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Supporting Girls and Young Women Victims of Sexual Harassment in Schools: 'Me and You and Everyone We Know'.

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TITLE: Supporting Girls and Young Women Victims of Sexual Harassment in Schools: "Me and You and Everyone We Know".

ABSTRACT:

This article highlights an innovative project, across three European countries Italy, Sweden and Romania, that used pictorial designs to empower young women to demand the right to live without sexual harassment.

Abstract figures in terms of race and gender of young people were produced on cards, which allowed the imagination of the viewer to interpret and discuss these images freely. Other cards had definitions and scenarios.

The cards generated discussion and comments both with the young participants and educational professionals.

Data is very hard to obtain on levels of sexual harassment and the project revealed that there was a need to educate female and male students on this, as well as to educate professionals of its long-term impact.

The three countries had different degrees of openness to addressing sexual harassment of girls in schools. The results may not be generalisable to the UK and researchers would like to use the tool developed in other countries.

The focus groups with young people in schools highlighted different attitudes towards sexual harassment in girls and young women, between the young women and men, and variations in the three countries.

More resources may be needed to deal with the issue as problems are uncovered.

This paper gives a voice to young people to discuss an issue, sexual harassment, that is addressed to varying degrees in the countries involved. The competition for young people to produce posters led to some amazing creative ideas.

Supporting Girls and Young Women Victims of Sexual Harassment in Schools: 'Me and You and Everyone We Know'.

Abstract

This article highlights an innovative project, across three European countries (Italy, Sweden and Romania), that used a pictorial co-design educational tool to empower young women to counter sexual harassment and abuse. Data is very hard to obtain on levels of sexual harassment and the project revealed that there was a need to educate female and male students, as well as professionals of its long-term impact.

The co-designed cards generated discussion and comments both with the young participants and educational professionals. Focus groups were organised in the three countries with students using the co-design tool. What emerged from those focus groups are different attitudes towards sexual harassment and how this may affect girls and young women in the three participating countries. This article reflects upon the use of a transnational co-design tool to prevent sexual harassment and abuse in schools. The main aim was to promote a dialogue with young people on the complexity of issues surrounding this topic in order to promote change in this area. Findings from this project revealed that there was much variation between the three countries in a number of important areas, such as the support and knowledge base on the issue.

Introduction

Me&You&Everyone We Know was an international EU-funded project that aimed to prevent sexual harassment and violence in high schools. It was co-funded by the European Commission's Rights, Equality and Citizenship 2014/2020 Program, and was one of the transnational actions developed to combat sexual harassment and violence against women and girls. In 2 years of intense work and confrontation with adolescents and adults, it produced a tool (a set of cards) to promote educational conversations about violence in intimate relationships. Five organisations participated in this project: Comunità Nuova e CODICI Ricerca e Intervento (Italy), Youth for Youth (Romania), FRYSHUSET (Sweden) -four non-governmental organisations, and Middlesex University (UK) -the two authors, AG and MC, were the evaluators of the project. The need for this project grew from work that had been carried out by CODICI Ricerca e Intervento in schools in Italy. However, this had been rather unsystematic and had led to the need to further develop a tool that could be used to address this topic with young people in schools.

The Council of Europe has an aim of achieving greater unity between its members and states when it comes to the issue of young people's sexual abuse and harassment:

Considering that every child has the right to such measures of protection as are required by his or her status as a minor, on the part of his or her family, society and the state:

Observing that the sexual exploitation of children, in particular child pornography and prostitution, and all forms of sexual abuse of children, including acts which

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3 are committed abroad, are destructive to children's health and psycho-social
4 development:
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6 Observing that the sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children have grown to
7 worrying proportions at both national and international level, in particular as
8 regards the increased use by both children and perpetrators of information and
9 communication technologies (ICTs), and that preventing and combating such
10 sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children require international co-
11 operation (Council of Europe Convention, October 2012, reprinted July 2014).
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15 The main aim was to produce a transnational co-design educational tool that could be used
16 with male and female students, as well as teachers and other educational professionals to
17 highlight the insidious nature of sexual abuse from what might be construed as minor
18 harassment to issues far more serious. Other aims included encouraging empowerment in
19 the students to confront and challenge sexist behaviour, but also offering support and advice
20 to victims. At the same time, it was considered important to upskill teachers, other staff
21 employed in high schools, and the professionals who were tasked with the responsibility of
22 engaging in student and staff support in confronting sexual harassment.
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26 The project is best considered as a piece of participatory action research (Bell and Waters,
27 2018; Robert, 2013) in that students with the evaluators and the practitioners working in the
28 project collaborated in the development of the educational tool to be used in the schools in
29 the three countries. There was regular feedback to the practitioners as the differences in the
30 national practices and cultural contexts were explored and understood by all. The
31 organisations involved in the project met in the three countries, sharing experiences and
32 issues and there was a session in the UK specifically on the process of the evaluation, which
33 can be defined:
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37 as an approach in which the action researcher and members of a social setting
38 collaborate in the diagnosis of a problem and the development of a solution based
39 on the diagnosis (...). In action research, the investigator becomes part of the field
40 of study (Bryman, 2012, 397).
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44 This is different to evaluation research where typically an intervention is tested by having one
45 group exposed to the intervention to be compared to a similar group that has not. The results
46 from the project we argue are not partisan, rather the practitioners, school professionals and
47 the students were all heavily involved in the diagnosis and potential solutions to the problem
48 of sexual harassment of girls and young women in the schools. The evaluators worked with
49 the project organisations in the three countries to understand the nature of sexual
50 harassment in their schools, the cultures and regulation in each country and how the
51 intervention could be operationalised. As well as our meetings in each country, there was
52 regular discussion on Slack, an online channel-based messaging platform. It was a learning
53 process and it took longer to learn about the nature and scope of sexual harassment towards
54 young women in each country than had been expected. The process however provided plenty
55 of opportunity to draw on the knowledge, experience and expertise in each country and led
56 to the project having a wide European perspective. Key research questions in this project
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3 were: how was sexual harassment understood in the different countries? What cultural
4 norms were violated and what was the reaction of officialdom to this?
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6 The educational tool that was developed drew on the experiences of the young people and
7 was piloted, revealing approval that the scenarios (described later in the article) were
8 accurate and real.
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11 The tool was used in a number of focus groups in the three countries. Whilst each group
12 completed a feedback form on their experiences at the end of each group session, it was not
13 appropriate for statistical analysis (a copy is attached at the end of the article). This is not a
14 quantitative piece of research. However, we were able to read participants' comments and
15 gain an appreciation of how useful the sessions had been, to see through the 'eyes' of the
16 participants the phenomenon we were trying to address and better understand their
17 perspectives.
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19

