



PREVENTING CYBERBULLYING TOWARDS LGBTQ+ GROUPS:

A RESTORATIVE JUSTICE APPROACH FOR YOUTH WORKERS

SUMMARY FINDINGS FROM THE UK, SPAIN, MALTA AND ITALY

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE SERIES NO 43



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ORGANISATIONAL PARTNERS & AUTHORS

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	<p>EUROSUD</p> <p>Is the Italian contributing partner for this transnational report. Eurosud offers support, help, service and counselling in the areas of development of civil society and democratic institutions, civil values and non-formal education for all citizens, especially for young people.</p> <p>http://www.eurosud.info/</p>
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VISMEDNET

Is an association of professionals in the areas of education, training and career development in Malta, Europe and in other parts of the world where VisMedNet has networks, partnerships and friendships.

VisMedNet is located in Malta and is the contributing partner and compiler of this transnational report.

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

Cyberbullying of vulnerable young people is a reality and an increasing concern locally and internationally. Unlike standard-bullying that is more common at school, it can continue throughout the day through SMS, and apps, in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or damaging content about someone else. There is evidence that LGBTI+ groups are disproportionately affected by cyberbullying.

The heavy reliance on the internet during the Covid-19 pandemic highlights the need for an urgent response that will enable both young people and youth workers to deal well with cyberbullying.

At this critical point in time, the RJ4All International Institute created a partnership from 4 Erasmus+ countries (Spain, Italy, UK and Malta) to address this phenomenon under the SIAC project “Promoting a Safe Use of Internet Against Cyberbullying”.

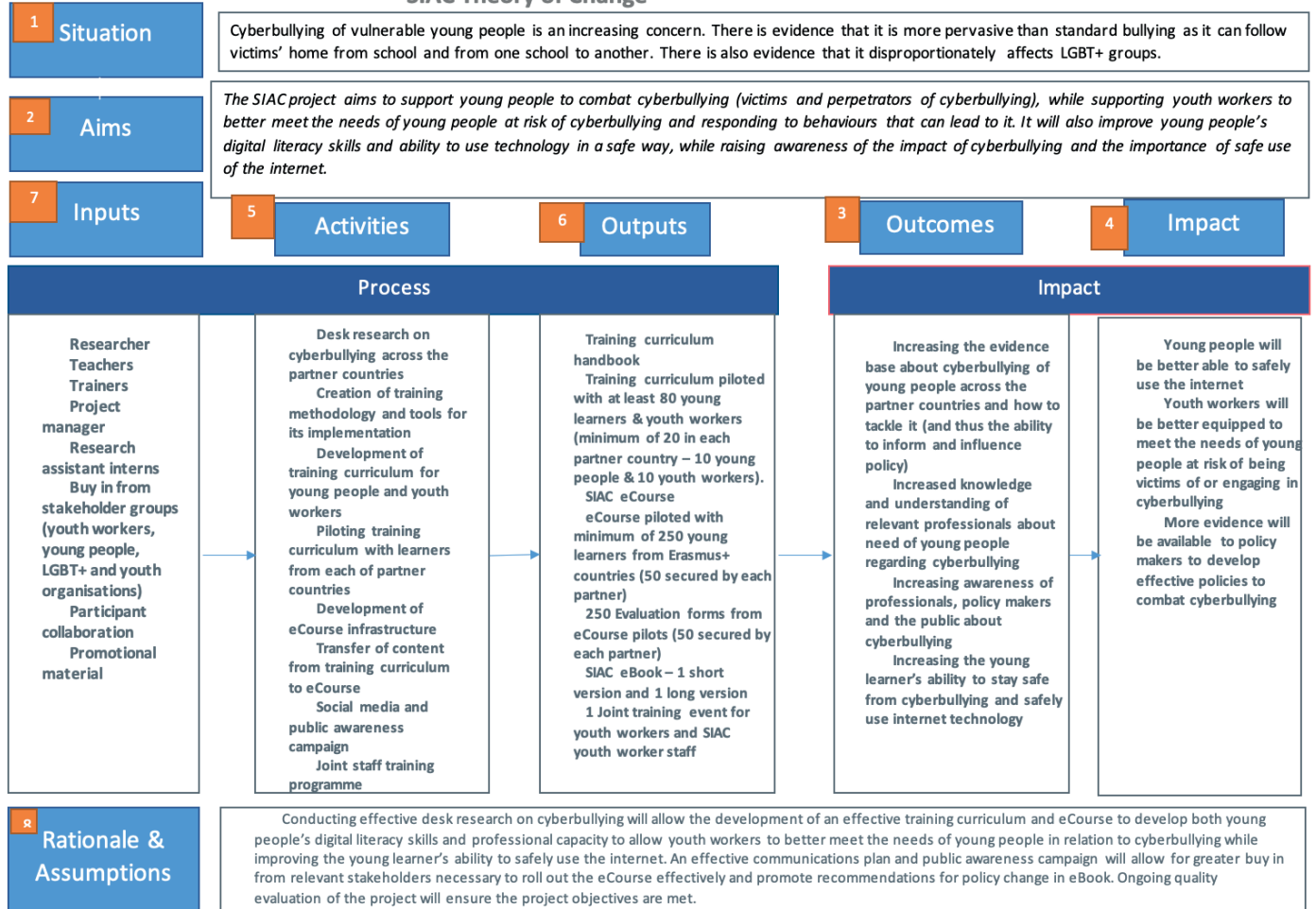
The project aims to support youth workers and other professionals working with young who are at risk of cyberbullying. It will increase the skills, knowledge and confidence that will allow these professionals to foster their young peoples’ resilience as well as knowledge in using the internet and being safe from cyberbullying. The project tailored and evidence-based accredited training and other social actions, which will drive innovation and quality in European youth work. The project accredited these courses with a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) status, certifying all trainees and in this way promoting the quality of youth work and validating a grey area of youth.

