

# FREE FROM GENDER BASED DISCRIMINATION: TEACHERS AND PARENTS TOGETHER FREE TRAINING HANDBOOK

### Acknowledgement:

This handbook was developed in association with Erasmus+ Programme Key Action 2: Cooperation for Innovation and Exchange of Good Practices. This training handbook was developed from robust empirical data conducted in four European countries (United Kingdom, North Macedonia, Spain and Greece) by the IARS International Institute (UK), Subversive Front (North Macedonia), Asociación Caminos (Spain) and Symplexis (Greece). The research conducted explored the experiences of teachers and parents in regard to their knowledge and understanding of gender-based violence in schools.

The findings of the research identified gaps in school curriculum and policies in eradicating gender-based discrimination. Many of these gaps have included the lack of support and resources teachers have in tackling the issues in the classroom. This is also evident in the role of the parents; and the difficulties of engaging both parents and teachers on this issue highlighted the complexities of this and the complex dynamic between “the public and private” in terms of the home and school environment. This training handbook acknowledges this by providing good practices and practical guides that will explore how teachers should approach parents to include them in school initiatives; methods for making parental involvement more tangible; and suggests ways in which teachers and parents will be consistent against gender-based discrimination issues.

### Research courtesy:



**symplexis**



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## Background

### Who is this handbook for?

This handbook will be relevant for teachers, school staff members and school administrators both in the public and private sector. This handbook is also relevant to parents, guardians and carers who are also involved in schools through parent-teacher associations and school governance.

### What is the aim of this handbook?

The FREE project targets gender-based discrimination in educational settings, with the purpose of eliminating its effects, especially related with school performance and early school leavers. Due to the pressing nature of this topic across Europe, the FREE project put together a strategic partnership of 6 organisations to respond to a number of educational priorities, focusing on eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence in educational settings.

Specific objectives include:

- Building the capacities of teachers and raising the awareness of parents on gender-based discrimination and providing the means to change school cultures that currently result in pupils being discriminated against
- Introducing innovative methods and tools to build the capacities of teachers and inform parents on how to react on incidents of gender-based discrimination
- Promoting cooperation and joint efforts between teachers and parents and building a model of collaboration, utilising various joint activities
- Reducing the psychological and educational impact of gender-based discrimination on pupils

### What is the scope of this handbook?

This handbook will be divided into four key sections that will help both teachers and parents to raise their awareness, understanding of the issues:

Part 1: Theoretical understanding of the concepts of gender and the role of schools

Part 2: Empirical research conducted by Greek, Spanish, North Macedonian and British schools

Part 3: Practical guides and good practices for teachers on tackling gender-based discrimination

Part 4: Tips for how parents can get involved in supporting schools and teachers

# PART 1: THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING

## Aims of this section:

- Understanding what gender is and being able to differentiate between the terms “gender” and “sex”.
- Be able to understand what gender stereotypes are and the dangers of it
- How gender stereotypes are perpetuated and the ways to avoid it
- Learn about the forms of discrimination, direct vs indirect discrimination as well as the definitions.
- Examples of gender-based discrimination in schools and home

## 1.1 What is gender?

There are several terms that people use when they talk about gender. As a historical phenomenon, gender is understood and developed differently in different cultural contexts and times. Cultural ideas and social practices account for the way in which inequalities are perpetuated in society, within the working environment, education and organisational structures. According to Amnesty International<sup>1</sup> within the heterosexual imaginary gender divides humans into two categories “male” and “female”. This categorisation impacts every realm of an individual's lives through how they dress, what they watch, what they read and career paths they choose. Regardless of how you see gender it operates silently in different ways impacting the way we behave, our ideas, our views and how we see the world.

It is important to note that:

- Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender diverse people (Diamond, 2002)<sup>2</sup>. Unlike sex characteristics which are biological, gender roles have dynamic characteristics.

This is different to the term sex:

- Sex refers to the biological characteristics, which define humans as female, male (or gradations running from female – male - intersex). These sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive as there are individuals who possess both, but these characteristics tend to differentiate humans as males and females.

## 1.2 What is sexism?

### **Definition of Sexism:**

According to the European Institute for Gender Equality Sexism is linked to power in that those with power are typically treated with favour and those without power are typically discriminated against. Sexism is also related to stereotypes since discriminatory actions or attitudes are frequently based on false beliefs or generalisations about gender, and on

Sexism is linked to beliefs around the fundamental nature of women and men and the roles they should play in society. Sexist assumptions about women and men, which manifest themselves as gender stereotypes, can rank one gender as superior to another. Such hierarchical thinking can be conscious and hostile, or it can be unconscious, manifesting itself as unconscious bias. Sexism can touch everyone, but women are particularly affected. Despite legal frameworks set up across the EU to prevent discrimination and promote equality, women are still under-represented in decision-making roles, left out of certain sectors of the economy, primarily responsible for unpaid care work, paid less than men and disproportionately subject to gender-based violence<sup>3</sup>.

Sexist attitudes, practices and behaviour contribute to a high level of inequalities which can have significant impact on the experiences of young women and girls. Within school structures, sexist behaviour in terms of the attitudes and behaviours of teachers and fellow pupils can have a significant impact on their school experiences. This is where questions in regard to how such acts are perpetrated and the terminology surrounding it.

<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International (2018) *Its Intersex Awareness Day - here are 5 myths we need to shatter*. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/10/its-intersex-awareness-day-here-are-5-myths-we-need-to-shatter>

<sup>2</sup> Diamond, M., 2002. Sex and gender are different: Sexual identity and gender identity are different. *Clinical child psychology and psychiatry*, 7(3), pp.320-334.

<sup>3</sup> EIGE “What is Sexism”? Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/sexism-at-work-handbook/part-1-understand/what-sexism>

### 1.3 How is sexism perpetuated?

#### **Definition of Gender Stereotypes**

According to the EIGE, gender stereotypes are consisting of preconceived ideas whereby females and males are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their gender.

Sexist behaviour and practices are underpinned by gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes originate from local culture and traditions. Children learn what constitutes female and male behaviour from their family and friends, the media, and institutions including schools and religious bodies. The prevalence of gender stereotypes in our culture can have an adverse effect on both girls and boys, who are constantly bombarded with messages about how they should look, behave and play according to their gender. These socially accepted and often unconscious ideas start to form in infancy.

An example of this is evident within schools and the way the element of gender operates:

- This is evident with the masculinized school curriculum in history, literature
- The feminization of the teaching career (more female teachers than male)
- Reduced understanding on how gender operates.

This is perpetuated in the:

- **Gender Norms:** are ideas about how men and women should be and act. We internalize and learn these “rules” early in life. This sets up a life cycle of gender socialization and stereotypes. These gender norms are the standards and expectations to which gender identity generally conforms, within a range that defines a particular society, culture and community at that point of time.
- **Gender Roles** are social behavioural norms which, within a specific culture, are widely considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of a specific sex. Task assigned gender roles often determine the traditional responsibilities and tasks assigned to women, men, girls and boys.

It is important to note that stereotypes can have a negative impact on both boys and girls.

Gender stereotypes shape self-perception, affect wellbeing, attitudes to relationships, and influence participation in the world of work. In a school environment they affect a young person’s classroom experience, academic performance or subject choice. The assumptions we make about boys and girls may be conscious or unconscious and can result in different treatment of one group compared to another.

It is worth noting that under these circumstances, the term gender is a culturally variable elaboration of sex and be debunked further beyond the binary system of male and female. Within this concept, the idea of gender identity comes to play and how individuals identify themselves.

- **Non-binary** - is used to describe people who feel their gender cannot be defined within the margins of gender binaries. Instead, they understand their gender in a way that goes beyond simply identifying as either a man or woman. Some non-binary people may feel comfortable within trans communities and find this is a safe space to be with other who don’t identify as cis, but this is not always the case. Identity is complex so getting the language right is important in affirming the identity of an individual, making them feel confident and assured. It is quite common that instances of discrimination are underpinned by the lack of education and the appropriate use of language.

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Terms	Definition
Cisgender	A person whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth
Gender-fluid	A person whose gender identity changes at different times
Genderqueer/gender nonconforming	A person whose gender identity is not limited to society's gender norms

- **Gender Equality**– refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.

## 1.4 Gender and Discrimination

### 1.4.1 What is Discrimination?

There are many competing definitions in relation to what discrimination is and how it is perpetuated. The most common definition of discrimination centres around "actions and practices that exclude and disadvantaged individuals or groups of individuals based on ascribed or perceived traits"<sup>4</sup>With this definition, the idea of identifiable discrimination comes into play, for example, as racial and gender-based discrimination such as racism, sexism, prejudice, and stereotypes. In this framework, the impact of discrimination is divided into "intentional discrimination and disparate impact" which can be further divided into subcategories such as:

- Direct discrimination is when someone is treated unfairly because of protected characteristic, such as sex or race

Direct discrimination can be because of:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage or civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

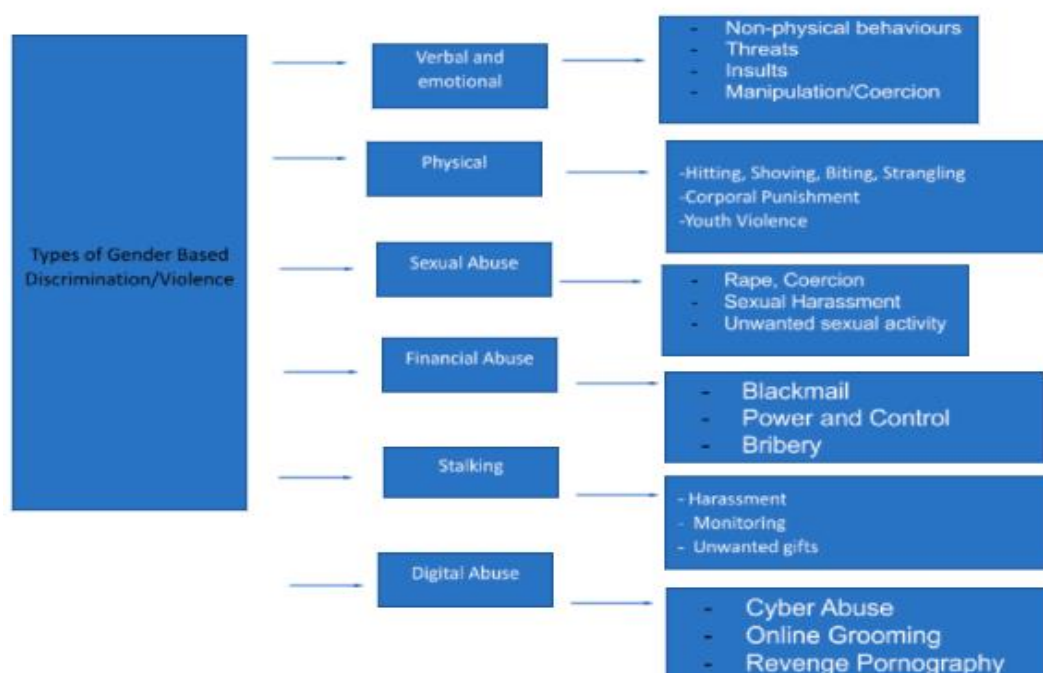
<sup>4</sup> Nixon, D., 2010. Discrimination, performance and recuperation: How teachers and pupils challenge and recover discourses of sexualities in schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(2), pp.145-151.



