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# SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' AWARENESS OF CYBER SEXUAL AND GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE IN YOUTH PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS



**TRANSNATIONAL REPORT**  
for Hungary, Spain, Serbia and Croatia

June 2020



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	3
-----------------	---

2. Research Methodology	6
-------------------------	---

3. Results	7
------------	---

3.1. Demographic characteristics of the sample	7
--	---

3.2. Gender stereotypes & roles in school	10
---	----

3.3. Gender based violence & cyber-sexual gender based	11
--	----

3.4. Awareness of the scope of the problem & teachers' experiences of cyber SGBV among their students	13
---	----

3.5. Teachers' ability to provide help to students experiencing (cyber) teen-dating violence	16
--	----

4. Recommendations	19
--------------------	----

5. References	20
---------------	----

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

This transnational report has been prepared within the project titled **I can choose to say no. Empowering youth, especially girls to stand up against cyber sexual and gender-based violence in intimate partner relationships**. It is a project that contributes to ending cyber sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in adolescents' intimate partner relationships, by especially empowering girls and supporting them to stand up to violence. To reach this goal, the first project activity was to collect evidence on awareness of secondary school teachers and their attitudes/strategies to address cyber SGBV in youth partner relationships. The research was conducted in Spain, Hungary Croatia and Serbia and national reports were prepared. This transnational report is prepared based on the country reports and presents the key results and insights regarding the awareness and strategies of secondary school teachers to address the cyber SGBV in youth partners relationships.

The project is being delivered by a partnership of the following organizations: The Autonomous Women's Centre (Serbia), Fundacion Privada Indera (Catalonia, Spain), Nők a Nőkért Együtt az Erőszak Ellen (Hungary) and CESI-Center for Education, Counselling and Research (Croatia). The lead partner is The Autonomous Women's Centre. The project is funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Program.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence, defined by the (UN) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) is "violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately" (Article 6) and was recognised as "a form of discrimination that seriously inhibits women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men" (Article 1). The first legally binding European instrument on violence against women, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) addresses violence against women as a violation of human rights and the form of discrimination and places, among others an emphasis on the **prevention** that includes the awareness raising, education and training of professionals (Chapter 3.). The Istanbul Convention entered into force in three participating countries - Spain, Serbia and Croatia. Hungary signed the Convention but rejected to ratify it.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is the most brutal expression of gender inequality that disproportionately affects women and girls. It can affect boys and men, but it usually occurs when they display non-normative sexuality or gender expression. Internet and social networks can easily be abused to perpetuate gender stereotypes and support gender-based violence. When we look at cyber gender-based violence, it is not a separate phenomenon to "real world" violence, but rather a continuum of offline violence. More specifically, it can be viewed as a violence facilitated by technology (EIGE, 2017).

In the European Union, 5% of women have experienced one or more forms of cyber stalking since the age of 15 (FRA, 2014:87). Cyber stalking in this case included stalking by means of email, text messages or over the Internet. In addition, data from the 2014 FRA survey shows that 77% of women who have experienced cyber harassment have also experienced at least one form of sexual or/and physical violence from an intimate partner; and 7 in 10 women (70 %) who have experienced cyber stalking, have also experienced at least one form of physical or/and sexual violence from an intimate partner.

According to research of European Women Lobby, women across the world are 27 times more likely to be harassed online. Besides a clear disproportion between women and men (aged 18 to 24) of the risk of online violence, women are a majority among victims of the most severe forms of violence, such as stalking and sexual harassment. In Europe, nine million girls have experienced some kind of cyber violence by the time they are 15; — one in five teenagers in Europe experience cyberbullying and among them, girls are at higher risk; — in 2014, 87% of all reported child sexual abuse images depicted girls (EWL, 2017:5). Iso, women and girls are the primary targets of so-called "revenge" pornography, created without the consent of all parties involved. Consequences of online violence can be as severe as physical violence against women. Consequences are no different from those of harassment, bullying and stalking in real life and can include stress disorders, trauma, anxiety, sleep disturbances, depression and physical pain (EWL, 2017:17-18). When addressing gender-based violence, attention should also be drawn to the lack of a systematic collection of data. In addition, there is a significant lack of data and systematic monitoring of gender-based violence among young people.

# Overview of National Contexts

- In **Croatia**, violence in teen-dating relationships is a problem that is poorly researched and completely “invisible” in the areas of public policy, legislation and occasionally present in the education system. Official data on violence in adolescent relationships is not available and only a few social studies point to the problem of non-recognition of different forms of violence in relationships, as well as the reluctance of adolescents to report violence. Existing protocols are related to violence among children and youth that focus on peer violence and the protocol for dealing with cases of sexual violence. Violence in intimate relationships, including adolescent relationships, is a legally completely unregulated area. Furthermore, there is no systematic approach to the prevention of violence in teen-dating relationships but rather prevention is related to sporadic implementation of programs in schools designed mostly by civil society organizations. School prevention programs designed by educational institutions are mostly focused on non-violent conflict resolution and prevention of peer violence. In addition, the Health education curriculum does not mention gender-based violence (nor any other issue that is related to gender, i.e. gender roles, gender stereotypes, gender equality, etc.) but refers mainly to peer violence. Studies show a high prevalence of teen-dating violence where the most common are controlling and possessive behaviours, emotional blackmails and jealousy and further on facilitated by technology (i.e. sexting, sextortion). Data support the need of professionals working in schools for additional education regarding cyber violence, especially sexting and sextortion. In addition, the majority of teachers report that students did not recognize them as someone who can offer help in cases of cyber violence (Child and Youth Protection Center, 2019).

