subjects. When implementing the programme with young people, make sure to also create an open dialogue with all parents/caregivers involved in the young people's lives. This could be done by organising an opening session before implementing the programme. Within this session, there is the possibility to create awareness and to listen to and respond to the concerns that parents/other caregivers have. The focus should be on solving problems together with a group of parents, rather than just pointing out issues and obstacles. After the opening session, contact with parents and family members can be maintained through regular meetings or ad hoc meetings as and when concerns arise. At the end of the programme, young people develop a local campaign in order to spread the messages they found the most important and relevant. Campaigns can be developed to raise awareness and provoke social change. At this stage, parents and family members could also have an important role to play. On the one hand they could be recipients of the messages distributed through the campaign and/or they can help to create and develop the campaign. A closing session with parents and family members could even further enhance their long-term involvement and thus enhance the impact of the programme in a more sustainable manner.

Consequently, the institutions where the workshops take place have a great responsibility to engage family members. It is important that they take a stand and defend the programme from the viewpoint of pedagogues. When organizing such workshops, it could be useful to work on some tools and information packages to be disseminated amongst family members

## Consenting Parents?

So, what if parents/caregivers don't agree with the content of the programme? For example, subjects like gender and sexuality could raise issues among parents who prefer not to address these subjects with their children for whatever reason. It's important to understand the concerns that these people have and listen closely to what it is that they desire. Try a problem-solving approach and ask them what adaptations could be made to meet their concerns and expectations. It is important to convince them that this programme is valuable for their children's wellbeing so that the children feel free to participate in the programme without carrying the burden of being disloyal to their parents. When convincing parents/caregivers, be it in the group sessions or in individual talks, it is key to stress the violence prevention aspect and the health promotion within the programme. Most of the parents agree that violence damages the wellbeing of their children and should be prevented.



In some cases, written consent from parents is needed for young people to participate in the programme. In this case, there are multiple options to consider. First of all, it is important not to mislead parents when it comes to the content of the programme. Misleading the parents could cause consternation, resistance and protest, and could have a negative impact on the desired effect of the programme on young people and their environment. When consent from the parents is needed but a lot of drop-out is to be expected (due to various reasons), an alternative for active consent is to obtain opt-out consent. This means that parents give their consent by not declining to give consent. If the parent does not clearly decline consent, consent is granted. This requires the parents to take action if they don't consent, for example by sending an email that they don't want their child to participate.

In other cases, parents don't need to consent with the participation of their children in the programme. Although it isn't a prerequisite, consent should preferably be obtained. Even more so if you want to actively engage parents at some point within the programme. When asking consent from parents is not obligatory, you at least have to inform them about the programme, as discussed earlier. Whether or not to ask for consent is a difficult question. On the one hand, asking and receiving consent prevents young people from feeling disloyal towards their parents when participating in the programme. It also increases the likelihood of parents being willing to support the programme and being actively involved in it. On the other hand, when parents refuse to let their children take part in the programme, it withholds young people from addressing important issues such as gender equality, violence, diversity and sexuality.

When we talk about parents' consent, it might seem that we look at parents as a whole group who do not have conflict amongst themselves. However, the reality is that parents often disagree with each other when it comes to bringing up children. This could also be the case with respect to their child participating in the programme, especially if parents have gone through a rough divorce. Again, to avoid a loyalty conflict and to encourage both parents to get involved, informed consent from both parents is recommended..

## Networks & Communities

A major role in the development of certain attitudes and beliefs is not exclusive to parents and family members. Young people can often count on a larger network of people supporting them, for example: teachers and educators (in school context or outside), youth counsellors, sports coaches, mentors in youth organisations, religious leaders... At the same time young people often belong to a certain community or communities.

By including all of these people, we arrive on a more comprehensive approach to social change that challenges social structures and norms. When focussing only on an individual level we risk holding individual people responsible for social change. This could reside in young people feeling too much pressure to bring about societal change. That's why we recommend including a wider range of factors in order to alter gender beliefs at a societal level. It's not an individual responsibility to create change.

## How to Involve Networks and Communities?

This could be done by making young people's networks more visible during the workshops. By making the absent people present during the workshops, young people are encouraged to reflect on who matters to them, to talk about their surroundings, and to engage in meaningful conversations about the topics addressed. For example, in the workshops with young people you could help them to map all of the people they consider important in their lives and in reaching their goals. The workshop "Team of Life" (<https://dulwichcentre.com.au/part-creating-team-life/>) does exactly that: participants map the people from whom they've learned the most, people who have had their backs when facing difficulties, people who help them reach their goals, people who encourage and support them when doing so, and people who they feel safe with to express vulnerabilities. By mapping all of these people you not only make the participants aware of the fact that they are not alone, but you can also ask them to reflect on the messages they've received from their network. This way, the most important voices in their lives are included within the workshops. You could for example ask: "What would person X have to say about that?" To encourage reflection on the community level it's important to regularly ask the participants "How does this affect your community?" Another way to include networks and communities is to organise local campaigns or actions that either target or involve these networks and communities.

The institutions in which the workshops are held can be very open and motivated to carry out the programme. These workshops can initiate meaningful change, but it is key that these institutions provide the content in a more sustainable manner. Their work is not done by simply organising some workshops. Real change takes time and requires a serious long-term investment to keep these topics alive. Try to encourage institutions to repeatedly bring up these topics in different forms and in different settings. It's imperative to go beyond a single intervention and incorporate different subjects addressed within the programme within a long-term vision.

When talking about including networks and communities it's also important to encourage the institutions involved (be it schools or youth organisations) to advocate for the programme. At different levels of these organisations (at the level of direction, educators and other staff) people should be encouraged to speak up and to disseminate the programme. Raising awareness shouldn't be limited to individual people and their networks but should also encompass different institutions that work with young people.