20 21 **Background**

22
23 As Fontes (2015) explained that teenage relationships often do not last as long as adult ones,
24 and the young person may also be living with parents or other adults. Consequently, the
25 process of developing control and isolation over the young person may not have had time to
26 develop. There may not be complete coercive control but still the victim can suffer serious
27 harm. They may feel miserable for a considerable length of time, which can have destructive
28 long-term effects. Fontes (2015) commented further that teens may lack personal experience
29 of peer relationships. They may also have witnessed coercive control in their parents'
30 relationship. A young person may lose contact with her friends and become dependent on
31 the controlling young partner for support, keeping this secret from adults. The behaviour
32 acted out by the young woman is often defined as 'edgework', where the acts around the
33 boundaries between danger and safety, undertaken by the edge-worker, are not rational but
34 are for the reward of emotions and sensations they produce (Naegler and Salman, 2016). Play
35 can be used to reinforce domination through slaps and rough play. We wanted to explore
36 these, and other aspects raised by students, to empower them to develop resilience and
37 resistance to being exploited or becoming an exploiter. The aim was to give rise to their
38 agency, in a pro-social manner of self-determination for young women, and gender respect
39 for young men.
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46 In the United Kingdom there have been high profile cases where young white women have
47 been sexually exploited by Asian men. As Thiara and Coy (2014) point out, this 'public
48 discourse' has been challenged and the exploitation of young Asian-Muslim girls has taken
49 place in their own communities. Drawing on the work of Gohir (2013), they add:
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52 Gohir asserts that offenders in these communities were often confident they
53 'would not be caught because their victims were unlikely to report them' because
54 the threat of shame and dishonour serves to silence victims (2013:26). Notably the
55 research identified limited knowledge about sex and lack of information about
56 predatory men as issues for Asian-Muslim girls, highlighting the importance of
57 prevention-education work in schools (Thiara and Coy, 2014: 182).
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3 In Europe the Lanzarote Convention is the first regional treaty dedicated specifically to the
4 protection of children from sexual violence. It entered into force in 2010 and has been signed
5 by all Council of Europe Member States. This states:
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8 Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse are among the worst forms of violence
9 against children. It is estimated that about one in five children are victims of some
10 form of sexual violence in Europe and that in about 80% of cases, the abuser is
11 somebody that the child knows. Sexual violence against children can take many
12 different forms, such as: sexual abuse within the family or circle of trust, sexual
13 exploitation through prostitution or sexual abuse materials, sexual violence
14 facilitated by the Internet, and sexual assault by peers (Lanzarote Convention,
15 2010: 2).
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19 In this article and in the project, we have adopted a cultural criminology approach towards
20 sexual harassment and abuse (Schofield, 2004; Hall and Winlow, 2004; Ilan, 2019). Whilst Ilan
21 described cultural criminology as broad and inclusive, gender and sexuality have often not
22 taken priority within this discipline. Despite this, the emphasis on emotion, sensation and
23 experience is helpful in understanding, in Katz's terms, the seductive nature of gender
24 relationships (Naegler and Salman, 2016). Whilst warning of the danger of rendering women
25 as passive, Naegler and Salman warn that cultural criminologists view 'erotic desires and
26 thrills' as being the same for men and women, rather than critically examining culturally
27 gendered differences.
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31 Gender differences in responding to physical violence has been emphasised in recent
32 research by Barter (2014), which included a larger survey with young people across the UK.
33 This was completed by 1,353 people: a finding from this large survey was that 76% of girls and
34 14% of boys said that physical violence had impacted on their welfare. More worrying was
35 that girls more often stated that the violence made them feel "scared, frightened upset or
36 unhappy", whilst boys generally saw the violence as "amusing, sometimes annoying", but
37 rarely producing "a negative emotional effect". Furthermore, "nearly 75% of girls and 50% of
38 boys reported some form of emotional violence from a partner" (Barter, 2014: 67). No female
39 interviewee admitted to using any form of sexual violence, some males did, stating that this
40 was normal and routine. Controlling their partners, for some boys, was a source of pride. The
41 research also revealed that boys used sexual coercion as a threat within their relationships,
42 forcing girls to go further sexually than they wanted to. Older partners used the age difference
43 to emphasise sexual immaturity, again as a threat that the girl would be replaced by an older
44 partner. Three quarters of all incidents of sexual violence occurred with an older partner -at
45 least two years older.
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51 In this project we focused on sexual harassment, as well as sexual violence. When trying to
52 define sexual harassment, Stanko (1992:331) writes:
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55 Sexual harassment, one form of intimidating behavior by men,
56 takes many forms. A general definition includes unwanted sexual
57 attention, such as leering; sexual teasing; jokes, comments, or questions
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3 aimed at one's sexuality; unwanted pressure for sexual favors
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5 or dates; unwanted touching or pinching; and unwanted pressure
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7 for sex with implied threats of retaliation for non-cooperation. Some
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9 women also report sexual assault and rape as sexual harassment.