- In **Hungary** there is no state-provided data on violence against women, also it is a poorly researched phenomenon. The government rejected ratifying the Istanbul Convention in May 2020, although the country signed the convention in 2014. According to the FRA research, 27% of girls before the age of 15 in Hungary experience physical, sexual, and/or psychological violence from an adult. Women between the ages 15-74 reported the following: 49% experienced verbal/psychological abuse from a partner, 19% experienced physical abuse from a partner and 7% experienced sexual abuse from a partner (FRA, 2014). Research on online harassment and bullying among youth shows that more than half of students participated in some form of online bullying and around 70% experienced some form of online bullying. Gender differences were also observed where male students tend to send hostile text messages, offensive images/memes, start false rumours and give out private contact numbers of others. On the other hand, around third of female students participate in online bullying in the form of online exclusion of another person (Margitics et al., 2019). The National Core Curriculum states that it is necessary for students to obtain knowledge on sexuality and intimate relationships, but the document mainly highlights the biological aspects and does not refer to the

social ones (e.g. violence against women and girls or relationship violence). Also, the curricula do not include the issue of gender equality or guidance for teachers on how to work on deconstructing gender roles and stereotypes.

Prevention programs regarding violence against women (VAW), teen-dating violence (TDV) or cyber violence (CV) are mainly designed and implemented by NGOs.

- In **Serbia**, existing legislation and protocols concerning the response of education institutions do not mention gender-based violence nor specify youth intimate partner relationships as a specific context of violence. Instead, documents regulate all forms of violence including digital violence. Available research shows that gender-based violence in schools is present and widespread – the majority of surveyed elementary and secondary-school students have experienced at least one form of this type of violence. Boys more frequently commit gender-based violence both towards girls and boys and boys more often justify violence in partner relationships (Ćeriman et al., 2015). In addition, the majority of secondary school students were exposed to harassment via phone calls, SMS messages and on social networks. In such cases, students most frequently ask their peers for help, then their parents and very rarely their teachers. Around half of the teachers assessed that they are informed to a satisfactory level about digital violence. Every tenth teacher said they would not know what to do if students complained to them about being harassed via a phone or over the Internet. Most students do not seek help from their teachers in case of problems with digital violence. On the other hand, teachers’ opinion is that not enough is being done in schools regarding the prevention of digital violence (Popadić and Kuzmanović, 2013).

- In **Spain**, research results show that 1 in every 10 adolescent girls report having experienced abuse from the boy they are going out with. Also, 1.3 in every 10 adolescent boys, admit behaving aggressively towards their girlfriends (Ministry of Equality, 2015). Furthermore, intimate partner violence (IPV) mediated through technology appears to be a problem among young couples more than in the general population, where ¼ of girls aged 16- 19 years reported being controlled via phones by their partners vs. 9.6% of the total women’s sample. Another study on teenage perceptions on teen-dating violence (TDV)<sup>2</sup> found that one in three young people consider it acceptable in some circumstances to “control the partner’s schedule”, “prevent the partner from seeing their family or friends”, “not allow the partner to work or study” or “tell them what they can or cannot do”. In the law on gender-based violence there are number of educational measures aimed at training future teachers in gender equality. Law recognizes that teachers play a key role in the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) and identification of young people experiencing it. The need for including these issues in teacher training curricula is also supported by the existing research data<sup>3</sup>.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology used consisted of quantitative methods in the collection of evidence. A questionnaire was developed with the goal of collecting evidence on awareness of secondary school teachers on their attitudes and strategies to address cyber SGBV in youth partner relationships. Besides demographic information, the questionnaire covered the following topics:

- Recognition and awareness of gender stereotypes and roles in a school setting (different expectations from boys and girls in school, different assignments/tasks, etc.)
- Attitudes to GBV and cyber SGBV (and specifically in youth partner relationships)
- Recognition of GBV and cyber SGBV (in youth partner relationships)
- Awareness of the scope of problem of cyber SGBV among their students/in their school
- Teachers' experiences (i.e. encountering the problem of cyber SGBV in youth partner relationships)
- Addressing GBV and cyber SGBV in youth partner relationships
- Teachers' perception of their role in addressing cyber SGBV in youth partner relationships.

The questionnaire contained a combination of open and closed questions. Closed type questions were in the form of nominal and ordinal scales. The filling out of the questionnaire lasted approximately 15 minutes. This questionnaire was prepared in English by CESI – Center for Education, Counselling and Research and finalized with inputs provided by partner organizations. The questionnaire was translated and adapted to the national contexts (i.e. depending on types of schools and teachers, their roles in the education system).