As it is the case with family members, you should be aware that young people receive conflicting messages from people within their networks and communities. It's important that you do not impose certain ideas and create enough room for opinions that you do not necessarily agree with. This could be a good way to have an insightful discussion. It is important, however, to correct misinformation, and to dismantle myths. We must also strive to deepen the conversation and to reconcile different viewpoints.

## Youth-Led Campaigns

The issue of developing and launching a campaign has been raised several times now. We cannot stress enough how important this is in order to create change on a larger scale. The final few sessions of the programme should be dedicated to developing a youth-led campaign. This is an element of the programme that should not be underestimated as it gives the participants the opportunity to look back on all the subjects that were discussed and to decide for themselves which messages were really

important to them. Try to encourage participants as much as possible to take action and to convey the messages that are valuable to them to a wider audience. Emphasise the fact that they do not have to do this alone. Family members, youth organisations, educators and other people from their networks and communities can be considered as supporters along this process. When considering these people as supporters, you not only create a wider platform to spread the messages, but you also raise awareness amongst them. They can also serve as role models and promote alternative masculinities.

The focus of these youth led campaigns should be on a positive message. This message should convey all sorts of benefits that can be associated with change. Confronting people with shocking realities or pedantic messages does not tend to provoke change. On the contrary, people usually avoid negative messages. Together with young people and their social environment, you should create a message of hope and possible change.

When disseminating these positive messages, keep in mind that a single action does not create a large impact. Try disseminating the message through different channels and at different points in time in order to generate more of an effect. It is always a good idea to repeat the same message over a longer period of time. Every year for example, you could build further on earlier campaigns conveying similar messages. Social change takes time.

## Social Media

When we talk about young people's networks and communities, we often think about physical people that are present in their daily lives. We tend to forget about the digital networks and communities that young people are involved in. However, for many young people social media has become essential in their daily lives and for communication with other people all over the world. The physical limitation of face to face contact is eliminated, and it's made easier to find people who are like-minded.

Although the use of social media carries certain risks, it also offers many benefits, especially when it comes to quickly spreading important messages to a large number of people and initiating social change. That is why it is imperative to reflect with young people on the role that social media could play when developing the youth-led campaign.

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## **7. Evaluating Gender Transformative Projects:**

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## The EQUI-X Experience

The promotion of healthy and equal relations among men and women, as well as strategies to combat and prevent violence against women and children has been, for more than a decade, one of the priorities of the European Union (EU), not to mention that gender equality is one of the founding values of the EU. Great strides have been made when it comes to gender equality by promoting equal treatment legislation and the integration of gender perspective into all other policies (gender mainstreaming), as well in what concerns gender-based violence (GBV) where the EU has invested as a promotor of awareness-raising, education activities and has done close work with public authorities.

However, gender gaps, the perpetuation of stereotypes and violent acts against women and children still persist in today's EU society. These have encouraged the EU to adopt multiple strategies to encompass priority areas including women's economic independence, the promotion of equality in decision-making, combating GBV and supporting victims (Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2010–2015 & Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016–2019). Common to all these priority areas and challenges is the need to use gender transformative methodologies that recognise how boys, girls, men and women are socialised into certain roles and seek to dismantle inequitable gender stereotypes. The focus on masculinities uses a prevention-based approach to address GBV and promote European gender equality goals.

Reaching gender equality is a global challenge, highlighted in Sustainable Development Goal 5, which serves as a base for establishing peaceful, healthy and prospering societies. The sustainable development goals are ambitious and push for results-driven action with indicators developed by governments and societies to support accountability. However, no country has achieved full gender equality and the push towards more equitable societies requires commitment from decision-makers and other stakeholders, resource mobilisation, buy-in on the ground in local communities and data. Despite the best-case scenarios when international agendas, political will and community needs align, practitioners responsible for implementing social projects are always constrained by resources. In most cases, brilliant projects may still be underfunded or need to cultivate support from policy makers and/or community leaders.

Knowing if your idea works, why it works and how it can work better can be a powerful tool for standing out in a sea of proposals and for supporting stakeholder management. More importantly, knowing what types of intended and unintended consequences a project generates allows practitioners to reduce harm, promote benefits in the target communities and optimise scarce resources. Implementing a monitoring and evaluation (M&A) plan can help provide these insights.

This chapter is designed to help groups working on gender transformative programmes to conduct M&A. By building on the example of "Promoting innovative-strategies addressing the construction

of gender identities and engaging men and boys in non-violent models of masculinity”, also known as EQUI-X, it aims to provide a real world experience to highlight the basics of M&A, in addition to specific considerations that should be taken into account when conducting M&A of gender transformative programmes. First, the chapter will introduce some of the key concepts of M&A. Then we dive further into the M&A process of EQUI-X.

The first step to constructing a monitoring and evaluation plan is understanding the problem you want to address and the project that you are creating. You should have clear answers to:

- What long-term change (goal) would you like to see stem from your programme?
- In order to reach the goal, or the desired change, what needs to happen? This would be your change model. There are several, slightly different models for developing a theory of change, but the theory of change for the project needs to show why your project should lead to the desired change and the necessary pre-conditions for said change. This model includes your hypothesis and assumptions and serves as the basis for designing the programme.
- Considering your change model, what are the objectives of the programme? The objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound.
- What are the activities, or methods, that will be used to meet the objectives?
- Who will participate and what will the nature of the participation be? Establish how members of the target population will be recruited (active or passive search) and how they will be selected (inclusion criteria). Will potential participants be excluded from the project for any reason (exclusion criteria), such as, age, gender, geographical location, etc.? Prepare procedures for approaching participants.
- What will the nature of their participation be? The target level of engagement of participants needs to be established, as well as strategies for achieving the target. For example, participatory projects employ methodologies for including members of the target population and/or community as **decision-makers**. However, you must also establish at what moments and levels the project includes participatory processes. For example, will the community be actively engaged in designing the programme and/or will the project utilise participatory M&A techniques?
- What is the expected result of each activity? Think in terms of outputs, or products of the activities, and outcomes.
- What is the timeline for your project? What is the timeline for the outcomes? How will the outcomes be sustained?
- What resources will you need? Include monetary costs and non-monetary resources such as infrastructure, personnel, and know-how.