- Indirect discrimination Indirect discrimination can happen when there are rules or arrangements that apply to a group of employees or job applicants, but in practice are less fair to a certain protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination is when there is a practice, policy or rule which applies to everyone in the same way, but it has a worse effect on some people than others.

#### 1.4.2 What is gender-based discrimination?

In most occasions, the terms gender-based discrimination are used interchangeably with the word gender-based violence. This is because for many “discriminations” are an act of violence, whether visible or not. In the case of gender-based discrimination; acts of physical abuse, emotional, and online abuse are consequence of systems and structures that favour men and boys. The diagram below provides an example of this:



## PART 2: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM UK, GREECE, NORTH MACEDONIA AND SPAIN

### Aims of this section.

- Overviews of the national context (policies, laws and legal framework, good practices) in the UK, Greece, Spain and North Macedonia
- Quantitative data from the UK, Greece, Spain and North Macedonia on the views of parents and teachers
- Qualitative data from the UK, Greece, Spain and North Macedonia on the views of parents and teachers

## 2. National Contexts

Understanding the national contexts in relation the policies and legislation of each country is important in identifying the gaps and exploring new policies and ideas that eradicate gender-based discrimination. This section explores safeguarding standards in dealing with gender-based violence, the warning signs of gender-based discrimination in schools, and differences in regional and national contexts.

### 2.1 United Kingdom

Within schools across the UK, gender issues remain a neglected area in research and in pedagogy. This is evident with the unique experiences boys and girls have in school, the relationships they form as school, the subject they overachieve in and the general public reaction.

Media reports on the gender discourse within schools, place the teachers, educators, youth workers and school staff at the centre of the gender equality debate <sup>5</sup>. Over the years there has been a moral panic regarding the experiences of young people and in schools and within their social spheres. This includes the interactions between teachers and pupils, stereotyping in the classroom, the educational curriculum and the relationships they form.

Research from the UK's leading children charity the NSPCC<sup>7</sup> found that young people between the ages 13 to 18 years old encountered different forms of gender-based violence in schools such as physical, emotional, manipulation and verbal.

Within the research:

- Two-thirds of female participants and a third of male participants reported that they had experienced emotional violence
- Only a minority of young people told an adult about the violence

These statistics which have been consistent throughout the 2010s have indicated the severity of s and the importance of having measures in place that can prevent and intervene when these forms of discriminations occur.

Section 175 of the Education Act (2002)<sup>6</sup> states that schools and colleges have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people at their educational establishment. Just like any other sector, educational institutions need to comply to the following to protect children from GBV:

- The Equality Act (2010)<sup>7</sup>-which prohibits discrimination, harassment and victimisation in education in education on the grounds of certain protected characterises. Schools and colleges must not discriminate against sex, race, disability, religion/belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or sexual orientation.
- Gender Equality Duty (2007)<sup>8</sup>- 10schools have a legal responsibility to tackle sexual harassment and violence against women and girls
- The Public Sector Equality Duty (2011)- 11all public bodies (schools and colleges) have a legal requirement to eliminate discrimination and harassment of girls, to advance equality and opportunity for girls.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/dec/15/gender-stereotyping-is-harming-young-peoples-mental-health-finds>

<sup>6</sup> The Education Act (2002). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents>

<sup>7</sup> 2010 Equality Act. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

<sup>8</sup> Public Sector Equality Duty. Available at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equalitydut>

## 2.2 Greece

The evolution of gender equality legislation and policy in Greece has been informed both by a Greek feminist and women's movement and a series of steps in relevant EU legislation. The autonomous, radical feminist movement of the 1970s and 1980s contributed to the development of new initiatives through their imaginative publications to feminist ideas, but the transfer of the intellectual production of other feminist movements to the country exerted mostly a limited influence. However, their theoretical analysis inspired feminist members of the political parties of the Left who were not in a position to promote genuine feminist claims since they faced patriarchal barriers within their parties. Although aware of those impediments, those women could not fully engage in the feminist struggle outside conventional politics and structures.

Articles 4, 22, and 116 of the Greek Constitution enshrine the principle of gender equality, including positive measures in favour of women, where necessary. Article 4 states that 'Greek men and women have equal rights and obligations', while Article 22 notes that 'All employees, regardless of gender or other discrimination, are entitled to equal pay for work of equal value' and Article 116 proclaims that 'There is no discrimination on grounds of gender if positive measures are taken to promote equality between men and women. The State shall ensure that the inequalities which exist in practice, particularly against women, are removed'. The first efforts to implement gender mainstreaming in Greece were in the 2000s, when the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE) actively participated in the planning process of the third Community Support Framework (CSF) 2000–2006, which is Greece's development programme financed by the European Union's (EU) European Structural Funds (ESF). The subsequent CSF 2007–2013 presented gender mainstreaming as an improvement factor for the quality of public policies in the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF).

## 2.3 North Macedonia

The Law on Equal Opportunities between Women and Men has an important role in improving gender equality legislation in North Macedonia. It regulates the establishment of equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men in all areas of society: healthcare and health insurance, social care, access to goods and services, economy, labour and employment, education and vocational training, culture, sport, etc. Article 6 of this law stipulates those mechanisms for elimination of stereotypes and prejudices regarding the equal opportunities between women and men are to be provided in the development, adoption, and implementation of the programmes for education and vocational training, in the development of schoolbooks and school tools, as well as in the introduction of organisational innovations and modification of the pedagogic and andragogical methods. Furthermore, the state authorities relevant for supervision of the operations in the areas of education and labour as well as the institutions providing education and vocational training shall conduct regular analysis of the content of the educational curricula, plans, and schoolbooks with the aim to advance the equal opportunities between women and men. The Articles 9 and 10 of the same law stipulate that the Parliament of North Macedonia shall establish a

Committee for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men as a Standing Committee and shall adopt the Gender Equality Strategy as proposed by the Government of North Macedonia. The Government appoints a coordinator and deputy coordinator for equal opportunities between men and women at governmental level and ministerial level, and establishes an inter-departmental consultative and advisory group for equal opportunities between women and men, whose main aim is to promote the concept of inclusion of gender aspects in the general policies of all the state institutions.

At local municipality level, the law stipulates that the local self-governing units' administrations shall integrate the principle of equal opportunities between women and men in their strategic plans and budgets and shall

establish a commission for equal opportunities between women and men at local municipality level. This commission at local municipality level has an appointed coordinator and deputy coordinator for equal opportunities between women and men whose main responsibilities are advancing equal opportunities between women and men, and non-discrimination within the scope of the mandate of the local self-governing unit. The Gender Equality Strategy as stipulated by this law, is developed for a period of eight years, and contains, among others, guidelines and measures for achieving the objectives for equal opportunities between women and men in the area of education, as well. The Law on Primary Education prohibits discrimination based on sex and other grounds, as stipulated in Article 5. All types of discrimination in primary education are prohibited in the following areas: educational process; enrolment process in primary education; employment, career development and termination of employment; pupils' organising; educational programmes' content and schoolbooks' content; management and participation in the school administration bodies and organs; financing of primary education, etc. The prohibition of discrimination based on sex is also applicable for parents or guardians of the pupils, as well as for the employees in the primary schools. The employees in the schools are to promote equality and justice among all pupils, and to actively oppose all forms of discrimination and violence. There are two other laws in relation to protection against gender-based discrimination in educational setting. The first one is the Law on Secondary Education which also prohibits discrimination based on sex, among other grounds (Article 3). The second one is the Law on Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination, that was repealed by the Constitutional Court on May 14th 2020, and at the time of writing of this report, is being re-tabled in the Parliament of North Macedonia. The latter provides comprehensive protection against discrimination, including the one based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

## 2.4 Spain

As some members of the teaching faculty point out, the Spanish educational system lacks the means and tools necessary to implement the tasks laid out by the Comprehensive Law against Gender Violence. Each Autonomous Community strives to apply the identification and action protocols derived from the Government of Spain, while trying to complement them with different programmes for the prevention and early identification of gender violence. The differences between the different communities of the Spanish territory are not significant, because it follows the same national guidelines. A different range of campaigns of gender violence prevention could be found in each Autonomous Community, depending on the projects or initiatives of each region, city or even village. However, in order to delve into the situation of the autonomous community in where the FREE project will be implemented, it is important to mention how the different forms of discrimination and gender violence are understood, as well as the different formats developed to face it in Andalusia (at the legal, institutional, educational level, etc).

After the approval in the Andalusian Parliament of Law 7/2018 13 (reform of the previous 13/2017) on measures of prevention and comprehensive protection against gender violence, some changes were introduced in the way of defining gender violence and acting against it. On the one hand, victims of sexual violence were equated with victims of gender violence, regardless of the relationship between the aggressor and the victim. The definition of gender violence was also broadened, encompassing any type of physical violence (any act by a partner against one's body as a form of aggression, exercised in the family or personal sphere), psychological violence (any verbal or non-verbal conduct that makes the victim diminishes the victim's self-esteem and/or causes them to suffer through threats, humiliations, demands for obedience or submission, coercion, insults, isolation, blaming or taking away their freedom), sexual violence and sexual abuse (including any sexual act of non-consensual nature) and economic violence (more related to family life, not as applicable to the school environment that concerns us within the scope of the project).

As acts of gender violence are also considered any type of violence exerted on a person by their partner or ex-partner and cyber violence, among others. Andalusia is a pioneering autonomous community in the development of the UVIVG's 15 Units for the Comprehensive Assessment of Gender Violence; multidisciplinary units located in the different Institutes of Legal Medicine of Andalusia, in order to guarantee compliance with the Organic Law on Comprehensive Measures against Gender Violence. As we can see, Andalusia is a community that has strengthened the definition and action protocols against gender violence to be more comprehensive, allowing more extensive interventions in risky situations. At the school level, it allows educators and management teams to take a broader and earlier action, both due to the broader definition of gender violence and the awareness, prevention and identification campaigns that derive from it. In turn, the Andalusian Institute of Women has its own Service of Psychological Care for Victims of Gender Violence: specialised teams that can provide support to both victims and educational centres. They have a specific care service for the children of victims of gender violence (who, after this reform of the law, are considered victims of gender violence by themselves): it is managed by the AMUVI Association, in charge of offering comprehensive and personalized care, accompanying them in this situation and avoiding the repetition of abuse patterns in the future. The Andalusian Institute for Women also has a programme caring for victims of gender-based violence against minors (between 14 and 17 years old): they offer assistance to the adolescent girl and guidance to her family. They also have activities for groups, through the participation of the victim of gender violence in therapy groups and workshops.