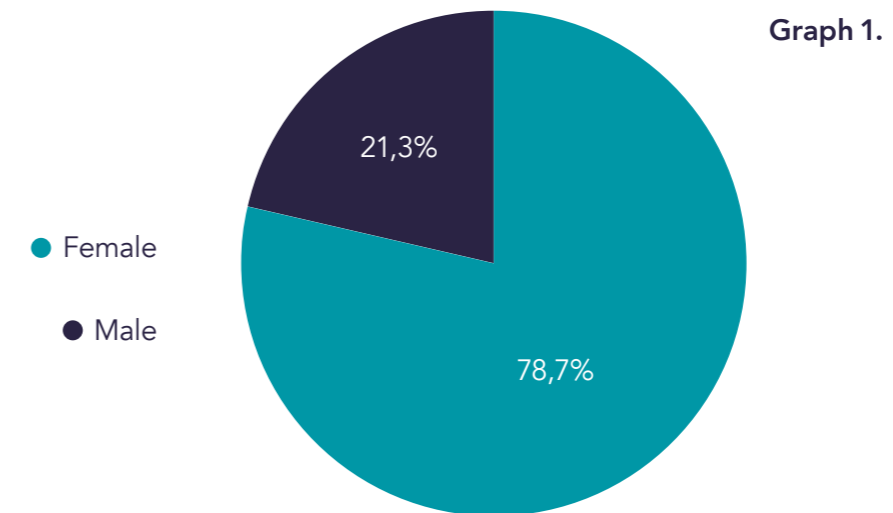
The data collection procedures varied among countries. In Croatia, the questionnaire was administered on-line using Survey-Monkey. In Catalonia (Spain) an on-line survey was also used while in Hungary data were collected online using e-mail communication, social media or professional mailing lists. Serbia opted for collecting data via pen and paper procedure through contact persons for further dissemination to interested school staff in different schools. Data were collected from December 2019 until March 2020.

Instead of the envisaged sample of 200 teachers in each partner country, most countries had slightly larger samples: Croatia (N=384), Hungary (N=235) and Serbia (N=209) while Catalonia (Spain) obtained the agreed sample of 200 teachers. Convenience (nonprobability) sampling was used, in accordance with the exploratory type of research and project goals, which does not enable the generalization of obtained results. The interpretative framework of the analysis emphasizes the active role of traditional gender relations, embodied in gender inequality that is supporting gender-based violence.

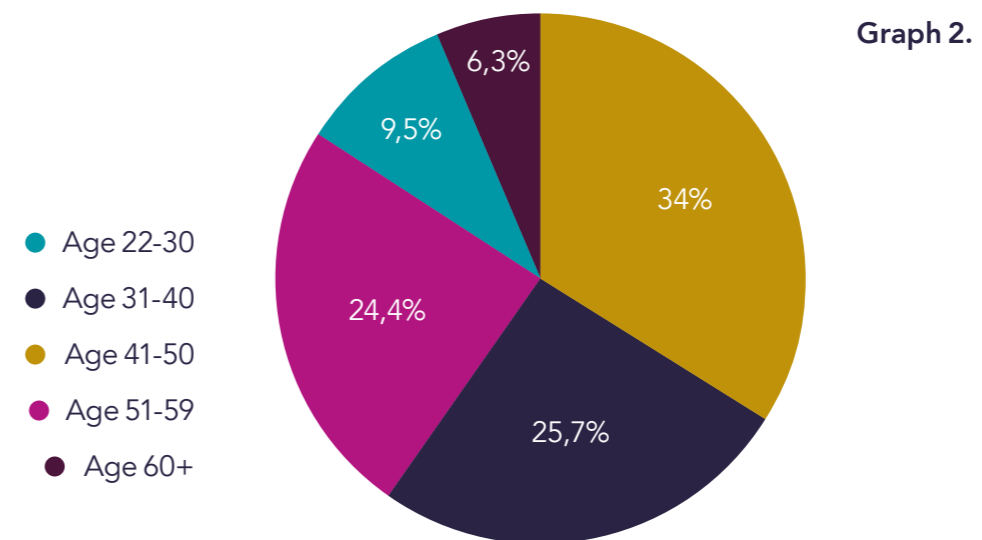
## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1. Demographic characteristics of the sample

The sample structure (N=1028) across gender and age was as follows: 78.7 % females (N=808) and 21.3% males (N=219) (**Graph 1**).



The majority of respondents were in the age group 41-50 years (34%), followed by the age group 31-40 (25.7%) while 24.4% were in the age group 51-59; 9.5% in the age group 22-30 and 6.3% aged 60+. (**Graph 2**).





**Table 1.** presents the type of school where teachers work according to the school systems in each partner country. The survey targeted high school teachers, but the Hungarian sample also included a small number of teachers working in primary schools and other institutions.

**Type of School**

**Table 1.**

	Primary	Secondary	Vocational	Grammar	Art	Public High School	Private High School	Other Institution
Spain						84% (168)	16% (32)	
Hungary	3% (6)	91% (213)						3% (7)
Serbia			67,9% (142)	23% (48)	9,1% (19)			
Croatia			76,6% (294)	20,6% (79)	2,9% (11)			