Once these questions are answered you will have a clearer image of what the project should look like and can start developing your M&A plan. Although often used together, “monitoring” and “evaluation” are not synonyms – instead they are two different and complementary forms of analysing data to support programme management. Monitoring is ongoing throughout programme implementation and allows you to see if the programme is going according to plan and if changes need to be made to re-orientate the programme for improvement. As such, data collection and analysis generally focused on the management of: a) resources, or materials, the programme uses or creates; and, b) processes.





Evaluations occur at the end of the programme or at benchmarks, usually specific transition points during the programme such as between project phases, to determine if and why the programme reached its objectives, with a focus on the results and goals. There are different types of evaluations depending on the questions you want to answer about the programme and based on when the evaluation was designed. Although important contributions come from implementation monitoring and evaluations such as logic chain, or theoretical evaluations, in this chapter we will focus on impact evaluations, specifically the methods used in the EQUI-X project.

## Results-based Evaluations

The results of a project are the changes that can be attributed to the activities of the project and the impact are the long-term results. Typically, practitioners, funders and policy makers prioritise results-based evaluations as they speak directly of the effectiveness, or the ability to achieve the intended results in the target population, of the project. In addition to effectiveness, results-based evaluations look at other domains, such as efficiency, sustainability, and impact.

As such, for these evaluations, it is important to understand what the attributable changes are and what the nature of these changes are. These questions present important challenges.

First, how can we establish that the observed changes are attributable to the intervention? This is the problem of establishing a causal relationship, or causality. To establish causality, we must create a counterfactual, or an estimate of what the results would be in the hypothetical situation of the target population had they not participated in the project. Obviously, we cannot observe the same participants, at the same moment while simultaneously participating and not participating in the project. Therefore, there are different methods to estimate what the hypothetical situation would have shown us.

The gold standard, or best option, would be to conduct a **randomised control trial** (RCT). RCTs are evaluations using an experimental design with at least two groups (a treatment group that participates in the project and a control group that does not participate in the project or participates in a different, previously validated project) and randomisation so that both groups are virtually identical except for the intervention they receive. If done correctly, RCTs are the best way to determine if the changes seen in the target populations can be attributed to the project. An important barrier to implementing RCTs are their cost, but they also present challenges in terms of ethics and stakeholder management. Communities may be resistant to serving as the control group and, when preparing to conduct an RCT, you should plan to continue the project to control groups if the evaluation detects positive results. Also, sampling techniques are important to assure that the groups are not inherently different from one another regardless of receiving the intervention or not and to avoid bias.

Even with RCTs, establishing causality is difficult in the realities of social programmes. In many cases, evaluations can only establish a correlation between the observed changes and the programme activities. Correlation is when changes are aligned, or seem to change according to each other, but we do not know if one of the changes causes the other, if the observed relationship is a coincidence, or if there is a confounding factor. A confounding factor is something else, that you may be unaware of, but that is linked to the changes you are observing and the project.

In light of these challenges, the change model is used to identify results that should be correlated with the implementation of the project and the most **ethical, feasible and methodologically rigorous** strategy should be implemented to try to establish a causal relationship between the project and those results.

A frequently used non-experimental method to estimate the counterfactual is by establishing a baseline and determining the difference in key outcome indicators at specific times. Using the right indicators is important because even if we have a very rigorous data collection design, if we don't choose the right indicators the results won't tell us much. Outcome indicators should be simple quantitative or qualitative variables that we can reliably measure to reflect progress on the desired outcomes. We use outcome indicators to answer, "how do we know if change happened and to what extent?"

Knowing what relevant indicators already exist, including data collected by governments and previously validated scales, is important in indicator selection and/or development. Sometimes groups want to "re-invent the wheel" and spend scarce resources trying to create and validate indicators from scratch when good, usable indicators already exist. When analysing available indicators consider the unit of analysis, disaggregation level and if they meet the needs of your stakeholder groups.

Also, the type of indicator used (qualitative or quantitative) will provide different types of answers. For example, quantitative indicators provide numeric answers (like percentages and means), which can help answer questions like what percentage of participants reached a certain goal. On the other hand, qualitative indicators help to understand more intangible outcomes such as perceptions and desires. Although both types of indicators are important, especially when used as complementary forms of data, qualitative indicators rely on subjectivity and may be more time-consuming to analysis.

Another form of classifying indicators is if they are simple or composite (also known as synthetic) indicators. Composite indicators include multiple variables, or 'sub-indicators', to provide a single index. The example that will be presented from EQUI-X will highlight the use of a composite indicator (the GEM score).

Regardless of the types of indicators selected by the project team, indicators need to be **useful** for your project; as such, they should meet certain criteria. Once the indicators and their collection methods have been determined, projects should be adjusted to include the activities and resources needed for data collection. Therefore, the timeline, budget and activities should all reflect monitoring and evaluation needs. You should be able to collect the required data for your indicator through the reasonable and responsible use of resources. They need to be sufficiently precise and sensitive to the changes you want to evaluate. If it is not possible to use direct indicators, proxy indicators, or indicators that measure indirect changes related to your outcome may be used with caution. If used, proxy indicators require significant analysis of the context of your project and the external factors which could also influence the proxy indicators.

For your indicators there should be specific targets that you would like to reach and dates for reaching them. These will let you measure if the expected results were reached and to what extent. It is important to be mindful that the project may also have unintended results and to actively search for and document these as they appear.