## 2.5 Research Data

This research was conducted to build the capacities of teachers and raise the awareness of parents on gender-based discrimination, and to provide the means to change the culture resulting to students' discrimination. It also introduces innovative methods and tools to build the capacities of teachers and inform parents on how to react to incidents of gender-based discrimination. It is important to reduce the psychological and educational impact of gender-based discrimination on pupils. Finally, it seeks to highlight the importance of parent-school collaboration in preventing and responding to such social phenomena. The formation of stereotypes and prejudices at an early age decisively contributes to gender discrimination, with a direct effect on accentuating inequalities between women and men throughout their entire life. Females have been portrayed in a narrow and biased way for many years. Education, as an essential factor for socialization, should foster and contribute towards achieving equality between men and women. Therefore, it must set itself the aim, in all its activities, of eliminating inequalities between men and women. However, with a child's entry to school, the link between biological sex and the stereotypical attitudes and perceptions about the various social aspects of gender role is made through a series of hidden or overt pedagogical practices and approaches. This research aims to critically understand the way the concept of gender-based discrimination is understood in Greece, UK, Spain and North Macedonia.

### 2.5.1. United Kingdom

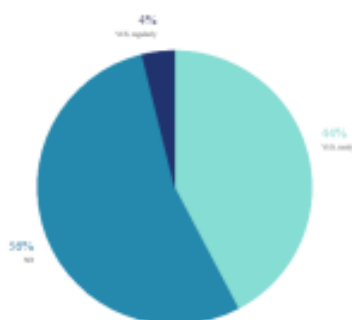
To gain and understanding on the nature of gender-based discrimination in schools, the IARS International Institute carried out mixed-methodology research focusing on teachers and parent's understandings of gender-based discrimination and how they think it should be addressed. Teachers and parents in the UK participated in surveys and interviews giving their opinion and contributing to the projects. Access to these groups were provided through the services of external stakeholders and social media dissemination. The findings amplified the importance of this research and how norms and attitudes towards gender-based discrimination can be challenged.

### 2.5.1.1 Quantitative data

A total of 50 surveys were collected from parents and teachers questioning their understanding on gender-based discrimination and how they relay information to their pupils and teachers.

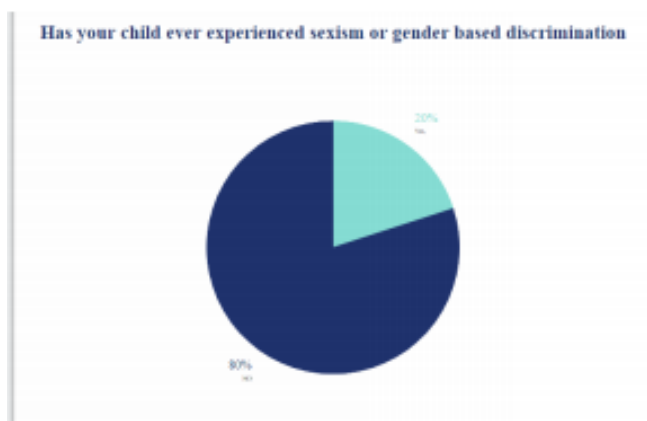
25 parents completed the survey, in which 20% of them were parents to children in secondary school and 80% were parents to children in primary school. 88% of parents were mothers with 12% of them being fathers. This was evident when parents were asked if their child has ever spoken about witnessing sexism and gender-based discrimination.

Has your child ever spoken about witnessing sexism or gender based discrimination ?



The responses here were quite mixed, with more than half saying NO and 44% saying YES. From these statistics it could be the case that the parents might just not have been aware of the discrimination their child may have witnessed as they didn't discuss it,

Has your child ever experienced sexism or gender based discrimination

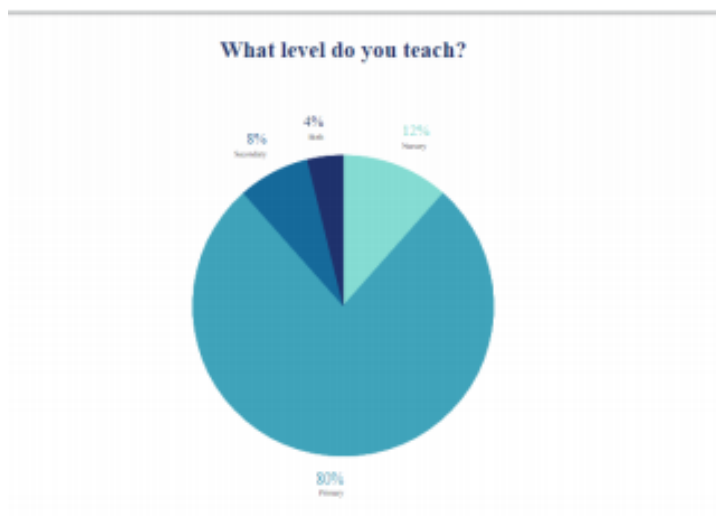


This caveat can also be used in the scenario when parents were asked if their child has experienced sexism or gender-based discrimination. 80% of them stated NO with 20% saying YES. There could be many explanations for this huge gap, such as parents feeling that their child is safe in school and such forms of discrimination does not exist. But it is important to focus on the 20% and try to identify why parents have answered this way. There has been an abundant on research on how schools are breeding ground for such form of discrimination and it is important to acknowledge.

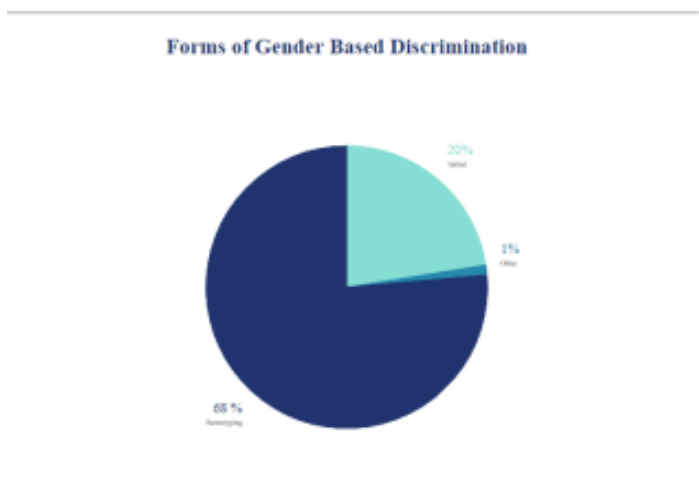
### Teachers

25 teachers with various levels of experience participated in this survey:

- 12% teachers had less than a year of experiences and were in teacher training phase
- 32% teachers had around 2 to 5 years of experience
- 8% teachers had around 6 to 9 years of experience
- 48% teachers had around 10+ years of experience



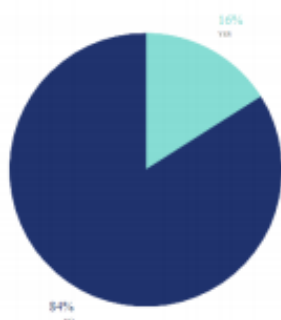
Within this group of teachers, 80% of them were primary school teachers correlating with the demographic of parents which participated in the earlier survey.



One of the first questions teachers were asked was if they have ever encountered any signs of sexism or gender-based discrimination. 80% of the teachers stated YES whereas 20% stated NO. When the 80% were asked what were the common forms of gender-based discrimination, the acts and forms of violence were categorized into two distinguished categories, 68% stated stereotyping as the biggest form discrimination followed 20% stating verbal abuse.



### Have you received training in spotting and countering sexist behaviours in schools?



This was a surprising statistic which became clear within although most of the stated that they were not aware of what constitutes gender-based discrimination. When teachers were asked if they have received any training in spotting and countering sexist behaviours in schools, 84% stated NO. This suggests a significant gap in the curriculum and teacher training.

More than 80% of teachers agreed that there should be more done to support teachers and parents to support them in stopping sexist behaviour and gender-based discrimination. This includes more interaction between teachers' schools and parents regarding sexism and gender-based discrimination.

#### 2.5.1.2 Qualitative Data

When participants were asked about their understanding on gender-based discrimination and the prevalence of it. Many of them agreed that gender-based discrimination was very prevalent, often hidden, and not often talked about. Both parents and teachers mentioned these following behaviours as examples of gender-based discrimination:

- Physical behaviours such as hitting or shoving
- Emotional and verbal abuse such as insults or criticism
- Psychological abuse such as controlling or manipulative behaviours
- Coercion and Gaslighting
- Sexual Violence and lack of sexual consent
- Financial abuse

#### Theme 1: Causes of Gender Based Discrimination

Both parents and teacher identified numerous factors that contributed to gender-based discrimination such as cultural and religious factors and financial or economic factors. Two of the most distinct factors, however, that teachers and parents highlighted were family background and lack of education. In the context of family background, it was emphasized that witnessing domestic abuse in childhood tend to compartmentalise these behaviours and class it as normal. One teacher described this issue as an unbreakable cycle that doesn't stop.

*A lot of the time it's not just one person receiving it, they go on and do that as well because that's all they know and that's all they know how to build relationships with, then they go out and they do that as well and it causes a cycle.*

Similarly, another teacher mentioned how of discrimination and violence are perpetrated due to normalization of behaviours and the characteristics associated with it:

*It varies, to be honest. It varies a lot. I would say the person that's being abused may have certain characteristics, as in, you know they may be slightly more vulnerable, as in they could've possibly grown up in care, like a looked-after child. They may have had some kind of sexual trauma previously. They may have grown up in an environment where there was domestic violence so that's almost become normalised to them and they kind of expect to be treated that way. [...] I know the characteristics of the perpetrator because I've worked for the adult programme as well and you know, they will be in that same cycle as well. They will kind of almost look out for the right type of person that they're going to*

*approach. That person who sorts of tells them everything very quickly about their life, so they've got lots of information to kind of use against them, at a later date, you know.*

One sub theme that came up in this discussion focused on the lack of support young people witnessing discrimination in their homes were offered:

*There's no support, like it's all about victims, which it should be all about the victim. But there's very much a 'We have to shun perpetrators and put them in the corner', rather than we should actually educate them and give them support*

The lack of education was highlighted by several participants as an important contributing factor for the perpetuation and experiences of discrimination. One of the teachers mentioned

*I'm tempted to say that things like lower standards of education on either side, as a perpetrator or as a victim, may also be expected. You might expect to see more relationship violence among those who don't have as high a level of education*

This explains the prevalence of gender-based discrimination among young people as one of the teachers highlighted:

*I think it's probably quite prevalent. I mean if you look at our national prevalence figures from the crime survey England and Wales, for example, you see this. Now unfortunately they didn't ask the 16, but the most prevalent is 16 to 25. [...] I'm sure that you'd find that going right back to about 12 probably.*

The lack of education is not only present on the side of young people but also from the perspective of educators and parents. Many participants reported the they had detected gender-based discrimination due to the language used and the hidden nature of these types of violence. One parent mentioned:

*I think it definitely exists. I don't know how recognisable it is. I think it's recognised more as bullying maybe [...] yeah it definitely exists but it's just how recognisable it is and I don't think it's recognisable. Hugely, hugely in school settings. And it's seen more as probably bullying.*

This suggests that causes of discrimination are often hidden under or categorised as general bullying. This then means that actions against bullying are used rather than solutions that are specifically aimed at tackling gender-based discrimination.