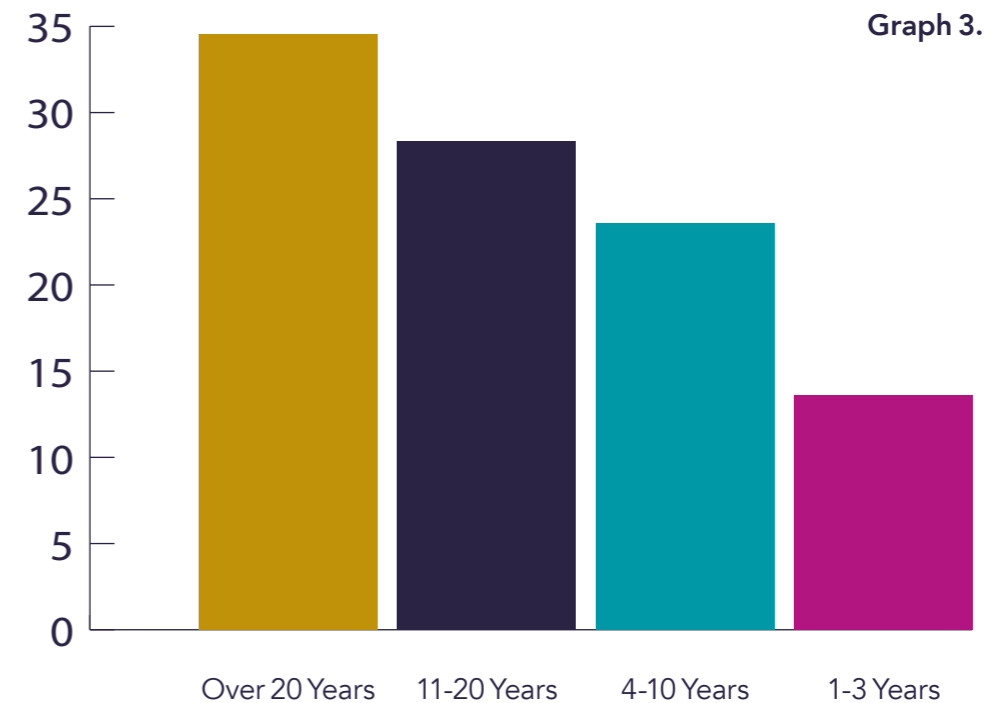
According to the position in school (**Table 2.**), the majority were teachers followed by other professionals working in schools.

**Position in School**

**Table 2.**

	Teacher	Psychologist/ Pedagogue	Other (school principal, librarian, teaching assistant, etc.)	Teacher of Vocational Subject	Practical Training Teacher	School Support (school psychologist, remedial teacher)	Social Worker
Spain	77.5% (155)	13% (26)	0.5% (1)				
Hungary	80% (188)					11% (26)	3% (11)
Serbia	55.5% (116)	8.6% (18)	0.5% (1)	42.6% (89)	5.3% (11)		
Croatia	83.1% (319)	12% (46)	4.9% (19)				

Most teachers have considerable teaching experience in schools: 34.5% have over 20 years of experience; 28.3% have 11-20 years of experience; 23.6% of teachers have from 4-10 years of teaching experience; and 13.6% have under 3 years of teaching experience (**Graph 3.**).



### 3.2. Gender stereotypes & roles in school:

Aiming to measure teachers' gender discriminative behaviour at school towards students, they were asked to indicate for a series of statements, whether what each statement describes happens equally to male and female students or whether the statement is not applicable specifically to either sex. The statements were related to different expectations and tasks: having better grades; being better in languages, maths; being quieter in the classroom; suspected more if something has been broken; assign the task of cleaning, helping with the computer equipment/computer programmes or carrying something.

In all countries there is an observed prevalence of gender discriminative behaviour towards students to a certain extent. Reported gender stereotypical expectations, roles and behaviours are very similar across countries.

- In **Spain**, the prevailing gender discriminative behaviour among teachers include the following: boys are mostly assigned the task of carrying something and they are suspected more if something has been broken while the dominant expectation for girls is to be quieter in the classroom. In all the other examined situations, majority of teachers reported having no gender specific expectations or tasks for students.
- In **Serbia** results show a moderate presence of gender stereotypes. Boys are expected to use physical strength, to be more active and be better at using computer technology and somewhat better in mathematics, while girls are expected to be more passive and quieter, with better school results, especially in learning languages, and perceived as more appropriate to do cleaning tasks.
- In **Hungary**, prevailing stereotypical expectations, roles and behaviours among teachers are as follows: boys are expected to help with the computers, are mostly assigned the task of carrying something and are suspected more if something has been broken. A dominant expectation for girls is to be quieter in the classroom. In other examined situations, majority of teachers reported having no gender specific expectations or tasks for students.
- In **Croatia**, teachers' gender discriminative behaviour at school towards students is still prevalent to a certain degree. Gender stereotypical expectations, roles and behaviours are observed among teachers e.g. girls are expected to be quieter in the classroom and boys are expected to execute tasks that require physical strength (i.e. carry something) or help with the computers and are being suspected if something has been broken.

### 3.3. Gender based violence & cyber-sexual gender based

Teachers' opinions and attitudes towards GBV and cyber SGBV were measured using different statements containing some of the existing gender stereotypes, prejudice or common myths about violence. Respondents were asked to express the level of agreement on a five-point scale.