The true impact of the project are the results that remain in the long-term. Although social projects are typically funded for fixed short or medium terms, it is important to analyse the sustainability of the project results and conduct follow-ups for impact evaluations.



EQUI-X was an international project with a shared aim, but with different target populations and specific strategies. However, the basis for each country's strategy were Programmes H and M, developed by Promundo with partner organisations such as ECOS, PAPA and others, (and freely available at [promundoglobal.org](http://promundoglobal.org)). These programmes utilise a gender-transformative approach to promote gender equality and prevent violence in its multiple forms. In other words, the programmes question the way boys and young men and girls and young women are socialised to behave based on stereotypes that can harm them, the people around them and their communities. For example, if girls and boys are socialised to expect men to not cry, their ability to express their emotions and seek emotional support may be limited. Similarly, if girls and boys are socialised to expect women to be responsible for household tasks and unpaid caregiving work, instead of sharing these responsibilities with men, the chances of women suffering from burn-out and other stress-related consequences increases, and the bonds between men and their children are stifled. Questioning these expectations allows for both men and women to lead more fulfilled and healthier lives.

The first challenge was adapting the programmes to the national contexts, while simultaneously maintaining common elements. Each country had to identify the target population and specific methodologies that made the most sense to that context. During the adaptation of the programme, the development of the M&A plan occurred simultaneously to make sure that the data was appropriate and could communicate across the participating implementation sites. This strategy is called using a prospective evaluation. Prospective evaluations are those which are planned and may be partially implemented before the project begins (i.e., the baseline is established before the start of the project through the pre-test). Retrospective evaluations are developed after the implementation of the programme and, therefore, rely on available data. Retrospective evaluations are most often used when unexpected outcomes are observed and need to be better understood by the research team, or when an external evaluation is conducted.

Despite the freedom that each national team had in identifying their target population and methods, all the teams shared the aim of promoting gender equality in each country, thus contributing to an improvement at the European level. For this project, the multi-country objectives were to develop strategies in five EU countries to prevent GBV amidst girls and women and boys and men, from different ages (12–21) and backgrounds; to promote nonviolent models of masculinity; and to strengthen relationships between EU academia and NGOs for GBV awareness and prevention programmes. The Logical Framework (log-frame) presents the relationship between the aim, objectives, outcomes, outputs and activities shared by the country teams.

Figure 1

| Aim                             | Objectives                                                                                                                                          | Outcomes                                                                                                                                             | Outputs                                                                      | Activities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Promote gender equity in the EU | Develop strategies in five EU countries to prevent gender-based violence (GBV) amidst girls/women and boys/men, from different ages and backgrounds | Increased capacity of professionals to promote gender equity and non-violence with youth                                                             | 5 adaptations of the H and M Programs                                        | Develop a toolkit to promote gender-equity for each country context                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                                 |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                      | 15 training courses on methodologies for prevention of gender-based violence | Conduct focus-groups with the target audiences to diagnose gender-related attitudes;<br>Train key professionals in the adapted methodologies in each European site with a focus on supporting the application of the methodology by the professionals in their daily activities with youth                             |
|                                 | Promote non-violent models of masculinity                                                                                                           | More gender equitable attitudes among young people (girls/women and boys/men from 12 to 21 in schools, youth detention centres, or housing/shelters) | 5 implementations of H and M programs                                        | Conduct focus-group with the target audiences to diagnose gender-related attitudes;<br>Pilot group education sessions (at least 7 in each country) for each target group of youth selected by the country                                                                                                              |
|                                 |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                      | 5 national gender equity campaigns                                           | Develop national youth-led campaigns promoting awareness of GBV (participatory design)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                                 |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                      | 1 EU campaign for gender equity                                              | Conduct a legislation review in each country;<br>Conduct exploratory interviews with the key policy-makers and decision-makers in the field of gender equity<br>Develop equality plans for each country;<br>With lessons learned from the country-specific youth-led campaigns, adopt an EU Campaign for gender equity |
|                                 |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |



| Aim                             | Objectives                                                                        | Outcomes                                                                                     | Outputs                                                        | Activities                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Promote gender equity in the EU | Strengthen relationships between EU academia and NGOs for GBV prevention programs | Increased capacity of professionals to implement, monitor & evaluate GBV prevention programs | M&A guide;<br>Report                                           | Provide consultations to EU teams on M&A of gender transformative programs during the different phases of project-implementation;<br>Provide training on GEM scale;<br>Maintain open communication between M&A consultant and EU teams  |
|                                 |                                                                                   |                                                                                              | Proposal for future research projects between EU Member States | Conduct a legislation review in each country;<br>Conduct exploratory interviews with key policy-makers and decision-makers in the fields of gender equity;<br>Meet personally 5 times with country representatives to share experiences |

Figure 1. Shared Logical Framework of the EQUI-X Project.

These international objectives were built on a socio-ecological change model, adapted from Pro-mundo's institutional change model, presented in Figure 2. The change model had to be flexible enough to meet the specific demands of each country context, while conveying the foundation for the project as a whole. Using the change model and log-frame as a base, the chapter will go over the process used by the 5 country teams, supported by consultants and NGOs, to evaluate the second outcome: more equitable attitudes amongst young people.