## Theme 2: Manifestations in schools

When participants were asked about the specific manifestation of gender-based violence in schools, some of the acts of violence highlighted by the parents and teachers focused more on non-physical behaviours such as teasing, harassment, catcalling, microaggression, LGBTI harassment and homophobia. One example of this was described as follows:

*I think a lot of it does have to do with teasing and the way jokes play out, the way people are shamed for certain behaviours or encouraged with certain behaviours, so on the first level I think it really starts as almost being presented as a joke and then depending on how that is taken, that can either be exacerbated or be lowered. So I guess probably the most prevalent would just be that kind of peer response and what jokes are funny, what things are okay to say, what names are okay to be called. And then I think, especially for girls it can become sexualised more particularly, so probably more young females will experience some sort of either sexualised name-calling, or when they start to form*

*relationships, abuse, pressure to, you know, do things sooner. Which I guess, you know, boys are probably kind of pressured to show that they're hooking up with their girlfriends sooner or whatever it may be. So yeah, I think probably sexualised behaviours as well as, in particular, the kind of verbal abuse is probably the most prevalent I would think.*

In some context sexual violence and trauma was also highlighted, particularly by one teacher who worked with disadvantaged young people:

*I think, sexual violence, there's a lot of sexual violence that I deal with but that's not necessarily in a relationship. It will be a sexual assault, like a one-off type thing and this is happening you know, quite often in school toilets, in parks. Yeah, I would say the sexual violence more than actually physical violence, I'm seeing a lot of.*

### Theme 3: Need for clear strategies and collaboration

Both parents and teachers described the need for greater collaboration with a range of external organisations; including the need for mental health provision in schools, multi-agency collaboration between parents, teachers, local authorities, and charities. One parent emphasised that there is a clear need for urgent action to be taken on issues of gender-based discrimination among young people. When discussing collaborative approaches in schools one teacher mentioned the importance of engaging with non-statutory stakeholders:

*So, it's actually quite important for schools to be part of that wider network outside the school and often schools don't know what's happening with the kids if there's been a lot of other violence and those things will impact on the children. That will also potentially affect other things at school. So they may end up being very withdrawn or aggressive or whatever so that'll also impact on how their behaviour is in school as well. [...] So, I think those kinds of connections are really important but I know in some areas they also, have the MASHs, you know, I don't know if you've heard of MASH but they're called, multi-agency safeguarding hubs and that's again where agencies put information through to a hub that then can see what's happening to children so it collects information from many different places so that they can oversee what's happening with the child. So that's also quite important to be linked into schools but those are different aspects of what's happening outside rather than necessarily what's happening inside schools. But to be part of this wider network of work around violence and abuse is actually quite important. And not just schools to be isolated in their own little...the word 'bubble' is getting a bit fashionable at the moment, but within their own bubble you know, because they also need to see what's happening on the outside and a lot of these violences are connected up. A lot of these abuses are connected up.*

Having access to a range of possible support workers and services specific to young people was considered to be important. This included the need for young people to have an input in this collaborative approach to addressing gender-based discrimination.

*I think, also would ask the question, 'Are young people participating in these conversations?'. Or is it just us as an adult saying 'this is good for the children, let's run with it', or do we actually give a voice for young people to say 'these are our experiences, this is how it is and what I think should happen in this kind of curriculum', or 'that's how you should tackle those issues within education, within schools', because my thinking and their thinking is a very different, different perspective and different thoughts. [...] Yeah, it's really important. Because it's theirs, isn't it. We are doing this for them and it's not with, making something that we haven't run it by them, I mean I've always had that but I've seen it more and more like with the young people that we work with.*

Within this discussion, the role of parents was also acknowledged, and how they address gender-based discrimination, especially when promoting gender equality and ensuring a good understanding of healthy relationships. One of the parents responded on the need for appropriate disclosure:

*So, you know, it's about giving young people strategies so that they know what's likely to happen. And they've got an idea of how to manage that. While they go, when I ask adults, I've always, I've always told my children as well as if it's been inappropriate with you, you always have to tell two adults. Because what might happen is, is you might tell your mother or your grandmother, they might have a, or your father have a vested interest in keeping it quiet. If the perpetrator is abusive, as part of their family. So I've always say tell two adults, one person that's close to you, and one that's like a family friend, or something that isn't going to keep, because I think that a lot of the people that I looked after their sexual abuse has been damaging, but what's been as equally or more damaging is when they've gone to their mother, or the person that they trust and ask them for help. And they haven't helped.*

Parents also mentioned the need for support services and further education on gender-based discrimination. This included other roles such as GPs, faith communities and sports clubs and social groups. To add to that, many parents often felt unaware of specific strategies, policies and approaches to supporting young people in relation to gender-based discrimination especially within the content of policy and legislation. One parent distressingly expressed concerns about how policies were implemented

*And I think equipping teachers with the confidence to ask questions and then make sure they record it, because I, yeah I think that with a lot of people in general, not just teachers, I think this is in general it's quite nerve wracking to ask questions about abuse, to ask questions about wider, what the family make-up looks like, because it could be viewed as being judgemental or overstepping, so I guess it's just going back to that thing where it's like about making sure everything is everyone's business and you know, making clear like, this is for safety, we just need to be aware of these things, what kind of role do they play and not only asking the parents but asking the children, like, "Who are the adults in your life? Who are the significant adults?", and just making sure that there's always that kind of broad outlook, so that if there is something disclosed or if there is something that's going on you know kind of what, yeah you have a bigger picture I guess. And so you know what's safe, who's safe to talk to, who the child thinks is safe to talk to, all that kind of stuff.*

#### Themes 4: The role of education

Following on from what some of the parents mentioned there was a general consensus that education provides a specific opportunity for young people to be instructed about gender equality and gender discrimination within different school environments. One teacher mentioned:

*Making it just part of conversations where it can be like, it doesn't have to be like a lesson on gender-based violence, it just needs to be constantly a topic. ... Just equality in general, isn't it?*

This was said in conjunction with the need for clarity about the process of reporting or knowing where to get help for gender-based discrimination to be made clear to young people. However, there are difficulties in engaging with young people in difficult discussion:

*It's not just on the side of students who may be reluctant to discuss and to be open, frank and honest and to have a clear discussion about these things. I think teachers also struggle when addressing these issues with students, so I think sometimes there's kind of a tendency to treat it as material to be covered rather than real discussions that need to be had and so I think that it needs to be less of a book-based exercise and more of a focus on real education and real discussion. [...] The student needs to be able to*

*talk and to articulate their own ideas about this and that is a very difficult thing to assess for any teacher and if it's not an exam subject a lot of the times these subjects don't get the time and that individual attention because they don't affect teachers and school performance in the way that exam subjects.*

In addition to this, some of the teachers mentioned other factors such as:

- The need for teacher training- The need for effective training for teachers in detecting, addressing and preventing gender-based discrimination was clear. Suggestions for training of teachers include:
  - Reflections and discussion
  - Multi method and Multi modal resources
  - Communication skills
  - Trauma informed practices
- Mode of delivery- Suggestions for the creation of effective training materials for teachers on the topic mainly highlighted the need for training to be interactive and involve reflective discussion, as well as practical aspects such as case examples and role plays
- Content- Teachers also wanted training materials to clarify the signs that they needed to be aware of, particularly the more subtle signs that they may otherwise miss. It was also suggested that training should clarify the steps and pathways they needed to take to report and address GBV if they came across it.

*I guess what would be good is being aware of the kind of nuanced ways that things can play out, I guess and just ensuring that it's not just the overt, which obviously is also important but the kind of nuanced way that behaviour can change, how do you recognise that, how do you have a conversation with that.*

## Conclusion

The findings of this research demonstrate to us the multidisciplinary nature of gender-based discrimination and how tackling this entails a multi stakeholder approach. The views of the educators, parents and community members highlighted the needs for sustainable, equal and accessible provision to support young people. There was a consensus that many of the manifestation of gender-based discrimination is not only relative to a lack of education, but the way society functions. When trying to develop and create tools to eradicate inequalities, developing strategies and tools that focus on lived experiences and empowering victims is an important step in starting the cycle of change.

## Recommendations

1. Training for teachers should involve reflective work and discussion, as well as enabling teachers to understand and address their own biases in relation to gender equality and gender-based violence topics.
2. Training should clarify signs to look out for and how to distinguish gender-based violence from other forms of abuse or bullying.
3. Training needs to demonstrate clear steps or pathways to follow once gender-based discrimination or violence has been identified or suspected.
4. Development of the training materials should include some content on the need for trauma informed approaches to teaching due to the significant role of trauma in contributing to gender-based discrimination and violence.

5. There is a clear need for content to be embedded in the curriculum across subject areas, and for the topic to be discussed authentically, rather than just being covered as content from a book. Support is therefore needed for teachers in achieving this.
6. Communication training is needed to equip teachers to discuss sensitive topics in a clear, effective and age-appropriate manner.
7. Multi-modal training programmes were suggested for teachers, including different delivery methods such as videos, case studies and discussion, and interactive element

## 2.5.2 Greece

### 2.5.2.1 Quantitative data

#### Teachers

33 teachers took part in the online survey; 60% of them are teaching in primary schools and the rest at other educational levels. According to the data collection, 75% reported that they have experienced gender-based discrimination at school, while the rest said they had not dealt with such incidents. According to most of them, 66% responded that the most common form is verbal gender-based discrimination, followed by stereotyping gender-based discrimination. Regarding teacher's training on relevant issues, 78% said that they did not participate in any training programme either to address gender discrimination or sexist behaviour in general. Most participants think that some training must take place on this issue. A large percentage (72%) also reported that they have intervened to stop such behaviour. The percentage of teachers who have discussed such a subject at school is only 39%. Finally, half of the participants (48%) reported that there is a need for more interaction between teachers and parents, while 42% reported that there is already some communication and interaction between them.

#### Parents

The online questionnaire was completed mainly by parents whose children attend elementary school and high school. According to the data collection, 72% were parents whose children attend primary school and 22% attend secondary school. 68% are parents of girls and 37% are parents of boys. 68% of the participants are mothers and the rest are fathers. 68% reported that their children were often witnesses of gender-based discrimination episodes. 59% reported that their children did not have any experience of gender-based discrimination specifically at school, while the rest reported that their children had some experience of gender-based discrimination at school.

54% of participants believe that there should be more actions at schools because nothing is being done on the subject, 31% believe that action needs to be taken, but things are improving, and the rest (15%) believe that enough has already been done and no further action is needed. All participants believe that teachers need to be trained more in order to eliminate gender-based discrimination in the school environment. According to guidelines or information about addressing sexism or gender-based discrimination in their children's school, 45% of participants reported that they did not know if relevant information existed, 22% reported that they did not have a guide at all, 18% reported that they hoped to have one, while 15% reported that their school had enough

information/guidelines. Concerning the cooperation between teachers and parents in tackling sexism in school and eliminating it. 90% of them believe it is good to exist, while 10% disagree.