- In **Serbia** results show no presence of explicit prejudice by respondents regarding gender-based violence and cyber sexual and gender-based violence in intimate youth partner relationships. Almost all teachers/school staff find it unacceptable to justify violence in romantic/intimate partner relationships by the "right" of the boyfriend to act in such a way towards his girlfriend, or by the "inappropriate" appearance (i.e. clothes worn) or behaviour of the girl. Explicit agreement was registered in the attitude that sex without consent is rape. However, school staff is of the opinion that there exists a "gender symmetry" in the violent behaviour of youth of both sexes, where a little over half of them agree that girls are equally violent as boys. A significant number of respondents is not sure or has some prejudice regarding statements on the knowledge and experiences about sexuality (i.e. young people learning about sexuality through pornography) or about the psychological nature and dynamics of abuse in a romantic/intimate partner relationship (i.e. it's easy to leave an abusive relationship). Also, school professionals are undecided about the level of trust young people have in them when it comes to the disclosure and seeking help in concrete cases of abuse.
- In **Croatia**, teachers' opinions and attitudes towards GBV and cyber SGBV reflect a certain level of awareness on the topic. In that regard, the majority of teachers disagree with the normalisation of violence (e.g. it's justified for a boy to slap his girlfriend) and common myths about violence (e.g. girl wearing short skirts and tight tops is to be blamed if someone attacks her; sex without consent is rape even when the person did not resist). Most of them are familiar with the dynamics of violent relationships (e.g. agree that it's not easy to leave an abusive relationship) and not inclined to victim-blaming attitude (e.g. it's not a girl's fault if her naked pictures sent to a boy end up on the Internet). Interestingly, the perception of the majority of teachers is that girls are equally violent as boys. On certain issues, it proved difficult for teachers to assess whether students trust teachers/school professionals enough to ask for help in cases of teen-dating violence; whether young people learn about sexuality through pornography; or whether girls are dressing provocatively to attract boys' attention, so the majority of them remained undecided.
- In **Spain**, most teachers do not hold victim-blaming attitudes and are aware of the dynamics of abusive relationships. The majority agree that the way a girl dresses does not make her responsible for suffering violence; that sex without consent is rape even if the person did not resist; that violence against women is never justified; that it's not easy for a victim to leave an abusive relationship; and that it's not a girl's fault if her naked pictures sent to a boy end up on the Internet. Although the majority of teachers do not think that girls are equally violent as boys, a quarter of them agree and a third of them are undecided on

the issue Disagreement was expressed on all the statements related to girls dressing provocatively to attract boys' attention, although a quarter remained undecided. A little more than a half of teachers think that young people learn about sexuality through pornography. Also around half of teachers are unable to assess whether students have trust in them when it comes to seeking help in cases of teen-dating violence compared to a third that think students have trust in them and a fifth that think the opposite.

- In **Hungary**, the majority of teachers are not inclined to victim-blaming attitudes. They disagree that a girl deserves violence because of her "provocative" clothes; that violence sometimes can be justified and that sex without consent is rape even if the person did not resist. Also, they are aware of the dynamics of abusive relationships where the majority holds the opinion that it's not easy for a victim to leave an abusive relationship. Although the majority think that it's not the girl's fault if her naked pictures sent to a boy end up on the Internet, a third of the teachers are prone to a victim-blaming attitude. When it comes to learning about sexuality issues, nearly half of the respondents agree that students learn about sexuality through pornography, while a third disagree with it and a quarter of them are undecided. A similar situation is observed regarding the statement that girls are dressing provocatively to attract boys' attention - nearly half of the respondents agree, and a third disagree. The opinion of the majority of teachers is that students don't have trust in them to disclose and seek help in cases of teen-dating violence, while a third of the teachers are undecided on the issue.

There are observed similarities across countries regarding teachers' opinions and attitudes towards GBV and cyber SGBV. Teachers mostly hold victim non-blaming attitudes and display awareness of the dynamics of abusive relationships. It also proved difficult for teachers to assess whether students have enough trust in them to seek help in cases of teen-dating violence.

### 3.4. Awareness of the scope of the problem & teachers' experiences of cyber SGBV among their students

Teachers were asked about their awareness of and attitudes about the **scope** of the problem of gender-based violence their students are exposed to, as well as about the extent to which this **topic is present** in formal and informal communication between different school representatives. Respondents were also asked whether they have any concrete information (direct or indirect) about the **experiences** of their male and female students facing this problem, as well as how this experience **affected** them.

- In **Croatia**, insight into teachers' knowledge; perception and awareness of the problem of teen-dating violence showed that only ¼ of teachers think that teen-dating violence is a serious problem among students. However, they report that teen-dating violence is a topic of conversations, both formal and informal with students and to a lesser extent a topic of professional conversations (and informal conversations) among teachers. With regards to encountering or hearing about the cases of teen-dating violence in their school, around half of the teachers had not encountered or heard about cases, while a little less than a half were informed about such cases. A higher number of teachers report that they were informed directly or indirectly that their female students were more often victims of violence (i.e. physically, psychologically, or sexually abused in their intimate relationships) compared to their male students.

Teachers were also asked if they happened to be informed that a student of theirs experienced different forms of cyber sexual and gender-based violence in intimate relationship. Teachers' reported being informed (directly or indirectly) about a female student in intimate relationship experiencing technology facilitated violent behaviours from a boyfriend. More prevalent were controlling behaviours and threats, i.e. forms of psychological violence (e.g. excessive messaging, including threatening ones that made her feel scared). Cyber sexual violence is also present, but to a lesser extent compared to psychological violence. Teachers also reported that experienced violent behaviours negatively affected the female student (i.e. it was serious and disturbing for her). When asked about being informed about a male student in intimate relationship experiencing technology facilitated violent behaviours from a girlfriend, teachers reported lower prevalence of violent behaviours. The most prevalent, but to a lesser degree in comparison to girls, is cyber violence and threats (e.g. writing nasty things about him on her profile page, sending threatening messages).

Teachers reported that the experienced violent behaviours negatively affected the male student, while some noticed (or were informed) that violent behaviours were perceived as funny and harmless by the student.

- In **Hungary**, most teachers assessed that teen-dating violence is not a serious problem among students. More than half reported that it is not a topic of conversations with students. The topic is more widely discussed informally among teachers than professionally. Also, it is not a frequent topic



of conversations with parents where a little less than fifth of teachers report discussing it with parents. Regarding encountering or hearing about the cases of teen-dating violence in their school, around half of the teachers had not encountered or heard about cases, while half of them were informed about such cases. Teachers were more often informed about female students being victims of violence compared to their male students. A little more than half of teachers were informed directly or indirectly that a female student experienced in her intimate relationship psychological abuse, while almost a quarter was informed about physical violence and a fifth were informed about sexual violence against a female student. A third of teachers were informed that their male student experienced psychological violence in his intimate relationship.

Regarding specific forms of cyber sexual and gender-based violence in intimate relationships, data show great gender differences. Around a third, up to a half of teachers reported being informed that their female students were exposed to such experiences. Most frequent forms of abuse experienced by female students are spreading rumours about her using a cell phone/e-mail/social networks; writing nasty things about her on his profile page; sending her threatening text messages; using her social networking account without her permission and using information from her networking sites to harass her or put her down. Fewer teachers reported being informed male students were exposed to such experiences. The most frequent forms of abuse experienced by male students reported by the teachers were spreading rumours about him using a cell phone/e-mail/social networks writing nasty things about him on his profile page. Although the majority of teachers were not able to assess how cyber GBV affected their male and female students, almost a half of them were informed or noticed that it had a negative impact on girls and a fifth of them reported negative impact on boys.

- In **Serbia**, almost half of teachers do not know whether teen-dating violence is a serious problem among their students, while others think it is or that it is not a serious problem in similar proportion. Still, most respondents state that this is a topic of informal conversations among teachers in their school, while almost half of them were of the opinion that this is a topic of conversation with students either as a class topic or informally. Two fifths of respondents have never heard or were not informed about a case of teen-dating violence affecting male and female students in their school. Similarly, this topic, in the respondents' opinion, is not a topic that is talked about professionally among teachers in their school, though a third of respondents have a positive answer to these questions. This is also not a frequent topic of conversations with parents. There were much more teachers that have no knowledge of a concrete experience of male and female students from their school with different forms of violence. In addition, respondents had more information on the experience of psychological than physical and sexual violence in intimate relationships. The majority of teachers were informed directly or indirectly that their female students were more often victims of physical, psychological and sexual violence in their intimate relationships. Physical and sexual abuse of female students is six times more present than in case of male students while psychological abuse is twice as present in relationships of female students than in those of male students.

When it comes to specific forms of cyber sexual and gender-based violence in intimate relationships, data show great gender differences. Twice as many teachers have information about female students being exposed to such

experiences compared to the number of those having information about male students. Most frequent forms of abuse experienced by female students are spreading rumours about her using a cell phone/e-mail/social networks; receiving threatening messages and being made afraid if she did not respond to his calls/messages.

Regarding the same forms of abuse experienced by male students the most frequent were: writing nasty things about him on his profile page; and spreading rumours about him using a cell phone/e-mail/social networks which is almost twice less frequent compared to the experience of female students. Based on information of school teachers, there is a sharp asymmetry in the experiences of male and female students when it comes to particularly grave forms of cyber sexual violence (e.g. creation and publishing of pornographic material or threats to send sexual materials), where girls' exposure to such violence is six to seven times more frequent than in case of boys. Cyber GBV affected those exposed to them negatively, and teachers perceive it was serious and disturbing for girls twice as often as it was for boys. In the case of boys, the "funny effect" (i.e. perceived as funny and harmless) is more present, according to teachers.

- In **Spain**, less than a half of the teachers do not perceive teen-dating violence (TDV) as a serious problem among their students while a third of them do not know. A fifth of the teachers is unable to assess whether TDV is a topic of conversations with students while others think that it is or is not in similar proportions. The topic is more widely discussed informally among teachers than professionally. Moreover, it is not a frequent topic of conversations with parents. Regarding encountering or hearing about cases of teen-dating violence in their school, around half of the teachers had not encountered or heard about cases while half of them were informed about such cases. Teachers report that they were informed directly or indirectly that their female students were more often victims of violence (i.e. physically, psychologically or sexually abused in their intimate relationships) compared to their male students and the most frequent type of abuse was psychological abuse.

When it comes to specific forms of cyber sexual and gender-based violence in intimate relationships, data show great gender differences. Around a third of teachers reported being informed that female students were exposed to such experiences. Most frequent forms of abuse experienced by female students are spreading rumours about her using cell phone/e-mail/social networks; sending her threatening text messages; using information from her networking sites to harass her or put her down; excessive messaging that made her feel unsafe or scared. A smaller number of teachers reported as most frequent forms of abuse experienced by male students spreading rumours about him using a cell phone/e-mail/social networks and writing nasty things about him on his profile page. Compared to males, female students experienced cyber sexual and gender-based violence 3 to 6 times more often in intimate relationships. Majority of teachers reported that cyber GBV negatively affected both female and male students, where more teachers were informed such acts had negative effect on girls. Almost a third of teachers reported noticing that boys perceived such situations as funny.

Teachers' awareness of the scope of the problem and experiences of cyber SGBV among their students is similar across countries where some teachers assessed that teen-dating violence is not a serious problem among their students, some do

not know, while others think it is a serious problem. As a topic of conversations, teen-dating violence is present, but more as a topic of informal than professional conversations among teachers. It is also a topic of conversations with students, but very rarely present as a topic of conversations with parents. Teachers do encounter cases of teen-dating violence in their work. The common finding across countries is that teachers were more often informed about female students being victims of violence in their intimate relationships compared to male students. In addition, regarding cyber sexual and gender-based violence in intimate relationships, data show gender differences. Female students experience cyber sexual and gender-based violence in intimate relationships more often. Although cyber GBV affected those exposed to them negatively, teachers' perception is that it was more serious and disturbing for girls while in case of boys the "funny effect" of such acts is noticed.



### 3.5. Teachers' ability to provide help to students experiencing (cyber) teen-dating violence

Teachers and school professionals were asked to assess whether their current knowledge and skills enable them to help their male and female students in situations of disclosure of cyber sexual and gender-based violence. Also, they were asked whether male and female students ever approached them to ask for their help, whether they were able to help and how. In addition to this, they were asked whether they think it is their role to respond to this problem through their work and with students, and then to assess their knowledge on cyber sexual and gender-based violence in intimate relationships of youth and express their needs regarding this problem, as well as their opinion on needs of youth concerning the mentioned topics.

- In **Serbia**, though a number of school professionals have fairly good knowledge, over half of them assess it as partial, and a good number as poor. The data also show that youth most often do not turn to their teachers or other members of the school staff in situations when they are exposed to violence, including gender-based and sexual violence, even less in cases of digital forms of such abuse in their romantic/intimate partner relationships. Teachers' information about the experiences of digital abuse comes equally from direct disclosure by victims, as well from friends of victims. At the same time, parents rarely communicate with school representatives about these problems. Teachers' answers confirm that most of them knew how to and could help in a concrete case of violence. The most frequent form of provided help was referring students to other relevant school representatives, and therefore the increase of knowledge and skills, as well as development of inter-sectoral communication in the community should be interventions of empowerment for the school staff.

Most teachers believe that their role should be to address the topic of cyber sexual teen-dating violence in their work with students. Regardless of teachers' good self-assessment on knowledge concerning GBV, there is a significant share of those who believe they have poor or average knowledge. Only a small share of respondents says they are actively involved in prevention measures related to this phenomenon in their school. Most state a need for professional training and useful education materials, as well as the need to have information about contact persons in all relevant services, but also to improve multisectoral cooperation the school could be actively involved in. As for the needs of youth concerning the investigated topic, education, availability of materials, awareness raising of youth on the problem and changes in youth attitudes, and more generally, changes of the system of values, are most frequent responses of school professionals.

- In **Hungary**, around half of the teachers assessed being able to partially provide help to students, experiencing physical, psychological, sexual and cyber abuse in their relationships based on existing knowledge and skills. 2/5 of teachers rated their knowledge on cyber sexual teen-dating violence as



average compared to less than a quarter of them assessing their knowledge as fairly good or very good. The majority of teachers believe that their role should be to address the problem of cyber sexual teen-dating violence in their work with students, but also with the help and support of the school psychologist/pedagogue.

More than half of the teachers reported that they have not been asked for help by the students or someone close to students due to teen-dating violence. A fifth reported being asked for help by female students, and a tenth of teachers reported being asked for help by both female and male students, while a very small number reported being asked for help by male students. In cases of cyber teen-dating violence a smaller number of students sought help from teachers. In cases of teen-dating violence and cyber teen-dating violence, more teachers reported being asked for help by a female student than by a male student. Almost half of teachers reported that they were able to help students while a fifth did not feel they could provide help. Helping strategies included referring a student to a school psychologist; involving parents and fellow teachers; or implementing preventive actions. The vast majority of teachers reported not being involved in prevention work. Those who implement prevention activities mostly use materials produced by civil-society organizations. Teachers reported as needed for young people in terms of knowledge, skills and activities related to the problem of teen-dating violence/cyber sexual teen-dating violence the following: development and skills building (i.e. self-image, self-confidence, conflict resolution skills); raising awareness (i.e. recognizing abusive behaviour, help-seeking options, building trust among teachers and students) and education (i.e. sex education, education on pornography, on-line behaviour).

- In **Croatia**, around a third of teachers assessed being able, having in mind current knowledge and skills, to provide help to students experiencing physical violence, cyber violence in a relationship and to a lesser extent provide help in cases of psychological and sexual abuse in a relationship.

Although the majority of teachers reported never to have been approached and asked for help by students because of teen-dating violence and cyber teen-dating violence, some of them reported that they have been asked for help by students or someone close to students (friends or parents). More teachers reported being asked for help by a female student than by a male student. Additionally, around a third of teachers reported that they were able to help compared to a third that said they were not able to help. Teachers' helping strategies included: referring student to school psychologist/pedagogue; following the school policy/protocol in cases of violence; initiation of prevention activities; referring student to support service in the community; and following the National protocol in cases of violence. Also, teachers reported that they talked and offered support to students (i.e. female students); talked to parents; or helped her to talk to the parents and not to feel guilty or responsible for the relationship abuse.