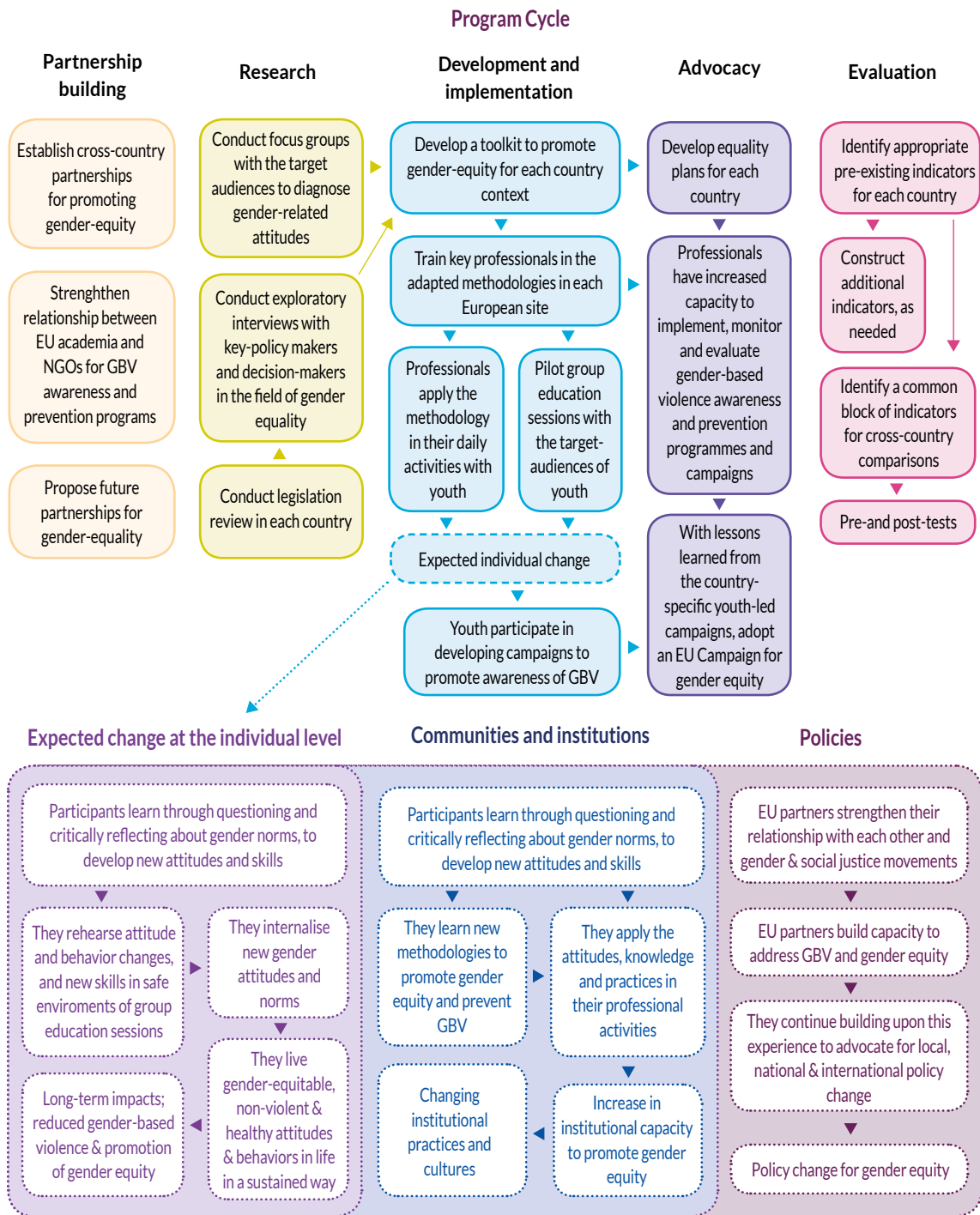


Figure 2. Change model of the EQUI-X Project, including the components of the programme cycle.

We highlight this example because it speaks to the core of the change model – the methodologies’ capacity to reduce GBV – directly with the main beneficiaries of the project.

EQUI-X main beneficiaries were young people aged 12–21 that are in school, youth detention centres, shelters or temporary housing, and/or who are refugees and migrants. Each country partner focused on a specific sector of the youth population and included the relevant professionals working most directly with the main beneficiaries, mostly teachers and/or social workers, to support them in their professional (and personal) involvement with young people and to promote the sustainability of the project in each country beyond the specific length of this project.

Groups wanting to evaluate gender-transformative projects and programmes have the benefit of an active field of research with on-going studies, in addition to important literature from the last decade (XY Online, n.d.). For this project, the Gender-Equitable Men (GEM) Scale was adapted to meet country-specific needs.

The GEM Scale was developed in 2001 by the Population Council/Horizons and Instituto Promundo based on qualitative research regarding gender norms in Rio de Janeiro and using a social constructionist perspective of gender identity (Pulerwitz & Barker, 2008). Although it was developed in the context of 18–29-year-old Brazilian men, it has been successfully adapted with different age groups ranging from 10 to 59 years old, including women and girls in schools who live in middle/high income communities in various countries. The Scale presents phrases that represent either traditional, non-egalitarian roles or gender-equitable roles divided into five categories: home & child-care; sexual relationships; health and STI prevention; violence; and homophobia and relations with other men.

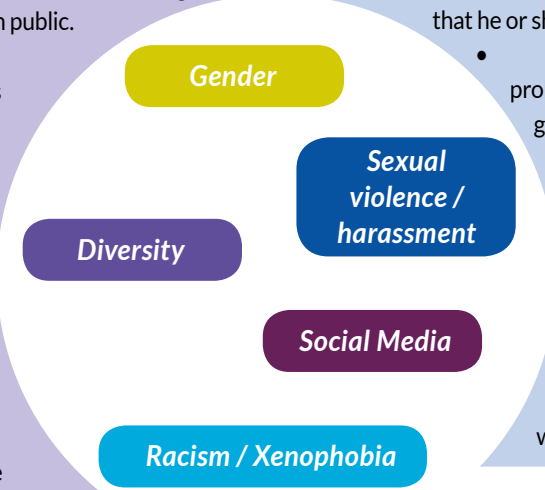
The country teams selected the GEM Scale as the basis of the instrument to measure how equitable (or not) gender attitudes were because gender attitudes are fluid, or susceptible to change, and held by individuals but constructed socially. Furthermore, the wide use of this scale, across cultures and population groups, supported its selection in this international project.