### 2.5.2.2 Qualitative data

The main purpose of this research was to investigate the phenomenon of gender-based discrimination in schools. Given that the bibliography reports many examples of gender discrimination (in the classroom, in textbooks and in student – teacher interaction), this study should be very helpful to explore if the bibliographic references apply at the specific research level as well. The research was conducted using a qualitative method, namely the creation of focus groups with teachers and parents. Our goal during focus group planning was to create a group that would lead to the production of useful research material through effective and constructive discussions. 20 parents and 20 teachers agreed to participate in the study. There were some obstacles in this research, mainly because the teachers were quite rigid and fixed in their willingness to interact, while parents were more willing to participate. The key prerequisites for creating a comfortable and productive discussion are participants being active, interacting with each other, and feeling comfortable discussing research-related topics. Based on this principle, two focus group discussions were conducted for parents and two focus groups discussions for teachers. The formation of groups with fewer participants has been done so that communication would be easier, and the participants could share in more in-depth conversations. Each group consisted of 10 people, so that everyone could be heard and make more constructive and meaningful conversations. Teachers worked in all school levels (primary – secondary – high school) as well as in private and public schools. Concerning the parents' focus group, an effort was made to form a heterogeneous group so as to hear many different views. They were men and women from different socioeconomic and professional backgrounds, while their children attend private and public schools at different levels.

After focus groups were conducted, the data were processed and systematized. The data was processed with thematic analysis, where the initial coding of data is done and their combination creates the categories and subcategories (thematic units).

#### Teachers

Teachers seemed more attentive than parents in the discussion and shorter in their responses. Female teachers reported more detailed incidents than men. Most teachers responded positively to the question of whether they had experienced gender-based discrimination at school. Some of their answers are stated below:

“Gender-based discrimination can be found among students and teachers” (female teacher in a primary school)

“Gender-based discrimination applies to administrative positions and higher-order classes to which most men belong. This is also negative in the eyes of the children as men appear more capable”

“Gender-based discrimination is always present and this is a reflect in the latent form of children’s plays”

“Gender-based discrimination exists and this is shown as usually men are selected to teach math and not women”

“During the school year, there are such behaviours in children that we can detect and clearly relate to stereotypes coming from their home and family” (answers by female teachers).

Male teachers found it difficult to talk about any form of gender-based discrimination, stating that they had not observed anything relative, nor that they discriminate against children in any way. Teachers who responded that there was no gender discrimination were teaching in the first grades of elementary school. They reported that the most common form of gender-based discrimination exists between personality characteristics of boys and

girls. A female teacher mentioned: “Girls are smarter, more organized and more mature than boys, while boys are often vivid and hyperactive”.

Another teacher mentioned: “The skills and behaviours of children are directly related to their gender. It is a common secret that boys are better in exact sciences (math, physics), while girls are better in theoretical sciences (literature etc.)”.

Other teachers mentioned:

“The distinction relates to the different games boys and girls play during breaks. Boys play sports while girls usually chat or dance”

“In general, boys do better than girls”

“The most common form of gender-based discrimination is that men are teaching mathematics. It is as if women are not as capable as men in teaching science lessons”

According to another teacher, the most common form of gender-based discrimination is that “teachers themselves assign more tasks to girls, considering them more capable of doing so”. Another teacher reported examples of gender-based discrimination between students: “Boys think they are smarter than girls, but girls are more successful, because they are more disciplined and attentive to the lesson. Also, boys consider girls “useless” in sports”.

Regarding the school guidelines or good practices on gender equality and respect, most teachers reported that their schools do not have a guide or general information on gender-based discrimination. Almost everyone mentioned the importance of having such a guide, as well as educating teachers not to reproduce patterns and social stereotypes. Regarding what parents and teachers should do to address gender-based discrimination, they mentioned the following:

“Teachers should not guide students according to social perception of gender roles”

“Complaint’s mechanisms, disciplinary measures and support services need to be implemented”

“The school must support mixed groups of children in both tasks and activities”

“Equal opportunities for boys and girls”

“Parents should reject their own prejudice and try to communicate the message of equality, in order to set the right example for their children”, “Parents have to break down stereotypes that exist for centuries”

“Through constructive discussions, examples of day-to-day life and reinforcement of teamwork, both in lessons and sports.

Also, sports should include both boys and girls”.

About teachers; skills and knowledge in tackling gender-based discrimination they reported that:

“Children should be treated with impartiality, teachers should not display their own experiences, views and stereotypes, activities should be shared equally, and expectations should not be differentiated by gender. As far as knowledge is concerned, specialised training is required”.



Moreover, they consider that their knowledge on the subject is incomplete. According to most participants, the teacher should not be prejudiced and should treat all students in the same way. Characteristically it was mentioned that the teacher should enhance the discussions on gender and equality. It is also good to plan activities where everyone can be involved: “teachers need to be close to students, trustworthy, so that children will feel comfortable talking to them if something like this happens and that “he or she should not judge and separate the children”.

Concerning school-parent co-operation, everyone said that it is very important to have direct communication because it could prevent situations like these. Teachers working in private schools said that this is already being done, but teachers working in public schools said that cooperation is not always possible. One teacher reported:

“At our school, parents are interested in meetings and all aspects of educational life. They are very committed to it”.

Another teacher said that “the school has to be in touch with the family. It is therefore advisable to organize gender equality talks, meetings and activities”.

Another one mentioned “I think the family should be involved during the whole school life of the child. This means that if a parent finds out something about their child, they should discuss it with the teacher and vice versa”.

Also, “a constructive partnership always helps and has good results”.

Regarding actions to be taken at national and local level to eliminate this phenomenon, they stated that it would be good to: “include a lesson on equality and avoid prejudice”; “I think school staff should be educated, we should have gender equality in decision making and textbooks should be assessed”; “there should be equal participation in all school activities”; “we must have gender-based lessons so that if a child does not learn something from his family, he could learn it in school”.

### Parents

Parents were actively involved throughout the discussion. They were parents whose children attend elementary and high school. They have a very clear picture of what gender discrimination means, and as they admitted, it is something that they (parents with children of different sexes) have practiced/experienced regarding their children’s abilities. Regarding how often the phenomenon occurs and what types of behaviours are observed, they reported that it exists and is intense. As a mother has mentioned:

“My son is negatively characterized by girls, because he is kind and gentle, as these elements of his personality are more closely related to a girl’s behaviour”.

A father said “There is discrimination between children and girls tend to underestimate boys”.

A mother underlined, “I think that is an element that appears usually in higher school classes and concerns both muscular strength and appearance”.

Another mother said, “I think there is discrimination, as girls are characterized weaker while boys are stronger, more aggressive and more valuable than girls”.

One mother reported on her son's lessons and skills that "during the lesson (literature), her son's response was underestimated by the teacher, because it wasn't as good as the girl's response". This makes it clear that boys are mistakenly considered to be less capable than girls in theory and more capable in sciences. Another mother replied "I think it concerns both students and teachers. In my opinion when a girl responds to a question is treated with disrespect".

The existence of gender-based discrimination in sports and activities was also mentioned. A girl's mother said, "The boys don't let my daughter play soccer with them, because she is a girl". Another mother reported that her daughter participated in a robotics course that included only boys, who constantly underestimated her and didn't let her express her opinion. Her daughter was very upset and asked for her help in order to understand how she could manage this situation. Another mother reported a gender-based discrimination incident at her child's school, where the teacher in order to end a fight between a boy and a girl, told the boy "don't mind her, she's wearing a skirt".

Regarding the availability of instructions at school or updates on the subject, almost all parents responded that there is no awareness of the issue. Some parents mentioned that some updates were made, but on other issues rather than specifically on gender equality. About the causes of the phenomenon, almost all participants underlined the key-role of the family environment. A father said:

"I believe gender-based discrimination comes from poor education, poor information, bad experiences, wrong stereotypes and patterns of the society. Society has an important role because of the images, experiences and values that it creates".

Another mother said "stereotypes come from the family and the society. Poor education, reproduction of stereotypes by the family and lack of respect for the female sex, are very common phenomena". Another mother mentioned "lack of communication between the family and indifference can lead to such behaviours".

Most parents said that it is important to develop skills to manage the phenomenon as well as establish "open communication channels" with their children. As they mentioned: "parents should discuss these issues while their children are at an early age"; "parents who have children of both genders, should treat them equally and not direct them according to their gender"; "parents and teachers need to be more insightful, talkative and flexible"; "parents need to be fair, unbiased and sensitive. They should be close to their children, in order to help them manage their problems".

One mother focused on the father's behaviour and role. She specifically said: "I think there are parents who turn a blind eye on these issues and especially the behaviour of boys. These attitudes must change immediately because they are misogynistic and enhance the interiority of girls".

One mother said that teachers must first solve their own issues in order to be closer to children, "Teachers must be constantly informed, self – criticized and develop emotional intelligence". Concerning the existence of these skills, almost all parents responded that teachers are not trained to recognise and deal with such problems. They also believed that they are often the ones who reproduce stereotypes and prejudices, for example rewarding boys for their performances in the classroom or sports and praising girls for their proper and courteous behaviour.

Regarding actions to eradicate the phenomenon, parents clearly mentioned the close and constructive relationship between school and family, which includes ongoing information/updates, good communication and joint actions on gender equality. Specifically, they said: "school is not close to parents. There should be constant communication and information from the side of the school and issues of equality and respect should be

discussed”; “I think there should be psychologists in schools to help us deal with these issues”; “I think the school should focus on helping children who have similar problems, perpetrators and victims. Work is also necessary to be done on the triangle child-school-family”.

### Themes

After the initial coding of all discussions, answers and comments by parents and teachers some basic categories were developed. The codes were: play, sports, exact sciences/practical lessons, humanitarian sciences/theoretical lessons, stereotypes, gender, aggressive boys, smart boys, emotional girls, weak and skilful girls, parenting information, models, gender discrimination school-based interest, prejudices, media, gender influence, family, gender roles, teachers, difficulty in managing gender discrimination. The process of editing and grouping the codes resulted the following categories:

Category 1: Stereotypes in the family and at school. Almost all of the teachers and parents talked about gender stereotypes and prejudices. It is a fact that according to much research, children from the beginning are entering an environment where male gender is preferred rather than female, despite the differences between them. The male stereotype includes characteristics of personality such as independence, aggression, competitiveness, courage, intelligence, while the female dominates in affection, submissiveness, passivity, dependency and courtesy. These characteristics, in addition to stereotypes, explicitly downplay the female gender. Parents, who are often subjected to gender stereotypes, tend to see and / or create differences among their children even when they do not exist. The social and educational level of the family, according to the literature, shows that it influences the stereotypical perceptions of parents about gender, as well as the socialisation methods used by them. It has been shown that children of lower social classes are more likely to have gender stereotypes than middle/upper class children. Undoubtedly, the education system helps the lower social classes to reproduce both its ideology and its existing social conditions, relationships and beliefs. The education system is the key to the production and reproduction of ideological structures which is inextricably linked to the division of labour. School therefore perpetuates the perceptions of gender discrimination that prevail in every side of social life and it is obviously against women. The school shapes children’s perceptions and attitudes about everything differently and contributes to the creation of stereotypes through the socialisation among children of different backgrounds, languages, sexes, cultures, through teacher’s beliefs and through the school programme.