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11 This is a definition written in the nineties and we are aware that it is not inclusive of the LGBT
12 community. Therefore, we use it to provide some context, being aware about its limitations
13 in our current society. Its limitations identify girls as victims and boys as perpetrators; while
14 we do not deny that this may often be the case, we take a critical stance towards gender
15 stereotypes and assumptions.
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18 Hayward (2012), drawing on cultural geography, challenged criminologists to consider the
19 relationship between culture, structure and space, rather than empiricism, power and
20 meaning. This requires an appreciation of the interdisciplinary nature of meaning and
21 technological change. Young people in this project have embraced changes that have left
22 many parents and teachers behind. Their culture, whilst still imbued with notions of
23 patriarchy, has fast communications that simultaneously convey news, excitement and risk.
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26 As an example, the ecology of the inner city, made famous by the Chicago School, was
27 developed from above, rather than below, denying individuals a sense of agency.
28 Criminological enquiry must be sensitive to the voices of the disempowered:
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31 Sauer's understanding of space differed sharply, then, from that proposed by the
32 Chicagoans. It was a notion that attempted to appreciate and comprehend how
33 individuals and groups lived in place and, in turn, shaped it, not the other way
34 around (Hayward, 2012, 446).
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38 To give a more accurate picture of the scale of the problem in England, the Department of
39 Education quoted from recent studies that found over a third (37%) of female students and
40 6% of male students at mixed-sex schools have personally experienced some form of sexual
41 harassment at school. Almost a quarter (24%) of female students and 4% of male students at
42 mixed-sex schools have been subjected to unwanted physical touching of a sexual nature
43 while at school. Girls (14%) were significantly more likely than boys (7%) to report that their
44 partner had pressured them to share nude images of themselves in the last year (Department
45 of Education, May 2018).
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49 *Working together to safeguard children* is the HM government guidance in England for inter-
50 agency working to protect children. It applies to all agencies that have functions relating to
51 children. It gives the legislative context, principally the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004. The
52 threshold for intervention is high but the central tenet is that there must be a child centred
53 approach and the welfare of the child is paramount. It acknowledges that "children may be
54 vulnerable to neglect and abuse or exploitation from within their family and from individuals
55 that they come across in their day-to-day lives" (2018:8).
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59 The guidance draws on the work of Carlene Firmin (2015) who developed the concept of
60 contextual safeguarding. This approach was designed to identify, assess and intervene in the

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3 social conditions that allow abuse to occur, beyond the immediate concern for the welfare of
4 individuals. Most recently, this has been extended to consider the association between
5 different relationships (Firmin and Lloyd, 2020). This allows practitioners to consider, for
6 example, how the grooming of a young person might affect the relationship with their family.
7 The other useful term is context weighting, which refers to which context is most in need of
8 intervention, and what is the best way to make the young person safe. This could be taking
9 action in the school, supporting the young person and/or their parents. Safeguarding
10 becomes essential to equip all those in contact with young people with the knowledge and
11 skills to protect them.
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16 Increasingly a public health rather than a criminal justice approach has been promoted to try
17 and eradicate serious violence. Public Health England (2018) commented that the evidence
18 does not support a single risk or protective factor, instead it postulated an ecological
19 framework that considered violence as an outcome of many risk factors: individual,
20 relationship, community and societal -all of which were equally important.
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23 Research into the understanding of girls' awareness of sexual violence can reveal worryingly
24 low levels of knowledge and naivete. A study in a girls' Catholic Secondary School by
25 Southampton Rape Crisis (SRC) revealed that sexual assault was assumed by the girls to be
26 carried out by unknown males. Furthermore, they assumed that this was when females put
27 themselves at risk by being alone in unsafe areas – an assumption that blamed the victim.
28 They were surprised to discover that sexual assault mostly occurred within relationships,
29 often after a period of grooming (Barry and Pearce, 2014). The girls were very keen to discuss
30 relationships in the school environment and, whilst the SRC had assumed that it would feel
31 safer for girls to talk about sex and relationships in single sex groups, this was not the case.
32 They were given the clear message that what was wanted was mixed gender sessions in order
33 that boys could also learn, within a safe and facilitated environment. For this reason, in this
34 project we utilised a mixture of single sex and mixed groups of young people. In terms of the
35 level of sexual awareness in the schools in the three countries, we did not want to make
36 assumptions and wanted to learn from the participants about their experiences.
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42 Romania is still facing up to the problem of sexual harassment and it is more difficult to assess
43 the scale of the issue as it is under-researched. Mostly research was carried out by national
44 no-governmental organisations in the workplace rather than in schools and colleges.
45 According to a study on the website Romania-Insider.Com reporting on a survey undertaken
46 by 'BestJobs', 44% of Romanian employees had experienced sexual harassment at work. 86%
47 were women and 56% stated it had been at least three times. The report *Harassment related*
48 *to sex and sexual harassment law in 33 European countries* (2011) stated that in some
49 countries, which included Romania, it was not accepted to accuse someone of sexual
50 harassment and the victim might be found guilty of having incited the other person to
51 harassment.
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56 In Italy, on the other hand, data on the incidence of sexual abuses or harassment in school
57 are missing or difficult to access, although cases of school staff abusing young students are
58 reported in the media, including the national press. Crimes of sexual violence or stalking can
59 only be investigated if the victim files a formal complaint. ISTAT, the National Institute of
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3 Statistics (ISTAT, 2018), estimated that for women aged between 14 and 65 years of age
4 43.6% were victims of sexual harassment in the course of their lives. In the last three years
5 15.4% had been sexually harassed.
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8 In Sweden the problem of sexual harassment in schools has been known about for a long
9 time. Witkowska and Menckel (2005) conducted an anonymous, self-report survey that
10 examined the magnitude of the sexual harassment and their perceptions of the problems
11 faced by female high school students. 540 female students took part and 49% of these
12 identified sexual harassment as a problem with their school. The common element in
13 Romania, Sweden and Italy is that sexual harassment is a problem, irrespective of the
14 legislation and formal processes set up to combat this distressing attack on personal space
15 and freedom.
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19 **Methodology**