During in-person and virtual meetings, the partners reviewed each item one-by-one and selected a “common core” of items to be used across the country contexts. An external expert supported the process by providing trainings on M&A and indicator construction; yet, the research teams had the final say on item selection and construction. The shared GEM Scale items covered all five scale categories and the teams decided to create additional shared items covering attitudes regarding: diversity, racism and xenophobia, sexual violence and harassment, and social media. The diversity attitude indicators addressed gender identity and sexual orientation. The block of shared items is available in Figure 3.

- Men have a greater sexual desire than women.
- Changing diapers, giving kids a bath and feeding them is the mother’s responsibility.
- A man and a woman should decide together what type of contraceptive to use.
- It is a woman’s responsibility to avoid getting pregnant.
- I would be upset if my partner asked me to use a condom.
- To be a man, you need to be tough.
- Women who carry condoms on them are “easy”.
- If someone insults me, I will defend my reputation with force if I have to.
- If someone insults me, I don’t need to use a force to defend my reputation.
- Either a man or a woman can suggest using a condom.
- A couple should decide together if they want to have children.
- It is important that a father is present in the lives of his children, even if he is no longer with the mother.
- It’s important for men to have male friends to whom they can talk about their problems.
- Men are always ready to have sex.

- It is not justified to act violently towards homosexual men/women when he/she is trying to pick you up.
- It is not justified to act violently towards homosexual men/women when he/she is kissing another man/woman in public.
- It is not justified to act violently towards trans people when he/she is trying to pick you up.
- It is not justified to act violently towards trans people.
- Trans\*/homosexual people should not have permission to work with minors.
- Trans\*/homosexual people should not have permission to adopt children.
- There should be laws to combat prejudice against trans\*/homosexual people.
- A woman cannot become a man or the other way around.

- It’s okay if your boyfriend/girlfriend has access to your phone and your social media passwords.
- My partner can be annoyed if I talk, or connect to someone through social networks, that he or she doesn’t like.
  - I don’t have any problem with my boyfriend/girlfriend entering my social network profiles without my authorization.
  - I would send pictures or videos of someone without their consent.
  - I feel okay receiving compromising pictures or videos of someone without their consent.



- In general, people of other cultural groups are to be trusted.
- People of other cultural groups are a threat to my culture and customs.
- I would not hang out with people from other cultures.
- In general, people of other cultural groups are to be trusted.

- It is never okay for someone in a relationship to force their partner to have sex with them.
- It is never okay for a man to force his partner if they won’t have sex with him.
- A woman should take it as a compliment when she is catcalled in the street.
- If a woman gets catcalled in the street, it’s offensive/insulting.
- It is important to ask for consent before having sex.





GEM Scale must be applied before implementing the programme in order to establish the baseline (pre-test) for comparison with the post-test score. The scale utilises a 3-point response scale with answer options including “Agree”, “Somewhat agree” or “Disagree”. The country teams were able to modify the scale to increase answer options as long as they had an analysis plan on how to interpret the answers using the common 3-point scale. Therefore, the original questionnaires varied from a 3 to 7-point response scale. For analysis using the common response scale, the least equitable responses received a score of 1 and the most equitable answers received a score 3. In other words, analysis of the GEM Scale followed the prescribed procedures (Pulerwitz & Barker, 2008), where negative items, or phrases presenting traditional gender roles, were reverse coded, as exemplified in Table 1, so that high scores represent high support for gender-equitable norms. The total points of the respondent are used to compare their score at different points of the intervention. In addition to using the GEM Scale as a continuous scale, three categories of scores can also be calculated: low, medium and high gender-equitable attitudes. The limits of the categories are established considering the total possible points. For example, when 30 statements are used for the scale, it is possible to score 30 to 90 points; therefore, the categories would equate to 30–49, 50–70 and 71–90 points, respectively.

Table 1. Example scoring of GEM Scale items.

| GEM Scale Items                                              | Response category and assigned weights |                |          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------|----------|
|                                                              | Strongly agree                         | Somewhat agree | Disagree |
| It is a woman’s responsibility to avoid getting pregnant     | 1                                      | 2              | 3        |
| To be a man, you need to be tough                            | 1                                      | 2              | 3        |
| A couple should decide together if the want to have children | 3                                      | 2              | 1        |

Translation from English and back-translation of the items occurred to consolidate the language of the wording in the German, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French and Croatian phrases. The questionnaires were presented to specialists in education, psychology, social services and gender equality participating in each country’s Technical Advisory Group.

Before using the instruments to establish a baseline, they were tested by each country’s team. In the Portuguese example, the in-country team, led by the Centre for Social Studies (CES/UC) of the University of Coimbra/Promundo Portugal, partnered with an NGO (Akto) to test the instruments in pilot sessions with a sample of students participating in a 2-year project funded by CIG (the Portuguese Gender Equality Commission). In addition to the common block of questions, the CES/UC Promundo Portugal team also included questions on the legal framework about GBV prevention and cyberbullying. The focus of their pre-test was on language, structure and data quality. Their pre-test detected that the language was appropriate for the audience, but the length of the questionnaires was not. As a self-administered questionnaire, applications lasted an average of 30 minutes. Through feedback from the participants and analysis of the response patterns, questions that were identified as ‘unproductive’ were removed from the questionnaire. This example highlights the importance of pretesting the instruments used in evaluations to promote greater quality data

and acceptability. However, pretesting is also important to make sure that data collection teams have established processes to promote data quality, that mistakes are identified and corrected, and that the instrument is appropriate for the audience.

Before applying the GEM Scale, or any other questionnaire, all ethical considerations should be followed. In most European countries, authorisation to conduct questionnaires in schools must be obtained from the responsible Ministry of Education. Each country has its own specific ethical guidelines; however, it is important that ethical considerations go beyond the legal concerns to focus on the best interest of the participants. The instruments should go through the most rigorous ethical committee available and safeguards should be put in place to avoid or minimise possible risks.