Category 2: Students Performance. Despite women’s improved position in education, gender inequalities are perceived through a closer look at the school environment. Although mixed education was achieved in 1985, even nowadays girls and boys continue to choose different directions at school and then at university, confirming that they still receive different motivations in education. Looking at research data, it seems that girls are more likely to choose the theoretical direction, while boys are more likely to choose the positive- technological direction, confirming that it is still present in the duopoly: girls-theory, boys-practice. In the same way, occupational preferences are differentiated between genders, with boys choosing more practical occupations that provide financial security and prestige and girls choosing jobs where they can combine “more easily” the roles of mother and spouse and achieve a better work-life balance. The role of teachers in reproducing gender inequalities in the school mechanism is crucial, as their beliefs about gender roles, their expectations and attitudes towards girls and boys create consciousness, influence their choices, their performances and their personality. The Greek school is presented as free from discrimination and sexist social perceptions, however, at both the formal and informal programme level, gender inequalities are found in the structure of the Greek educational system.

Category 3: Characteristics of boys and girls. Gender socialisation involves the different processes and prepares male and female individuals for roles defined by society as appropriate to their gender; and is the link between the roles attributed to individuals by society and the acceptance and reaction of roles by individuals themselves.

Gender stereotypes have a variety of characteristics about the way individuals express, think, act, feel, dress, as well as the roles and occupations they follow, depending on their separation into women and men. Children indicate which gender they belong to, emphasizing the characteristics, activities and desired behaviours consciously or subconsciously, shaping their attitude. The literature also observes that boys, regardless of socioeconomic capital, adopt stereotypical attitudes earlier than girls, but as they grow older, they tend to follow stricter behaviours and socially acceptable choices for their gender. But regarding the stereotype of girls; education and skills in research, research shows the opposite. So according to the findings of a research about the percentage of women in tertiary education by gender, age, field of study and higher education areas, we can see that:

- In Greece, there are no statistically significant differences between the performance of girls and that of boys in natural sciences and mathematics
- In the academic years from 2010/11 to 2014/15, 58.5% of the regular university students on average are women, and 41.4% are men
- The Higher Education system in Greece consists of 22 Universities and 14 Institute of Technological/Applied Sciences, with 268 and 168 departments respectively. During the five-year period 2010-2015 the total number of female students in tertiary education (Universities and Institutes of Technological/Applied Sciences) reached 758,345, while the total number of male students reached 626,405 with the respective percentages being 55% for female and 45% for male students.

### 2.5.2.3 Conclusion

The Greek school is presented as free from discrimination and sexist social perceptions, however, at the formal and informal programme levels gender inequalities are found in the structure of the Greek educational system. Gender equality has not been reached and traditional gender roles and stereotypes can still be found in textbooks and teaching material. School curricula do not always reflect enough on gender equality and issues such as sexual harassment. When choosing vocational training, girls and boys still follow different paths based on the stereotypical perception of their gender roles. The need to address gender equality in schools is demonstrated by problems such as sexual harassment and discrimination based on gender in the school setting, stereotypes in school material, missing focus on gender equality in school curricula, a general lack of equality plans, as well as gender segregation in vocational training and later careers. Gender can be viewed as a social construct, with culturally based expectations of appropriate behaviour for girls and boys. Physiological differences in girls and boys also impact on their learning and behaviour. It's important for teachers to understand both the social construct of gender and the physiological differences, to ensure that the school culture and climate support the development of girls and boys.

It is obvious from the data collection that shaping perceptions about the role of the sexes has its origin in the family, but once established it will be strengthened in the school environment. Teachers and parents agree on the existence of gender stereotypes and prejudices. It is a fact that children are entering an environment where the male gender is preferred rather than the female, despite the differences between them. As we can see, stereotypes are due to a range of factors including the family's poor education, poor information, bad experiences, and stereotypes about gender and patterns of our society. It is obvious that stereotypes come from both the family and the stimuli of society. It is necessary for parents to develop their skills to manage the phenomenon and improve the open and sincere communication with their children.

School should not act as a reproductive mechanism for stereotypes, but it can and should be a powerful means of combating and removing them. Regarding the school guidelines or good practices on gender equality and respect, we can see that many schools do not have a guide or general information on gender-based

discrimination. We can understand the importance of having such a guide, as well as the need to educate teachers not to reproduce patterns and social stereotypes. Regarding teacher's skills and knowledge in tackling gender-based discrimination, it is obvious that their knowledge on the subject is incomplete. The teacher should not stereotype and should treat all students in the same way. Concerning school-parent cooperation, it is very important to have direct communication because in this way any form of gender-based discrimination can be prevented. Teachers who are working in private schools said that this teacher-parent communication already exists, but teachers who are working in public schools said that cooperation is not always easy. This situation can change with actions to eradicate the phenomenon, which include training programmes, parental awareness, communication and joint actions on gender equality and, of course, more close and constructive relationships between school, society and family.

### 2.5.3 North Macedonia

#### 2.5.3.1 Quantitative data

In total 51 participants responded to the questionnaire assessing the knowledge of sexism and gender-based discrimination, as well as assessment of the willingness of both teachers and parents to work together in tackling gender-based discrimination in schools in North Macedonia.

It is worrisome that 74% of the teachers said they have encountered signs of sexism or gender-based discrimination at school, with 45% verbal form of gender-based discrimination, 36% stereotyping, and 14% physical form of gender-based discrimination. Two thirds of teachers (66%) have not received training in spotting and countering sexist behaviour in school; however, 62,5% of teachers have directly stopped sexist behaviour in school. Almost all teachers (96%) agree that there should be more interaction between teachers / the school and parents, regarding sexism and gender-based discrimination, and that more should be done to train teachers and/or parents about stopping sexist behaviour. Teachers show hesitance in approaching a parent about their child's sexist behaviour, but 54% of the teachers have done so.

When it comes to parents' responses to the questionnaire, 84% of parents have responded that their child has rarely or never spoken about witnessing sexism / gender-based discrimination, and all parents stated that their child has rarely or never experienced sexism or gender-based discrimination. 85% of parents think that more should be done to address gender-based discrimination in schools, and 96% of parents think more should be done to train people about stopping sexist behaviour. A relatively high 46% of parents do not know if their child's school has guidelines/information about addressing sexism or gender-based discrimination. Nearly all (96%) of parents would like to work with teachers in tackling sexism in schools.

#### 2.5.3.2 Qualitative data

The qualitative data analysis and interpretation was conducted by developing codes, grouping them in categories, and interpretation of the categories and the findings derived from them in consideration to the research aim. The key categories developed within the thematic analysis, were as follows:

##### Category 1: Gender roles and stereotypes.

The children are already introduced and taught about gender roles and norms from an early age by their parents, which are then difficult to be altered later on during school years. When children enrol at schools, they already have an idea and example "of division of household tasks at home by gender"; "which sports or hobbies are traditionally considered male" and "which toys are considered female". Teachers have reported a few of gender-

based stereotypes and prejudices among pupils and students, as reflected in their attitudes, such as “boys show aggression and strength” and “boys can’t express their feelings”, whereas “girls are considered the softer sex” and “being a girl is physically weak just because of their sex”. Children at school age already possess a preconceived notion that “boys who come out as gay or bi, are a shame to the class”, that “it’s worse when boys have feminine traits or body movements”, and that “girls are not to wear leggings and short skirts because they provoke the boys”.

All the above illustrates the influence patriarchal values and norms have in the shaping of the life experiences of children from a very young age depending on their gender. It is difficult to conduct interventions in reducing or eliminating gender-based stereotypes and prejudices that lie in the heart of gender-based discrimination, once a child enrolls at school.

### Category 2: Roles of teachers and parents in addressing gender-based discrimination in schools.

The major concern and fear raised by both teachers and parents is that the gender-based stereotypes and prejudices can only be strengthened during the school years, as both teachers and parents agree that “gender-based discrimination and sexism is more visible in secondary than in primary school”, when students already have their attitudes, knowledge and understanding of gender roles and gender norms developed and integrated into their life experiences. Parents and teachers also agree that “gender-based discrimination in schools is kept hidden and not talked about” and that “nothing is done on this topic so far”. Teachers and parents equally place responsibility to the “other” in addressing gender-based discrimination and sexism in schools. For instance, teachers say that “the main target group should be the parents”, that “parents talk less and less to their children” and that “parents are stubborn and hard to communicate with”. In a few instances, parents have shared that “a lot of teachers don’t respect the discretion of students and share private information” and that “the students knew more than the teacher and that they were teaching the teacher”. However, both parents and teachers recognized their own role and responsibility in addressing gender-based discrimination as well, with statements such as teachers saying that “teachers don’t do enough to give positive examples”, that “teachers have less time than they once did to talk to their students and address the problems they experience, due to paperwork” and that there is “lack of education for teachers”. Parents have reported that “the kids need to gain support from their parents”, that “parents need to speak to their children at an early age” and that “parents need to meet more with teachers”.

### Category 3: Interventions for addressing gender-based discrimination in schools

Teachers have come up with proposals for interventions in addressing gender-based discrimination in schools, such as “using the class on ‘Life Skills’ for discussing topics such as discrimination and inequality”, that “psychologists and pedagogists should take action”, that “more centres need to be opened in schools where students can come and ask questions”, and that “there needs to be more propaganda and educational materials in schools”. Parents, on the other hand, have come up with proposals that changes should first happen at home where “these values, behaviour and reactions need to be taught at home where the child grows”, that “current school programme needs changing”, and that “prevention, rather than damage control” should be the rule. Teachers have also pointed out the lack of responses by the relevant authorities for addressing incidents of gender-based discrimination in schools with statements such as “institutions don’t take these appeals into consideration” although it is the teachers’ responsibility “to report the case to the relevant authorities”. Teachers widely agree that “bullying is the most common form of discrimination” and that parents often minimize the harmful effects bullying has with statements as “parents of the bullies responded with “so what?”



## Conclusion

Gender-based stereotypes and prejudices are present in both the educational content and curricula, as well as the teaching practices in North Macedonia's primary and secondary schools. Gender roles and norms are taught to children from a very early age and it is difficult to intervene in deconstructing them later on in educational settings. Gender inequality is manifested in various areas of society – labour relations and employment, politics and power, education, healthcare, media, and social care.

Teachers and parents of children at school age lack training and capacity building in addressing gender-based discrimination. Little is done by the relevant state authorities when reporting incidents of gender-based discrimination in schools. Teachers, despite lacking training and capacity building on gender-based discrimination and violence, are able to recognise it and counter it. Parents of children at school age lack awareness of the different aspects of gender-based discrimination, and knowledge on addressing it.

Macedonian legislation to a good extent promotes gender equality and provides opportunities for promotion of equal opportunities between women and men. However in practice very little is done regarding promoting equal opportunities between women and men, and the implementation of the existing laws is not satisfactory.

## 2.5.4 Spain

### 2.5.4.1 Quantitative data

#### Parents

When parents were asked if their child has ever spoken about witness sexism of gender-based discriminatory:

- 75% stated no
- 25% stated yes

This correlated when parents were asked if there were aware of their child ever experiencing sexist or discriminatory behaviours:

- 87% stated no
- 13% stated yes

Due to this many parents agreed that more should be done to address gender-based discrimination in schools with, 95.83% stating YES. This also include many parents identifying that they themselves did not know what their child's school guidelines and information are about addressing sexism or gender-based discrimination.

#### Teachers

When teachers were asked of their experiences of sexism in schools, 87% stated that they had encountered this. Some of the examples upon which teachers agreed included 82% who highlighted stereotypes as one of the main examples of discrimination, followed by 15% stating verbal abuse.

### 5.4.2 Qualitative data

The interviews were structured with multiple fixed questions, with the interviewer asking further questions to address any uncertainties in the responses. This report summarises the results of the interview according to the question asked.

The first question asked during the interview was: What kind of skills and knowledge is required of teachers and parents to identify and address cases of gender discrimination?

In response to this question, the answers are very varied, stating that equality should be a transversal value that permeates everything else, and that the action protocols should be reinforced by institutions. As for the necessary skills and knowledge, it is emphasised again and again that information and training are needed, especially training aimed at the students' parents, not just the teaching staff. Great emphasis is placed on the importance of communication, both within families and in schools, and in paying attention to what happens on social networks. On the other hand, there are those who affirm that it is necessary to have empathy to convey to children that they can rely on adults to solve the problems they might have. As far as teachers are concerned, the general opinion is that they must know how to detect cases of gender discrimination, and for this, active listening, observing duly and encouraging reflection, dialogue and debate are essential. Teachers must also be tolerant, patient and understanding, and be very aware of language, not only verbal, but also nonverbal. Some interviewees declare that emotional intelligence and critical thinking can be useful, as well as creativity, when it comes to transmitting the necessary confidence to students. The importance of working hard to improve the self-esteem of children is also mentioned. Knowing the students well and knowing where they come from - socially and culturally - can help teachers do their job better and understand and deal with certain behaviours.

There were some interviewees - very few - who believe that there is no need to have specific training to address cases of gender discrimination.

The second question was: To what extent are these skills and knowledge currently covered by parents and teachers?

In general, the majority answers this question by stating that, although much progress has been made in recent years, there is still a long way to go. Teachers say that it is the students' parents who need more training in this regard, although it is also scarce among the teaching staff, since only the guidance they have is more specific training on how to deal with cases of gender discrimination. Some people think that the involvement of teachers in this matter also depends a lot on the subject they teach in school, having the belief that those who teach science are less involved than those who teach literature or philosophy, for example.

Teachers tend to associate families from other countries, families living in rural areas and families with less income with those who tend to discriminate more and have less knowledge about the subject we are dealing with.

In this section, as in the previous one, reference is made to the problem of social networks. Television programming and advertising are also added. In addition, their importance of using inclusive language is highlighted.

Third, respondents were asked to reflect on the following: Characteristics of the ideal Parent-Teacher collaboration.

What kind of initiative would have the greatest impact and what is required of teachers and parents for its implementation?

All responses to this section can be summarised in one word: communication. Both teachers and parents think that fluid communication between the two parties is very important: more communication and better communication. This implies more meetings, more tutoring and more school activities in which the students' parents participate. The need for greater coordination between parents and teachers is also emphasised since children must be educated 24 hours a day. On the other hand, there are those who talk about the importance of collaboration and the creation of an environment of trust and respect between all parties.



Among all the answers there is a rather elaborate one, in which it is affirmed that creating learning communities that involve families, diverse groups, associations, the educational community and not only the teachers of a centre is quite useful. That way the perspective is greatly expanded, and it is easier to extend valuable initiatives. Finally, it is suggested that there should be fewer children in the classroom to focus attention and that the possible workshops must have more practical than theoretical content.

The fourth question was: What are your experiences in identifying and addressing cases of gender discrimination?

The answers to this part of the interview are very varied and confusing, which leads us to affirm that implementing a project like FREE is of vital importance. In some cases, the existence of the figure of the social integrator is named, as well as the existence of a specific protocol to address cases of gender discrimination, but it seems unclear that the people interviewed know very well what this protocol consists of.

We can say that the interviewees who have not had any experience of gender discrimination are a minority and, in general terms, it is claimed that women suffer the most - despite the existence of stereotypes in different genders - and are more prone to inclusion and acceptance, as well as being more aware of this issue. The importance of making proper use of language and the existence of micromachismos is mentioned. Its danger lies in the fact that they are not very evident, and that they are easily extended. On the other hand, the fact that the students have assumed a role according to their gender since childhood is seen as a daily reality.

Again, some of the people interviewed relate the rural and the foreign to the likelihood of more cases of gender discrimination.

Finally, the interviewees were given the opportunity to share any additional important information on this topic.

Here, the importance of listening to children, the value of more training and a better education in equality, both in schools and at home, is once again expressed. The belief that a simple protocol is not enough is widespread, and so is that this issue cannot be advanced without more communication and more contact between teachers, parents and students, as well as without greater involvement of male persons.

# PART 3: Practical guides and good practices for TEACHERS on tackling gender-based discrimination

## Aims of these sections

- Recommendation based on the qualitative and quantitative data
- Good practices for teachers in tackling gender-based discrimination.
- Consideration on how to implement these good practices

### 3. Part 3: Practical guides and good practices for teachers on tackling gender-based discrimination

#### 3.1 Recommendation based on the research

The institutional framework and the legal framework on combating gender-based discrimination at national levels have been greatly improved over the past years. All EU directives on discrimination have been incorporated in national law and a number of institutional bodies have been established to monitor the implementation of legal provisions. However, from the research conducted there are still many gaps and obscurities.

- Raising awareness on discrimination issues among the general public, as well as the key players, through information campaigns for schools, in tackling both direct and indirect discrimination, is very important.
- Promoting the social dialogue among civil society and school society will also contribute towards this direction
- Promoting programmes and services that meet the particular needs of teachers and parents is of extreme importance.

Possible avenues for addressing gender-based discrimination in educational settings can be as follows:

a) Utilizing the existing structures and mandates of the civil servants and education professionals in addressing gender-based discrimination such as:

a. Conducting training and capacity building of psychologists employed in primary and secondary schools on issues such as gender-based discrimination and violence covering topics including:

- i. stereotypes and prejudices
- ii. gender roles and norms
- iii. definition of normality
- iv. definition of equality, equity and justice
- v. discrimination, hate speech

b) Establishing a National Gender Training Centre where the trainings of the psychologists as elaborated above would regularly take place

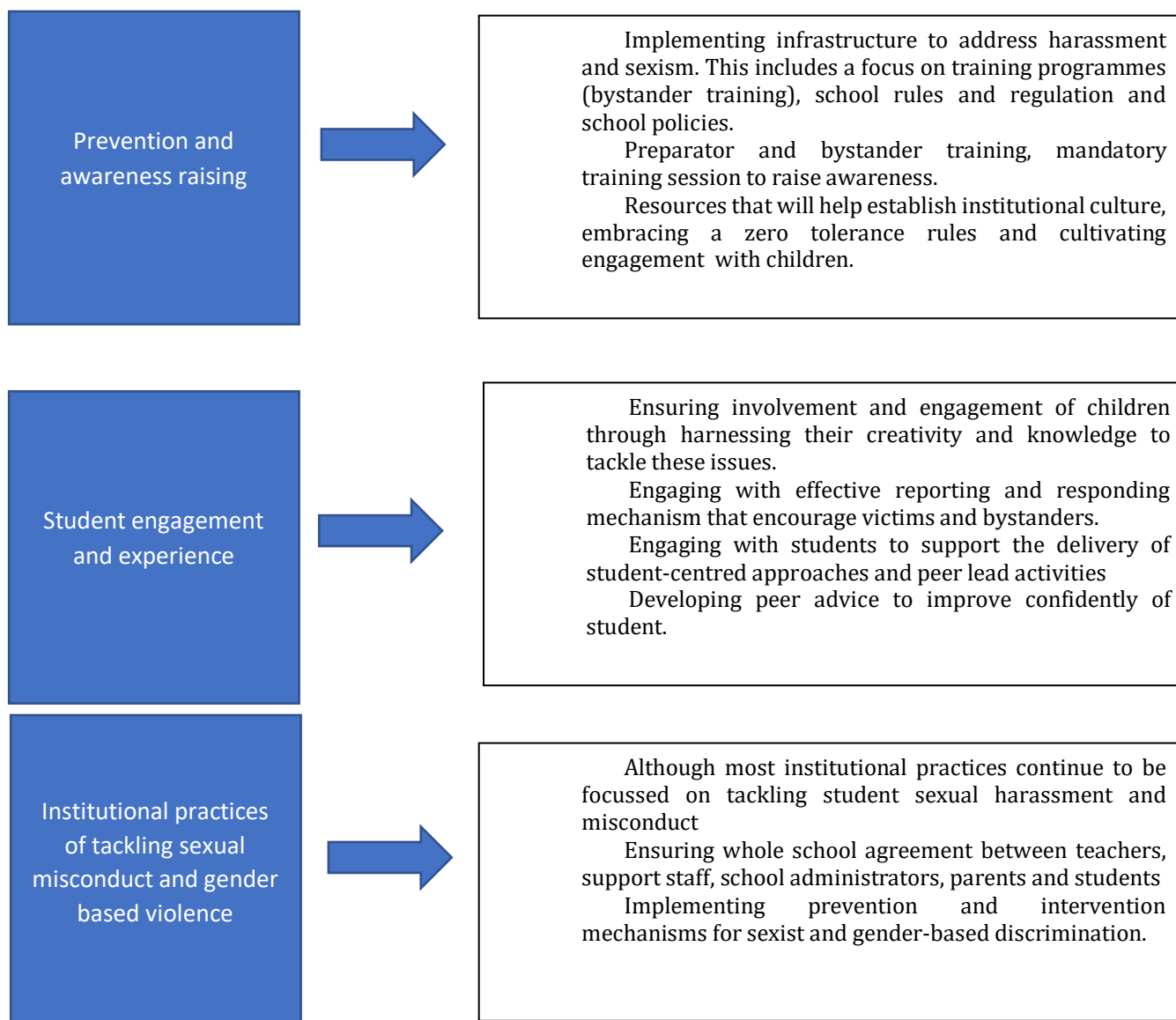
c) Conduct of trainings by psychologists for employees in schools (teachers, principals, assistants) on gender-based discrimination and violence so that knowledge, skills and attitudes are transferred to the front-line employees that have a daily contact with children at schools

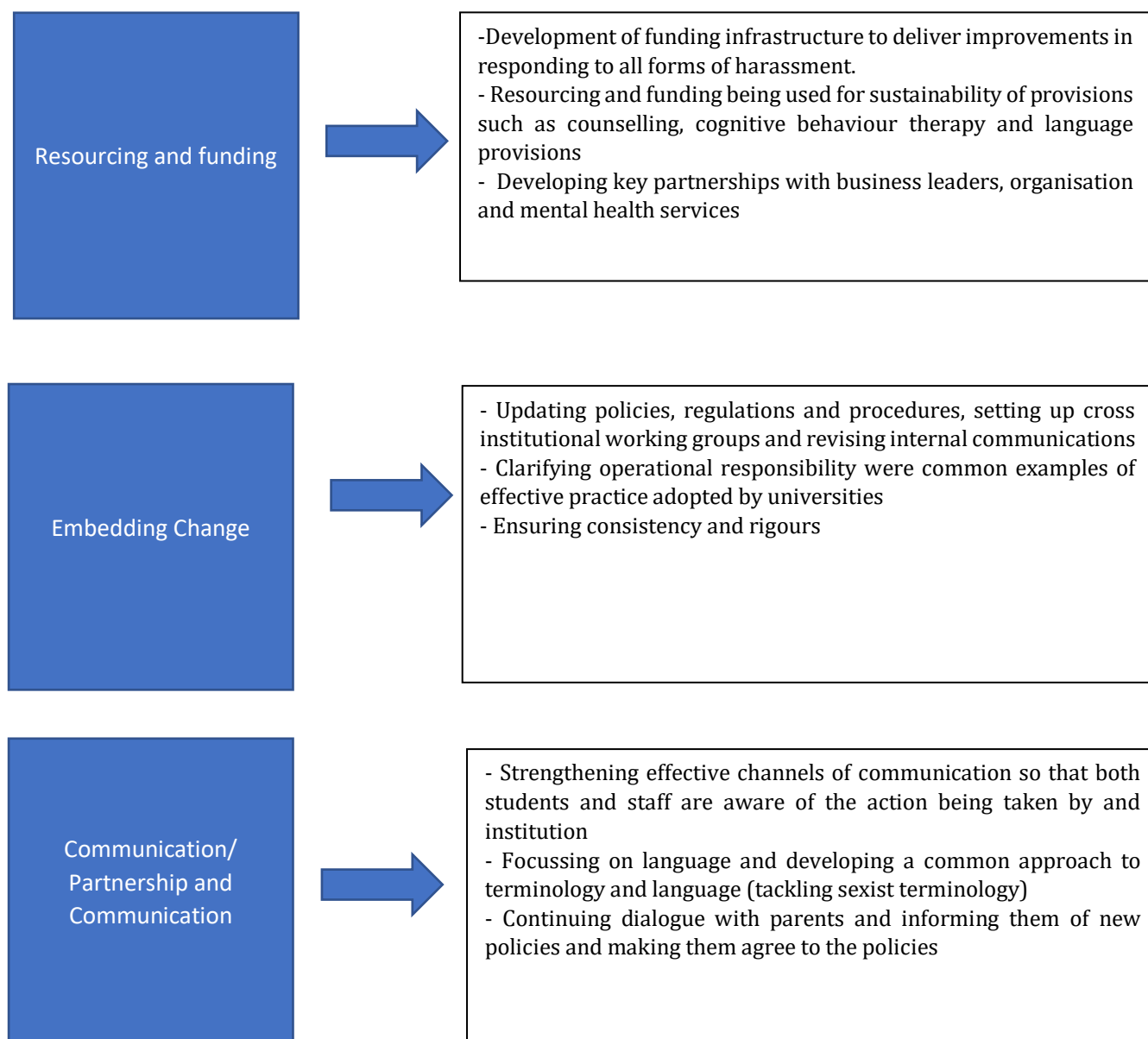
d) Utilizing the existing school boards (consisted of representatives from parents, teachers, and other schools' staff) in each school for a contact point for reporting incidents of gender-based discrimination and access to support for either victims or witnesses of gender-based discrimination and violence in schools

e) Increasing the competences of the coordinators and assistant coordinators for equal opportunities between women and men at local municipal level to initiate, plan, organize and evaluate joint actions with the schools' staff (principals, teachers, psychologists, pedagogues) on promoting gender equality and non-discrimination in school settings.

### 3.2 Good Practices for teachers in tackling gender-based discrimination

Based on the recommendations there are numerous ways in which teachers can implement good practices in dealing with gender-based discrimination.





# PART 4: Practical guides and good practices for PARENTS in tackling gender-based discrimination

## Aims of this section:

- Explore ways in which teachers and parents can work together.
- The role of parents in stopping and identifying incidents of gender-based discrimination and violence.

## 4. Practical guides and good practice for parent in tackling gender-based discrimination

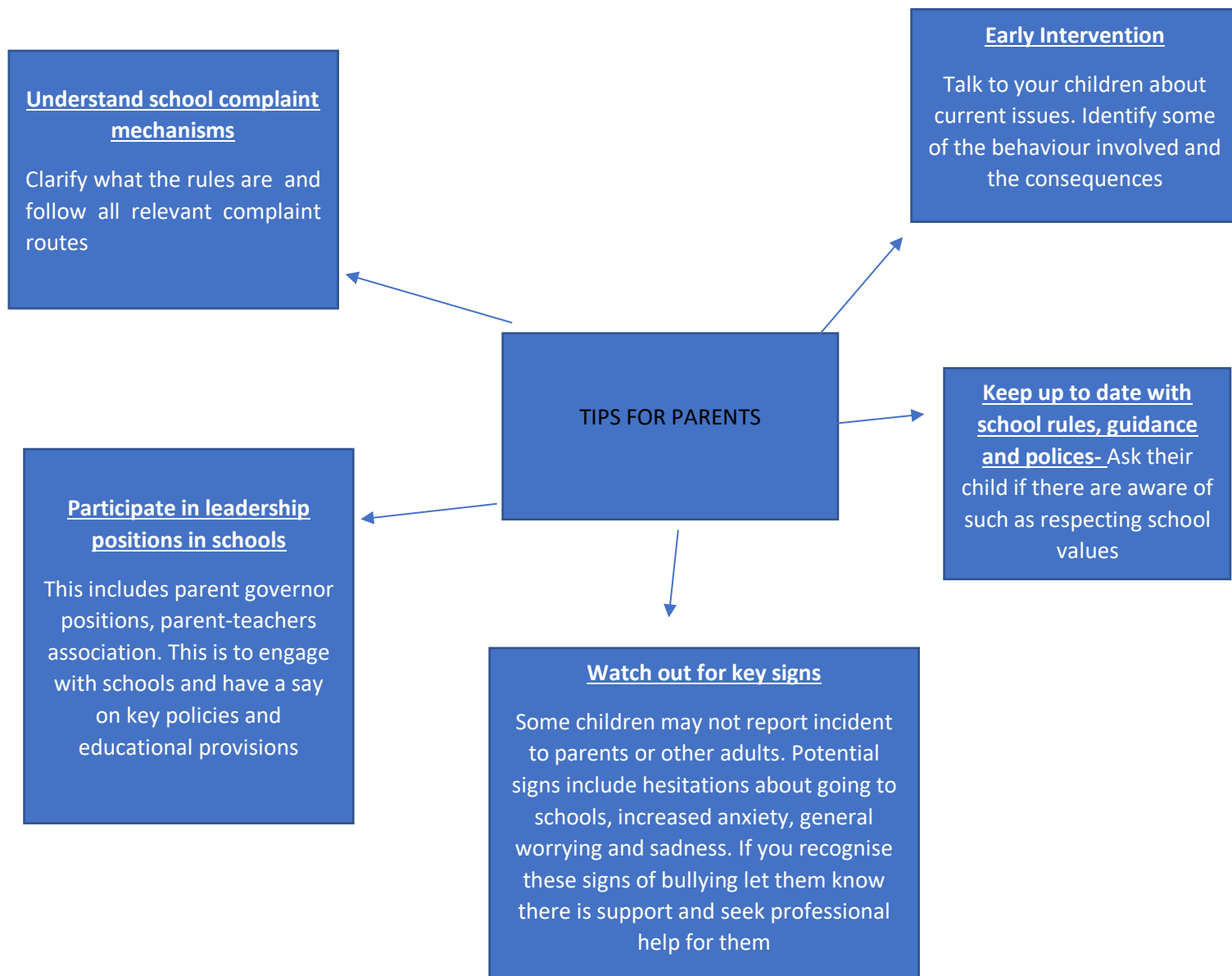
### 4.1 How can teachers and parents work together in tackling gender-based discrimination?

As mentioned in the previous section, a whole school and collaborative approach between teachers, parents and the whole community is important in tackling sexism and gender-based dissemination. This can be achieved in many ways, as listed in the table below:

TEACHERS	PARENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increasing awareness and sensitivity to the issues of gender-based violence and discrimination via education and dissemination of information</li> <li>● Address the behaviour immediately via a zero-tolerance policy</li> <li>● Model positive behaviour and implement behavioural expectation</li> <li>● Setting classroom rules and making expectation that build and atmosphere of respect and tolerance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Parents should also make an effort to prevent gender-based violence, no matter where it takes place.</li> <li>● This includes Communicating with your child about details such as:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What his or her school day is like,</li> <li>● Who he or she spends time with,</li> <li>● Asking about your child's friends,</li> <li>● Being aware of your child's mood changes before and after school,</li> <li>● Keeping close contact with the classroom teacher</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Parents can also help their children to identify what gender-based violence is and how to cope with it in healthy ways</li> <li>● Helping children to know that there are people they can go to for help will give them the confidence to face their bully without feeling defeated or alone.</li> </ul>

In addition to this, teachers can also provide support to parents in terms of providing them with access to support services, encouraging them to be more involved in schools, educating them on new policies by encouraging them to take part in mandatory workshops where parents sign internal and external agreements to support the school on their approach.

#### 4.2 What role do parents have in stopping and identifying incidents of gender-based violence?





## Conclusion

Schools are reflections of society; in that they are breeding grounds for social learning and intellectual development. It could be argued that schools have become centres of social reproduction, maintaining status quo and places where students are trained to enrich the system, not themselves. However, this is a flawed argument as within traditional school systems students do not have the opportunities to reflect on and criticize the content and belief system they are taught. There are many reasons for this, such as the marketisation of education, the national curriculum, lack of training teachers and development. Schools are also key sites of socialisation, where societal norms are reproduced and occasionally left unchallenged. This has been particularly evident in the case of gender norms where schools have become settings in which significant amounts of gender-based harassment, dating and relationship violence occurs.

Schools are also a breeding ground for violence which is evident with the number gender-based discrimination and violence accumulating. Within schools across the United Kingdom, Greece, Spain and North Macedonia, gender inequalities are rife and impact the educational experiences and achievements of young people. Thus, from the research conducted in the four specified countries it is clear that more needs to be done. The general consensus from the recommendations focuses on the need for:

### Teachers

- Further teacher training and education to understand and address their own knowledge and awareness of the issue. This includes the development of training materials content on informed instances of gender-based discrimination.
- The need for greater clarity around strategies and legislation that would help them tackle and prevent gender-based discrimination.
- Some form of guidance on working collaboratively with parents in relation to gender equality issues may be helpful to enable teachers to address parents' concerns in relation to sensitive topics

### Parents

- Further understanding of the rules and safeguarding procedures on what gender-based discrimination is
- Collaboration with teachers and parents in supporting children and developing an environment for change
- Training should clarify signs to look out for and how to distinguish gender-based violence from other forms of abuse or bullying.

***This training guide alongside the training resources, materials and modules created for Intellectual Output 2 on the [FREE](#) website tackles this through in class and online teaching materials.***