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21 This research project was informed by the principles of the experience-based co-design
22 (EBCD) approach (Bate and Robert, 2007; Robert 2013; Donetto et al. 2014) and action
23 research (Robson and McCartan 2016). The EBCD approach is in essence participatory and has
24 mostly been applied within clinical settings (Locock et al, 2014). The EBCD methodology aims
25 to gain access to the 'user' experience, (in this case students, teachers and other educational
26 professionals) by inviting them to participate in interviews, focus groups and story-telling
27 opportunities. Participants had an active role in giving their views and experiences, which
28 were used to develop a series of cards, some pictorial, others with prose, which were then
29 piloted and used.
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33 These cards drew on real life experiences and all elements represented on the co-design tool
34 combined to give participants, female and male the opportunity to discuss sexual harassment
35 and how it can be challenged and countered. The project was determined to challenge
36 stereotypical depictions of young women as passive victims. The emphasis is on examining
37 the convergence of the cultural and criminogenic processes that transpire (Ferrell, 1999)
38 when young women are faced with sexual harassment and violence.
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42 The project was innovative for several reasons. First of all, because the educational tool and
43 activities were tested and evaluated whilst being sensitive to the particularities of the
44 different school environments, such as: the prevalence of male/female students, teachers or
45 staff; the presence of cultural or religious minorities; the average socio-economic level of
46 enrolled students; the specific history of the school in relation to previous cases of sexual
47 harassment or violence. Secondly, because the project activities addressed not only students
48 and teachers, but the wider school staff and environment: school managers, school boards,
49 parents' representatives, administrative staff, cafeteria staff, janitors, guidance counsellors,
50 security and so on. Thirdly, because the design of the educational tool was based on new
51 technologies, through the collaboration with ICT experts, a multidisciplinary design studio
52 that combined art, architecture, construction and design. Fourthly, because the designing of
53 the educational tool was put into practice with participatory methodologies, through the
54 direct involvement of students, teachers and school staff.
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3 As explained by Robson and McCartan, action research “adds the promotion of change to the
4 traditional research purposes of description, understanding and explanation. Improvement
5 and involvement are central to action research. There is, firstly, the improvement of a practice
6 of some kind; secondly, the improvement of the understanding of a practice by its
7 practitioners; and thirdly, the improvement of the situation in which the practice takes place”
8 (2016:199). In the findings, we discuss the co-design educational tool (a set of cards) and we
9 reflect on the focus groups that were carried out with students in schools in the three
10 countries.
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14 In total, the project worked with 674 students in Italy, 770 students in Romania and 764
15 students in Sweden. This was in small groups that could be single and/or mixed sex. More
16 details of the groups are given later in the article. The facilitators in all countries were highly
17 skilled and experienced. They were able to create a safe space for the students to discuss
18 aspects of sexual harassment without making it threatening or personal. The scenarios were
19 devised by the students and were realistic, allowing them to think about how sexually abusive
20 relationships can develop and how they can be challenged.
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24 At the end of each session a feedback form was completed and gave an indication of how the
25 session had progressed. A copy of the form is included at the end of the article. Follow-up
26 support was available from the facilitators and counselling services within the schools. The
27 subject of sexual abuse within schools is an ongoing topic and schools will continue to address
28 the subject after the project ended. The cards became an educational resource for teaching
29 staff who also attended groups to learn how to use them. The evaluation gives a picture of
30 the contents and focus of the groups and demonstrates that they were largely able to engage
31 the students in discussion. It is important to state that all the projects were working on sexual
32 abuse and harassment in the schools but had lacked a tool that could be used systematically
33 with students. This is the innovation that was developed and tested and is now available to
34 be used more widely.
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39 Results

40 a. The set of cards

41 An example of the project outcomes was the creation and production of a set of cards that
42 were used by young people and adults to discuss the topic of sexual harassment. In this article,
43 we will particularly engage with an analysis of these visual tools. Rose (2012) cautions that
44 visual research methods can lead to ethical problems if actual photographs are used. In this
45 project abstract figures in terms of race and gender of young people were produced, which
46 allowed the imagination of the viewer to interpret and discuss these images freely. The cards
47 generated discussion and comments both with the young participants and educational
48 professionals. They stimulated educational conversations about harassment and violence in
49 intimate relationships among teenagers, and among adults and teenagers. These educational
50 conversations were meant to be guided, reflexive and profound discussions surrounding
51 participants’ meanings, understandings, emotions and values when thinking about violence
52 in intimate relationships. When thinking about this type of violence, there is an array of
53 violent behaviours that have been taken into consideration, such as, for instance, sexual
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3 harassment, bullying and gender-based violence whether online or offline. The aim of these
4 activities with young people and the use of these cards can help to deconstruct stereotypes
5 and gender-based role models so that young people can develop their own critical thinking.
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8 The set of cards was developed through the collaboration of all the partners at the
9 international meetings held in the three countries every six months, taking into consideration
10 transnational perspectives on the issues at stake.
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12 This tool has also been piloted with young people and school professionals and is very much
13 based upon their own experiences. The pack consists of 67 cards, some of which are shown
14 below, organised in 5 categories: characters, landscapes, emotional and relational key words,
15 common sense statements and definitions. The character cards (see image 2) represent ten
16 different people that can potentially be involved in a situation of violence with different roles:
17 as victims, perpetrators, witnesses, rivals or supporters. Some cards represent a single
18 individual, while others depict a group of people like friends and family. The landscape cards
19 (see image 3) show ten different scenarios, like, for instance, social media, a party or a
20 classroom. The 'common sense' cards (see image 4) consist of eleven statements that put into
21 question stereotypical views on how boys and girls should behave or feel concerning
22 sexuality, emotions or gender expression. The definition cards (see image 4) represent
23 statements defining phenomena such as gender- based violence, sexual harassment or
24 sexism. The emotional and relational key word cards (see image 5) are 21 meaningful words
25 concerning people's approach toward relationships. They describe emotions, attitudes and
26 feelings.
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Image 2. Character cards