Some basic ethical considerations regarding data collection:

- Effort should be made to encourage interviewers and interviewees to be gender matched. In other words, women researchers should be used to interview women or girls. Similarly, men should interview men or boys.
- The study objectives, the intimate nature of the themes, the voluntary nature of participation, the ability to interrupt participation at any point during the study, and the guarantee of confidentiality must be presented to the participant and a Term of Free and Informed Consent signed before beginning data collection.
- Research team members must be trained specifically in confidentiality and privacy concerns. They are responsible for providing all relevant information to the participants. Also, all data collection documents must be designed for maximum confidentiality using the reference number instead of the participant's name.

When working with children and/or adolescents, extra ethical considerations should be taken to recognise and respect them as participants with their own agency while also respecting the rights of their parents or legal guardians. Even if parents authorise the participation of a minor in research, the child/adolescent has the right to understand the research study, ask questions, and decide whether or not to participate.

The data collection methodologies need to be designed according to the needs of the participant group. In EQUI-X, language considerations were not limited to translations – the Technical Advisory Groups also analysed the questions and questionnaire structure according to the participant's ages, comprehension levels and first-language to guarantee that the instrument was appropriate. If the questionnaire is too complex or long, respondents may provide the most convenient answers, instead of the most factual. Particularly with young adults, they are more inclined to provide 'politically correct' or 'socially desirable' answers according to what they perceive the data collection team wants to hear. To promote honesty, the questionnaire prioritised traditional, or non-equitable, presentations of the items.



## Conclusions

Monitoring and evaluation are key components of programme design and implementation – fundamental for knowing if your idea works, how to improve it and what consequences it generates (expected and unexpected, good and bad). Informed decision-making, transparency and accountability all require information as a basis. In order to collect that data, the key steps are:

1. Understand the problem;
2. Develop your idea (programme) for addressing the problem with a clear hypothesis;
3. Identify the questions you want to answer about the programme;
4. Based on your questions, decide how you will collect the necessary data to answer them.

Each of these basic steps shows that the monitoring and evaluation process of your project was intrinsically linked to the change model that guides your programme and is rooted in the problem. Social programmes are often multi-pronged and address complex social problems embedded in multiple levels of impact and determined by historical, political, economic and sociological processes. Even in the face of such complexity, keep the evaluation plan simple. The design and instruments should support understanding of the problem and the intervention, instead of generating more confusion. For more information regarding gender transformative methodologies and their evaluations, access [promundoglobal.org](http://promundoglobal.org).

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## 8. Roadmap



Throughout the different chapters, on the basis of the practical experience of the EQUI-X Project, some of the topics related to gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence amongst young people in the European context have been approached: a brief overview of the European policies and initiatives on this field, thoughts about gender equality threats today, the role of the different agents, school, community, the intersectional approach in the pedagogical practice and the need to evaluate the actions implemented. Other topics would fit in, but it has not been possible to include them within this text.

The exchange of knowledge and good practices between organisations at the local, national and international level, as it has been revealed in the case of the European Cooperation project EQUI-X between five partner countries, is a significant step to move forward with the promotion of equality and prevention of gender based violence amongst young people. However, it is worth noting some next steps to continue moving forward.

There is a need to widen the approach, making it more intersectional, approaching policies, as well as the professionals working on one side with young people and teenagers, and on the other side fighting against gender-based violence. The EQUI-X project experience has been focused on a defined and limited context as it is in schools. Nevertheless, it has revealed its plurality and complexity, due to the multiple agents, the different professionals implicated, the diverse gender and cultural identities present that are increasingly more visible, and the contrasting school realities. Thus, the project has been implemented specifically in secondary schools and youth detention centres, although other locations such as the vocational training centres, where it hasn't been implemented, present different situations for young people.

In this sense, it is important that the activities, projects and programmes that have been developed until now in terms of gender-based violence prevention, do not remain as isolated experiences. On the contrary, counting on the involvement and commitment of the public administrations in their different fields of activity, systematic and coherent policies would be developed at the European, national and local levels focused on men and boys. On the other hand, the development of equality policies that have a strong probability of changing hegemonic masculinity are necessary, and also the promotion of men's and boy's involvement in care works.

# 9. GLOSSARY

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**Aphobia:** Refers to discrimination against asexual and aromantic people manifested in rejection, anger, intolerance, prejudice, discomfort or physical or psychological violence against asexual/aromantic people or people who are perceived as such.

**Aromantic:** A person who has does not experience romantic attraction to others and/or interest in romantic relationships. It is not necessarily related to asexuality.

**Asexual:** A person who feels no or little sexual attraction to other people. As asexuality is a spectrum, some people spell it asexual or a\*sexual. It is not celibacy or rejection of sex. On the one hand, celibacy is a free decision while asexuality is a sexual orientation, and on the other hand asexual people can have sex for various reasons. It is not necessarily related to aromanticism.

**Bisexual/Pansexual:** When a person identifies as being emotionally and/or sexually attracted to more than one sex.

**Cis:** A term to refer to whoever is actively or passively staying within the social norms of the assigned gender at birth.

**Coming out:** The process of realising, accepting, and revealing one's own identification as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, or intersex person. The concept itself is built upon hetero, cis and binary gender normativity, as those who are not heterosexual and / or cis must reveal this fact to others. Coming out is not a one-time act, as LGBTIQPA+ people decide or are forced

to come out several times during their lives to different people, e.g. colleagues, new friends, neighbours and doctors, etc.

**Discrimination:** Process of division and hierarchisation within social groups that creates inequalities. As a result, those groups above get a privileged position while those below are discriminated against. If power is exercised from top to bottom (which can happen individually, but also institutionally and structurally), then discrimination happens. Examples of forms of discriminations are: **Direct discrimination:** Where a person is treated less favourably by other people. **Indirect discrimination:** Where an apparently neutral provision or practice would put people at a disadvantage compared to others. **Multiple discrimination:** Discrimination based on more than one ground.