Around 2/3 of teachers believe that their role should be to address the problem of cyber sexual teen-dating violence in their work with students but also having the support of the school psychologist/pedagogue. The majority of teachers rated their knowledge on cyber sexual teen-dating violence as average. 1/4 of teachers are involved in prevention work, by implementing various prevention programmes/workshops designed by CSOs; or school prevention programmes,

or as a part of particular education (i.e. Health education). To be able to better address the problem of teen-dating violence that occurs on-line and in reality, teachers assessed the following as important: education and training; contact points/services where they can send students; educational materials; experts working with them as mentors; school policy on teen-dating violence; and better multisectoral cooperation. When asked what is needed for young people in terms of knowledge, skills and activities related to the problem of teen-dating violence/cyber sexual teen-dating violence, teachers' responses included prevention and education; and providing counselling, support and help.

- In **Spain**, the majority of teachers assessed being able, at least partially, to provide help to students, experiencing different forms of violence in relationships (i.e. physical, psychological, sexual and cyber abuse). When asked if any of their students ever approached them seeking help because they were suffering from teen-dating violence (TDV), the majority replied negatively. However, there were almost a quarter of teachers who reported being asked for help by a female student in case of TDV and less than fifth being asked for help by a female student in case of cyber TDV. Notably more teachers reported being asked for help by a female student than by a male student. Also, a tenth of teachers reported being asked for help by victim's friends. Also, a remarkable number of teachers reported being able to help students. Most used helping strategies included referring the student to the school psychologist/counsellor; initiating prevention activities in the class and following the school's protocol. The majority of teachers believe that their role should be addressing the problem of cyber sexual teen-dating violence in their work with students but also having the support of the school psychologist/pedagogue. When asked if the schools and teachers should be involved in the protection and safety of students from cyber sexual teen-dating violence, the absolute majority replied affirmatively. Half of respondents rated their knowledge on cyber sexual teen-dating violence as average compared to a third that rated their knowledge as poor and a fifth assessing the knowledge as fairly good. 2/5 of teachers reported being actively engaged implementing TDV prevention programmes and activities.

To be able to better address the problem of teen-dating violence that occurs on-line and in reality teachers' assessed as the most important: education and training; contact points/services where they can send students; experts working with them as mentors; and educational materials. Teachers' opinions on what would be needed for young people in terms of knowledge, skills, and activities in relation to TDV include raising awareness and creating safe space for students to talk openly as well as education (i.e. workshops, peer-education, activities related to the topic in the classrooms).

Insight into the countries' data shows that there is a strong need among teachers and school professionals for additional knowledge and skills building regarding the issue of (cyber) teen-dating violence. There is also a recognized need of students regarding knowledge and skills related to TDV. Teachers believe that their role should be addressing the topic of cyber sexual teen-dating violence in their work with students. However, most often young people do not turn to their teachers for help in situations when they are exposed to (cyber) teen-dating violence. But when young people turn for help to teachers then a gendered dimension of the problem is visible across countries - more teachers reported being asked for help by a female student than by a male student. As expected, most teachers expressed the need for professional training and useful education materials, as well as the need for contact points/services where they can send students.

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the research on secondary school teachers across countries and national recommendations, joint recommendations were prepared regarding teachers, schools and decision makers in the field of education. Considering research findings, recommendations can be grouped into two categories.

### RAISING AWARENESS, EDUCATION AND PREVENTION

1. Provide education on gender issues and gender-based violence at the university level as a part of training of students that will work with youth in the future,
2. Ensure a programme of formal, basic education for the teachers and school staff, especially focusing on deconstructing their gender stereotypes and gender discriminative behaviour towards students,
3. Ensure support and help for teachers who wish to be involved in the prevention work and implement various programmes and activities with students,
4. Implement trainings and workshops in school for high-school students on teen-dating violence, including cyber sexual and gender-based violence,
5. Ensure that relevant topics (e.g. gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence in youth partner relationships, digital security) are implemented as part of regular or optional school subjects and extracurricular activities,
6. Improve teachers' knowledge on mechanisms and ways of recognizing, reporting and responding to cyber teen-dating violence and referring students to services in the community,
7. Encourage students to seek help in situations of teen-dating violence and especially cyber sexual violence, inform them about who they can turn to for help and encourage them not to be passive bystanders,
8. Work on establishing a positive school climate and culture that supports gender equality and has zero tolerance to gender-based violence and build trust of students in teachers and school staff,
9. Facilitate information exchange and cooperation between school and parents as well as between the school and all relevant institutions/organizations in the community in the prevention and protection of students from all forms of violence, including cyber sexual and gender-based violence in intimate youth relationships.

### REGULATION

1. Work on establishing clear rules, procedures, protocols which address students' need to be safe in the physical and digital environment,
2. Where needed, work on establishing protocols and guidance to institutions and schools how to deal with cases of teen-dating violence, especially cyber sexual and gender-based violence in intimate youth partner relationships,
3. Improve legal protection from all forms of gender-based violence in physical and digital environment with special emphasis on intimate youth partner relationships.





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