Image 3. Landscape cards



Image 4. Common sense statements and definitions



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Image 5. Emotional and relational key words



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3 The story cards describe nine stories about violence in intimate relationships among
4 teenagers. The writing on these cards is too small to show pictorially, so here are two
5 examples of the stories on the cards. The stories were developed from discussions with
6 students and they were seen as being 'real' in the piloting exercises, with both students across
7 the three countries and professionals.
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10 The first story is titled the *Instagram Story*. One afternoon, Emily and Rose – two students of
11 senior year - decide to open an Instagram account called "Winner & Losers" to comment on
12 their schoolmates to choose the most uncool among them. They start to post pictures of girls
13 and boys commenting on their weight, their outfit and their lifestyle. The account gains
14 thousands of followers in a bunch of hours: they are amazed by the success of the page and
15 they ask the followers to share the photos and add comments. The mood of the comments,
16 however, begins to change quickly, becoming more and more vulgar, with explicit sexual
17 insults and threats referring to the guys depicted as sluts or faggots. The day after – during a
18 outdoor party in a city park – a girl confront another girl who wrote several negative
19 comments on her and it ended up in a huge fight among dozens of teenagers. The rumor of
20 the fight reaches the school principal that decides to investigate on the Instagram account in
21 order to find out the owners. Emily and Rose are identified as the account managers and as
22 a disciplinary provision they are suspended for three days. After a day of silence on the social
23 networks, they decide to write a joint letter on their Facebook profile saying that the
24 disciplinary provision is unfair because they meant the account to be a joke and the
25 responsibility for what happened has to be taken on by those who wrote the comments.
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32 The second story is about Ann and Philip, who have been together for three years and a half
33 from the age of fourteen. It has been the very first emotional relationship for both of them,
34 and also the very first opportunity to explore sexuality and pleasure. They got to know each
35 other's desires and bodies and after a while they got used to exchange erotic text messages
36 and sexy pictures to stimulate their intimacy. Unfortunately, few months ago they broke up
37 because Ann didn't feel to be in love with Philip anymore. One evening Philip is home with a
38 bunch of friends, chatting and drinking to recover from the break-up. While using Philip
39 computer to find a movie to watch all together, his friend Luke finds out Ann's sexy pictures
40 and messages in a folder. He shows the pictures to the others and they start making jokes
41 about Ann's body and sexual preferences and to drink to Philip's sexual experiences. At some
42 point some of the pictures are sent to Kyle and John – two friends who couldn't come that
43 night – to involve them in the joke that send them also to their girlfriends who are Ann's
44 schoolmates. Philip – who is mad at Ann because she decided to break up with him – decides
45 to send it also to some friends of the school soccer team to tease her.
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51 In a few hours many friends and classmates got to see Ann's naked pictures that appeared
52 rapidly on social networks. For several days after that evening Ann received SMS and/or email
53 commenting on her body or insulting her for her sexual life. Philip is sorry for what happened,
54 he didn't expect that so many people would have seen the pictures. However, he thinks Ann
55 took those photos voluntarily so she cannot blame him if people judge her sexual habits.
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58 Representation of diversities were carefully taken into consideration in order to allow every
59 player to identify with the figures and the situations depicted. The stories, in particular, have
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3 been designed to create a fictional scenario within which participants could learn to deal with
4 complex issues in a safe space and to exchange views on their emotions, values and opinions
5 drawing on the experiences of the characters. The stories could be read in small groups, and
6 few generative questions could be given by the facilitator to help participants frame the
7 discussion. Questions could deal with an array of perspectives: emotions, roles, social
8 expectations and so on.
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11 The definition cards were designed to help naming and framing effectively the experiences
12 explored with the other cards. They could help participants to locate the group discussion
13 within a wider framework and to compare the lexicon of meanings on violence in intimate
14 relationships created within the group with those elaborated by the institutions. They could
15 be used by the facilitator to support a debriefing session of the workshop or by the
16 participants themselves to ask for support within a group discussion.
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20 The pack was designed to promote identification with the experiences and emotions lived by
21 the characters, meaning by identification the deep ability to put oneself in the shoes of others
22 and to experience his/her point of view. The emotional and relational key word cards could
23 be used to explore the feelings and emotions of each character and to compare them with
24 the ones of the participants; while each story could be read picking up the perspective of one
25 of the characters (like the victim, the perpetrator, the family, the teachers et cetera) allowing
26 participants to prove themselves with different viewpoints.
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30 Overall, the function of the pack was to generate new thoughts and new attitudes toward
31 intimate relationships: in order to overcome stereotypes and role models and to promote
32 freedom, self-determination and mutual respect. All the stories were open ended, meaning
33 that they could be re-written adding new characters and/or changing the characters' choices
34 and behaviours. The character cards as well as the landscape ones could be used to create
35 brand new stories, drawing upon the creativity of the participants; participants could also
36 create their own new card to add what they thought was missing in the pack in terms of
37 definitions, key words, characters, common sense statements or landscapes.
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41 The pack was also designed to help participants understanding how socio-cultural models of
42 gender, sexuality and relationship shaped individual behaviours and deconstructing
43 stereotypes and prejudices. The common-sense cards were explicitly designed for this
44 function: they questioned statements of common sense that lied behind belief and
45 behaviours about identities and relationships – like differentiated expectations on boys and
46 girls – and could be used to open up a second layer discussion. They could be used alone as
47 generative stimulus, or they could be integrated in the process of reading, discussing and
48 deconstructing the stories. These cards were a tool that could be adapted to the objectives
49 of each workshop in each country.
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54 **b. Focus groups with students**

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56 By drawing on the content contained in the cards it was possible to elicit spontaneous
57 responses. It produced a rich source of responses from the participants who found the
58 process to be real and relevant to themselves. Power is a theme that found a great deal of
59 resonance in the young people. Rose (2012) commented that in Foucauldian terms power is
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3 everywhere and is not something imposed in a top-down manner. It is discourse that provides
4 the discipline and generates the sense of self. This was the essence that the project sought to
5 explore: to make explicit the discourse of masculinity and how this is located within the
6 intersection of power and knowledge.
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9 **Italy**

10
11 In Italy the project worked with a total of 674 students, 419 female and 255 male. All groups
12 ran for a minimum of two sessions, many with three. There was a total of 92 group sessions
13 and 36 different groups. There were 8 groups of professionals who participated in 14 group
14 sessions. The card activities based on the stories and landscapes were particularly successful
15 as participants enjoyed engaging in role playing or discussing specific stories. Although less
16 successful, the activities based on the definition and common-sense cards helped participants
17 to think about the importance of language and some of the groups also thought about
18 possible solutions, such as reporting sexual violence/harassment to parents and/or the police
19 and providing sanctions for perpetrators. Empathy, responsibility and awareness were also
20 mentioned as particularly relevant. Role playing worked well and the repertoire from the
21 cards led to a deepening of relationships between participants. A question frequently asked
22 was: what is harassment?
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28 Facilitators reported that group dynamics were not always easy and in some of the workshops
29 it was difficult to engage young people into discussion. There was evidence of early
30 nervousness, the subject of sexual harassment was different from their usual school
31 curriculum. This led to discussion of school policies, responsibility and trust. Trust was a word
32 that came up in many of the feedback forms from the groups. Boys were sometimes described
33 as aggressive and the girls as being judged. When this occurred, it was not a very comfortable
34 experience for participants.
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37
38 Not all were prepared to expose themselves and to give their personal opinions. Classes could
39 become quite tense, with some students keen to get involved, others less so. In some groups
40 some boys did not want to participate, and then commented that they felt that they had been
41 judged. There could be exasperation: "It sucks but how do I change it?" Another commented:
42 "Boys only think of...and get angry if you refuse." There were a number of comments that the
43 punishment meted out for sexual harassment and violence was not severe enough.
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47 A girl asked to join a group from another class as word got round about the project. A group
48 of boys described the experience of discussing sexual harassment as a "stimulating
49 challenge." At the end of an all-boys' group, an individual approached the facilitators about
50 sexuality and relationship issues. In other workshops, young people were involved in the
51 discussion and they also managed to share personal experiences.
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53
54 Sometimes there were striking disagreements between boys and girls views. Some
55 conversations were described as being "high level", and when this occurred there was less
56 need for the facilitators to intervene, even when some of the group were silent. This was less
57 of an issue when the group was sub-divided, for example there might be 20 students in the
58 full group, which could be intimidating for a shy student. It highlighted the need for the
59 facilitators to be highly skilled and able to adapt the discussions within the groups according
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3 to the ability and willingness of the groups to engage in meaningful discussion. Nevertheless,
4 it was felt that some students had learnt empathy and reciprocity from the sessions.
5

6 What was encouraging was students requesting that the project should continue to help
7 individuals to recognise their own prejudices and the importance of working on them. We
8 were told about a case in one school, from the previous year, where a relationship between
9 two pupils had become abusive, resulting in the male student had been suspended. The young
10 woman was still scared of what he could do and was seeing a psychologist. The class teacher
11 was amazed that the young woman was still affected by the situation. Clearly, there was a
12 need to educate the staff of the long-term damage that sexual abuse causes.
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16 **Romania**

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18 In Romania the project worked with a total of 770 students, 456 female and 314 male. There
19 was a total of 31 different groups, with between one and three sessions. The discussions
20 facilitated with card stories were extremely successful and participants were very active in
21 the process of recognising characters' feelings and also in identifying methods to prevent
22 sexual harassment. All cards with feelings were considered useful, especially when thinking
23 about a particular moment in the stories. Definition and common-sense cards were also very
24 successful.
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28 Word of the group sessions spread in the schools and this was seen positively by the students,
29 who were highly motivated to participate. Students could recognise the feelings generated
30 by the characters in the cards and in identifying ways of preventing sexual harassment. One
31 piece of active learning from this particular group was the power of one (male) individual to
32 affect the dynamics of the entire group (15 male and 14 female, aged 17). One group was
33 tried in a local park and this was felt to be successful. The tool was felt to be appropriate for
34 out of school activity. There were short discussions and what emerged was the students' lack
35 of knowledge about concepts such as empathy, consent or vulnerability. The group reinforced
36 the need for education as many of the young people did not take the subject of sexual
37 violence seriously.
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42 Three groups were run with 14 year olds, and these were very revealing. In the first group
43 students were very receptive due to the fact that in their school a group of students had
44 started an online group similar to Gossip Girls (an American teen drama series). This spread
45 rumours regarding the personal lives of others. The school Director had punished the girls
46 before talking to them, which they did not agree with. However, the girls had not felt
47 responsible for their actions and they thought that this was wrong too. They had not
48 considered how those they had targeted would feel and hadn't asked for consent to use their
49 photos and to launch a contest. They started from a position where individuals were
50 completely either a victim or a perpetrator and as discussions continued, they agreed that
51 100% certainty was inappropriate.
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56 They thought that punishment for those who started harassment was wrong, it was better
57 for them to participate in a meeting where they could reconsider their actions, take
58 responsibility and try to correct what they had done. In other words, a restorative approach,
59 although they did not use this terminology. Arguments were based on their lived experiences
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3 and they could be very firm in their beliefs, however they could put themselves “into the
4 shoes” of the victim, which led them to think people should think twice before acting
5 improperly. Victims would need support from the school and peers to overcome the trauma
6 they suffered.
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9 Students took time to recognise the continuum of sexual harassment, especially what they
10 described as soft behaviours. As they began to understand the complexities around sexual
11 harassment some participants experienced some revulsion, when they reviewed their own
12 behaviour. An enthusiastic group of 17 year olds found that definitions helped them in their
13 understanding of sexual harassment. Indeed, this was called a breakthrough for most of the
14 participants. The group was interested in online forms of sexual harassment and commented
15 that this environment had the power to develop the identity of the user or to destroy it. They
16 were also enthusiastic about the role play. Revisiting the story of Vicky, they changed their
17 opinion about a character who was initially thought of as a perpetrator. They realised that it
18 was possible to see an individual as a perpetrator, when this might not be the case. Other
19 interesting comments focused on gender differences, when they felt that girls “often felt
20 attracted to older/mature men who put them in a vulnerable position.” They recommended
21 better education within the family but also in schools with a focus on human interaction,
22 emotional development and how to build a trustworthy relationship. Parents were often the
23 ones who encouraged unhealthy attitudes.
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29 Students could be judgemental about particular aspects of sexual harassment, for example
30 keeping erotic pictures on their phone. This led to an appreciation that teenagers, mostly girls,
31 must be educated about intimacy and not to try and “impress” by exposing their sexuality.
32 Discussions on violence between partners, what is a good relationship and what is trust, led
33 to thoughtful ideas being expressed on how to understand prejudice. Expressed emotion
34 could be strong, with participants feeling “revolted” to find out that they were “perpetrators
35 of sexual harassment at least one time so far.”
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39 The project succeeded in challenging and changing attitudes. At the beginning of one group
40 there was comment that jokes between friends that minimised sexual harassment was OK,
41 because they were friends. Later on, this was reconsidered, and the offensive nature of the
42 jokes led them to say that they would feel uncomfortable to be surrounded by these “friends.”
43
44

45 In terms of the school environment, there was scepticism about proposing new policies for
46 preventing sexual harassment as they felt that existing rules were not well implemented.
47 Students were not aware of existing policies so there was a need to find ways of publicising
48 these and making official communications more explicit. This was a consistent theme across
49 the groups and in different schools. Responsibility however was seen as shared obligation
50 because schools and students needed to cooperate in order to make successful interventions.
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54 Punishment, without more elaborate interventions, was not seen as helpful. Students needed
55 to be helped to grow into being “responsible and peaceful citizens.” As one student put it:
56 “school is like a jungle with predators and victims that rarely change roles.” This was not what
57 they wanted. School policies should be based on more elaborated interventions, as, in the
58 majority of the cases, participants were unaware of the school policies that were in place.
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Sweden

In Sweden a total of 764 young people were seen over the life of the project. This was mostly in the 33 workshops attended by 639 individuals. The final event proved to be very popular with the students and 60 entered the competition, resulting in 32 images being uploaded for public view. Class size varied between 18-31 students and might include a majority of young men or of women. In addition, the project reached over 2000 of Instagram/Facebook viewers and over 1000 persons during the event in April 2018 which was held in one of Europe's largest malls. In total the project involved 3834 individuals in Sweden. The workshops were particularly successful; young people were interested in the cards and in exploring each one of them. The students were good at engaging with the role play. After a while, facilitators noticed that students really cared about the stories discussed. The cards helped them to identify with the characters. The question cards were also used and students participated well in the discussion.

Some of the work that took place in the student groups reflected the same concerns that were noted in the sessions with the professionals. Students wanted schools to take more responsibility for sexual harassment. Students enjoyed activities such as role play, but this didn't mean that they listened to each other. They could reflect on their own stereotypes and opinions but did not always listen to other views. This might be linked to lack of respect for alternative views. Indeed, in some groups (16 year olds), the students made fun of each other and did not take the session seriously. This immaturity led them to place responsibility on to the teachers. In marked contrast to this in another group (16 year olds), the students listened and respected each other's opinions, which led to good discussions. The main issue for this group: "was that the adults around them in the school didn't take their responsibility seriously when it came to this issue, they thought that the teachers should step in and take this more seriously."

Initially, in some groups, sexual harassment was not seen as a serious problem. However, later some students commented that this had changed. There appeared to be a process of 'normalisation' in terms of behaviour in the school and they now realised that "you should let people know if you see that 'they' are doing something wrong." This placed the responsibility on the students' themselves not to ignore sexual harassment.

Other interesting ideas emanating from the groups were the need to make people aware of the existence of sexual harassment, and the desire of some young people to learn more about how teachers deal with sexual harassment. One group specifically putting the onus on adults to talk to students about sexual harassment. In the workshops it was apparent that some students did not understand what sexual harassment meant. For example, it was not OK to take pictures in the locker room. There was ignorance that this was against the law and could not be excused as a bit of fun. Students, despite starting from a low knowledge base, were enthusiastic in the role play and entered fully into the discussions.

There was a much discussion on the differences between how boys and girls were seen when it came to sex. Girls were talked about negatively when it came to sex and could be called names, whereas boys were just named a "king" or "cool." Even though Sweden has more laws

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3 and regulations than many European countries to protect young people from sexual
4 harassment, this did seem to lead to a more enlightened level of knowledge in the students.
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6 **Conclusion**

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8 Going into schools in Italy, Romania and Sweden revealed there was much variation between
9 the three countries in a number of important areas. Firstly, the support and knowledge base
10 of the different professionals varied, and this impacted on who the project collaborated with,
11 in the work with young people. In some countries, teachers might be a resource to be drawn
12 on in terms of their knowledge of their students and how this might help to focus the work
13 on sexual harassment. In another country there was denial that this problem existed and
14 therefore the project workers ran groups without involving the teachers. External 'experts'
15 might be helpful to the project work as their lack of expertise was exposed, revealing the need
16 for them to receive training in working with sexual harassment. The hard work that the
17 facilitators put into the preparation for the groups is evident in the work that led to the writing
18 of an 'Educational policy for workshop implementation', available on the website.
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23 The readiness of the students to discuss and work on issues of sexual harassment varied
24 remarkably between the countries. Even in countries where there was insight, the need for
25 the project was still abundantly evident. This indicated the importance of this work in all the
26 countries. Not all students recognised that what was happening in their country between
27 young men and women was sexual harassment and there was a need to develop the concept
28 of empathy and personal responsibility for behaviour and etiquette between the sexes.
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32 The positive message across the participating organisations was that the tool that has been
33 developed was highly useful and enabled a systematic approach to be adopted. The
34 usefulness of the tool is still being refined and its use differed between the countries. It will
35 be useful to understand why particular cards were used, their benefits and how they were
36 introduced. In some countries the organisations are likely to be asked to continue this
37 important work, but in others it will need to be picked up by teachers and other professionals.
38 However, will they be ready and willing to do this without further training?
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42 It is worth stating that this project was not a piece of research to ascertain whether sexual
43 harassment exists, nor the extent of this worrying social problem. This was the focus of an
44 earlier EU funded project by Milnes et. al. (2015), funded by the European Commission's
45 Daphne III programme, which found that nearly three-quarters of the 253 young people in
46 Bulgaria, Italy, Latvia, Slovenia and the UK had been subject to one or more sexual bullying
47 experiences on more than one occasion at a similar prevalence rate across the five countries.
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50 Instead, much of the work of this project involved the development and the use of the set of
51 cards, that were fit for purpose to engage with young people, and professionals, to enable
52 discussions to take place on sexual harassment. They had to work with all kinds of
53 relationships, different genders, sexualities etc. and the feedback from the project workers is
54 that they have been able to do this.
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58 The many groups that were run across the three countries demonstrated the effectiveness
59 and potential of the co-design educational tool. It was possible to see that it can challenge
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3 and affect attitudes and beliefs in students from early teenage years to older ages. It also
4 worked with professionals, especially when motivated, and perhaps this is one of the key
5 findings from the project, that schools need to be explicit about their policies on sexual
6 harassment, as this is a serious problem that all involved in the lives of our students have
7 responsibility to address.
8
9

10 **Acknowledgements**

11
12 We would like to thank the organisations involved in this project and, in particular, the team
13 of social workers, educators and researchers working in Milan (Comunità Nuova Association,
14 CODICI Ricerca e Intervento Action Research Agency), Goteborg (Fryshuset Foundation) and
15 Bucharest (Youth for Youth Association). Their contribution has been essentially throughout
16 fieldwork and data collection.
17
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19 The cards were produced by Arianna Vairo:

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21 https://www.instagram.com/arianna_vairo/?hl=it She is an illustrator and printmaker who
22 was involved in the design of the cards. Her visual research work in representing human
23 beings, bodies, gender, relationships, emotions and her artistic choices deeply influenced
24 the tool we created. <https://www.instagram.com/meandyouchallenge/> This website also
25 shows some posters designed by young people who participated in the project.
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29 The cards are available on the SALTO website:

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31 [https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/me-you-everyone-we-know-set-of-](https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/me-you-everyone-we-know-set-of-cards.2672/)
32 [cards.2672/](https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/tool/me-you-everyone-we-know-set-of-cards.2672/)
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34 SALTO-YOUTH stands for Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities for Youth.
35 It works within the Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps programmes. It is a
36 network of seven Resource Centres working on European priority areas within the youth
37 field. As part of the European Commission's Training Strategy, SALTO-YOUTH provides non-
38 formal learning resources for youth workers and youth leaders and organises training and
39 contact-making activities to support organisations and National Agencies (NAs) within the
40 frame of the European Commission's Erasmus+ Youth programme, the European Solidarity
41 Corps, and beyond.
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Appendix

Data collection and evaluation form

(to be completed after each session, to be signed by each participant)

Country

City

School

Group

Number of sessions

Total Duration

Session ① ② ③	Date: __/__/__	Time: __:__:__
N. of participants _____	Male __ Female__	Age range _____
Facilitators names		

Activities	How successful do you think the activity was? (On a 1-5 scale)	How engaged were the professionals? (On a 1-5 scale)
<input type="checkbox"/> icebreaker or team building activity		
<input type="checkbox"/> project/session introduction		
<input type="checkbox"/> activity based on the story:		
<input type="checkbox"/> activity based on "definition" cards		
<input type="checkbox"/> activity based on "common sense"		
<input type="checkbox"/> activity based on "landscapes" cards		
<input type="checkbox"/> activity based on "key words" cards		
<input type="checkbox"/> activity about guidelines, school policies or local action plans		
<input type="checkbox"/> "M&Y Challenge" activities		
<input type="checkbox"/> others (describe)		

What went particularly well and why?

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What went not so well and why?
Briefly list and comment on the main issues raised in the workshop.
Were the cards/stories selected appropriate for this session? Why?
Participants' proposals raised about how to prevent/contrast sexual violence/sexual harassment in secondary schools
What was the key learning from the session?
Other comments

Safer Communities

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