**Gay:** A cis or trans man who identifies as being sexually and/or emotionally attracted to men. Gay is sometimes also used as a blanket term to cover lesbian women and bisexual people as well as gay men. However, this usage has been disputed by a large part of the LGBTIQPA+ community, and 'gay' is therefore used in this guide to refer strictly to cis or trans men who self-identity as being emotionally and/or sexually attracted to men.

**Gender:** Refers the social construction that allocates certain behaviours to male and female roles. Although gender can be internalised and is now recognised by many as separate from biological sex, it has historically not been an individual decision, but rather a prescribed

identity based on one's sex assigned at birth. The basis of the construction is a markedly hierarchical categorisation in which roles and characteristic features that can be linked to power are routinely related to and associated with the male gender.

**Gender expression:** Is the way in which people represent themselves in a gendered way, for example through haircuts, clothing but also behaviour. Some people represent themselves as male, others as female, others represent as both at the same time and some don't want to be seen as male or female at all. This can be but is not necessarily linked to the persons' sex they were assigned at birth, gender or gender identity.

**Gender identity:** Refers to each person's internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Gender nonconformity/gender nonconforming:** Involves not conforming to a given culture's gender norms or gender expectations. 'Gender nonconforming' is a phrase for someone whose gender expression does not match their society's prescribed gender roles or gender norms for their gender identity. Gender nonconformity transgresses societal or psychological expectations for perceived gender assignment, through presentation, behaviour, identity, or other means.

**Inter:** A term that has developed from the community and that describes the diversity of inter realities and physicalities as an emancipatory and identity umbrella term. Inter functions as an umbrella term for intersexuals, intersex, intergenders as well as inter- or intersexual people who are born with a body that does not correspond to the typical sexual standards and norms of man and woman. Intersexuality is used as a pathologizing diagnosis for these people because their physical characteristics cannot be unambiguously attributed to the male or female sex. Many Inter\* therefore reject the term as self-descriptive.

**Interphobia:** Describes the hostility against the existence and expression of intersex people as well as of physical-gender diversity. This leads to violence, discrimination, exclusion and the medical, social and legal impossibility of inter\* identities and physicalities (enforced by surgeries that are often, but not always) carried out at an early age. Interphobia criticises the trivialisation of the violence of inter\* annihilation.

**Intersectionality:** A feminist approach that emphasises the entanglement of various systems of oppression, thus different social categories such as gender, ethnicity, class or sexual orientation, which generate inequality. The aim of intersectional perspectives is to analyse the interaction of different positions of social inequality and to illustrate that forms of oppression cannot be added together as a sum but must be considered in their entanglements and interactions. This perspective makes it possible to analyse multiple relations of inequality and oppression that cannot be explained by the category of gender alone.

**Intersex:** A term that relates to a range of physical traits or variations that lie between stereotypical representations of male and female. Intersex people are born with physical, hormonal or genetic features that are neither wholly female nor wholly male; or a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male. Many forms of intersex exist; it is a spectrum or umbrella term, rather than a single category.

**Lesbian:** A cis or trans woman who identifies as being sexually and/or emotionally attracted to women.

**LGBTIQPA+phobia:** General, psychological and social hostility targeted at LGBTIQPA+ people. Social construction which promotes heterosexuality as the only accepted sexuality and creating a hierarchy of sexuality. For many feminist authors, the root of homo-lesbo-trans-bi-inter-phobia is sexism that plays the role of monitoring sexuality and suppresses any behaviour that exceeds the boundaries between gender. Although in this sense homophobia, lesbophobia, transphobia, bifobia and interphobia



are part of the same phenomenon, it is important to distinguish them because they have different manifestations and intensities.

**LGBTIQPA+:** Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and all other identities which fall under the queer umbrella. A heterogeneous group often treated together in social and political discourse.

**Mixed education:** Refers to girls and boys sharing the same classrooms, receiving the same kind of education and being subjected to the same requirements and evaluations.

**Experienced discrimination:** Also called subjective discrimination, the experience of being discriminated against.

**Non-binary:** An umbrella term for many gender identities that lie outside the man-woman binary, such as agender (to define oneself as genderless) or genderfluid (to define oneself again and again differently). Some non-binary people identify as trans and some do not.

**Queer:** This term has had many meanings over time. Traditionally 'queer' was a term of abuse -meaning different or strange- which has been reclaimed as a positive word. It also implies a political stance in opposition to the dominant heteronormative structures but also to mainstream identity LGBTIQPA+ politics. It is an umbrella term for those who challenge norms of gender and sexuality but also the LGBTIQPA+ mainstream and other social norms.

**Sex:** Refers to biological makeup such as internal and external bodily sex characteristics like genitals and gonads (i.e. testicles, ovaries), genes, and hormones. The legal sex is usually assigned at birth and has traditionally been understood as consisting of two mutually exclusive groups: male and female. However, this biological classification may be questioned, and sex assigned at birth may not correspond to a person's gender identity.

**Sexual orientation:** Refers to each person's capacity for profound affection and/or emotional and sexual attraction to and/or intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.

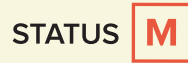
**Trans people:** Trans people are people with a gender identity that is different from the gender assigned at birth. Trans people may or may not express their gender through their choice of clothes, body modifications (that can include medical procedures), or other gender presentation. The word "trans" is often used as an umbrella category that encompasses all non-normative gender identities and expressions. There are almost as many ways of living trans identity as trans people. In the same way, we can find so many ways of living masculinity and femininity as men and women in the world.

*equix*



# equix

ENGAGING YOUTH IN THE PROMOTION  
OF NON VIOLENT AND EQUITABLE  
MASCULINITIES



Collaborate:

