



European
Commission



“RAISING CHILDREN’S AWARENESS OF GENDER (IN)EQUALITY IS CRUCIAL IN PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN”

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The GEAR against IPV project aims to contribute to the prevention of Intimate Partner/Dating/ Sexual Violence (IPV/DV/SV) among teenagers. The main beneficiaries are teens (12-16 years old), at some risk (general teenage population) or at high risk (abused/neglected/vulnerable children 12+ years old) of becoming survivors or perpetrators in the future. GEAR uses child-centred approach and the teenagers are not taught in a classical manner but, instead, are guided to explore their own attitudes.

FOR FAR TOO LONG, VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN HAS BEEN HIDDEN BEHIND GENDER STEREOTYPES AND SOCIETAL NORMS, WHICH ARE STILL PREVALENT AMONG ADULTS IN THE EU AND RARELY ADDRESSED WITH YOUNG PEOPLE.

These stereotypes and behaviours start being established from earliest childhood, but solidify during adolescence. Hence, exposing teens to the topics of gender stereotypes and equality, e.g. through school interventions related to these topics, is important as a means of preventing gender-based violence. One such form of violence is Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), i.e. violence between partners in a romantic relationship.

GEAR against IPV (short for: Gender Equality Awareness Raising against Intimate Partner Violence) is an EU-funded project working with schools in seven EU countries that focuses on promoting gender equality among adolescents in order to prevent IPV. The project invites girls and boys to assess and challenge their culturally “inherited” gender

NON.
NO.
NEIN.

#SayNoStopVAW

“The Workshop made me understand what a healthy relationship is and how to create one.”

George Kostas, student, GEAR against IPV, EVAN

stereotypes through debate, role play and experiential exercises and to approach differences between the sexes as individual differences rather than innate characteristics of the superiority of one sex over the other. For example, in one exercise boys and girls match cards revealing stereotypical phrases such as “A woman without a man is... like a ship without a steering wheel”, giving them the opportunity to discuss whether these phrases are true and to challenge them.

In Greece, more than 30 groups in 21 schools and 11 Houses of “The Smile of the Child” (who offer shelter and support for children who have experienced abuse or neglect and those who are at risk or belonging to vulnerable groups) as well as 90 school teachers have been involved, securing participation of 500 adolescents altogether. Kiki Petroulaki, President of the European Anti-Violence Network, who leads the project, says: “This initiative is of immense importance for Greece. Funding opportunities for similar projects are very limited, so this is one of very few opportunities to increase students’ and teachers’ awareness about gender stereotypes and inequality, and IPV. The project is also hugely popular and successful: most of the schools spend considerably more than the minimum number of teaching hours on the workshops and at least 13 more schools have chosen to run the project on their own, without our financial and material backing. Both these responses show how Greek schools welcome projects that aim to develop equal and respectful relations between the sexes.” Ms Petroulaki feels that the only missing element now is the establishment of relevant national policies, as dictated by Article 14 of the Istanbul Convention.

Feedback from both students and teachers also highlights how eye-opening this intervention has been for them. Ms Maria Karakou, a teacher from Agios Nikolaos, Crete explains: “Through the simulation and the students’ interactive activities we all better understood the nature of intimate partner violence. For example, we realised that jealousy is not a sign of love but a form of control, and that dictating to our partner what they should or should not wear and who they can and cannot see is a form of violence and not an expression of interest. As a result, both myself and my students feel empowered to pass on this knowledge to others.”

Two of her students, Niki Tzanopoulou and Maria Sfyraiki, described how their group was struck by both the gender stereotypes that are at the root of such forms of violence and by the possible responses to this violence that they learnt about: “Realising how many stereotypes we follow every day, we were angry about the social norms that tend to trap us in specific roles, often so incompatible with our characters. Through the workshop we learnt to see through these stereotypes and we identified ways to respond to IPV or challenge behaviour that condones violence against women. The project has helped us recognize what a healthy intimate relationship entails and made us want to achieve one for ourselves, as well as for the people close to us, among our friends and family. We wish the same opportunity will be given to as many children, young people and schools as possible in the near future.”

MORE INFORMATION ON THE PROJECT

gear-ipv.eu

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