PROJECT’S OVERALL GOALS:

- Supporting youth workers and other relevant professionals to better meet the needs of young people at risk of cyberbullying.
- Minimize the harassment of students that have bad habits with the use of the Internet through innovative education.
- Increase the professionals’ skills, knowledge and confidence to allow them to foster their young peoples’ resilience as well as knowledge in safely using the internet and being safe from cyberbullying.
- Promoting quality, innovation and recognition of youth work.
- Improve young peoples’ digital literacy and the use of technology in a safe way. Enhancing this knowledge and experiences will enable our target groups’ adaptation to the digital age and shape their future professions.
- Raise awareness of the importance of a safe use of the internet and need to tackle cyberbullying

SIAC THEORY OF CHANGE

SIAC Theory of Change



SIAC IN THE UK

COMPARATIVE AND CROSS-COUNTRY LEARNING

ABSTRACT

This is the summary of the comparative chapter of the SIAC e-book. This summary aims to critically synthesize all the findings from the project. It reflects on the new knowledge, tools, pilots, and results that we accumulated as an Erasmus+ strategic partnership over the last two years. This summary chapter reflects on the current reality of cyberbullying with a special focus on people from LGBTQ groups in Europe. It looks at the role of youth work as well as to set light on challenges faced. Furthermore, restorative justice is presented as a positive approach to adopt for enabling to root out cyberbullying among youth. Emphasis is given on the implementation of our innovative tools in the project participating countries: the UK, Spain, Malta and Italy.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

In the framework of the SIAC research, partnership has studied cyberbullying signs and patterns physically, but also online. SIAC project aimed to:

- Identify existing methods used to reach marginalized youth
- Identify the best innovative practices in preventing cyberbullying
- Identify existing tools and facilitation of non-formal educational activities attended by youth workers
- Identify accessible methods of communication and distribution of information about the organization programs/projects/activities to reach the most affected young people.

To reach these objectives each partnering country representative in this project conducted desk research:

- on data and statistics on cyberbullying in their countries, identifying pertinent issues at the local, regional, and national level.
- on data collected on EU wide initiatives to tackle cyberbullying.

The methodological approach used a combination of different methodologies, including literature review, qualitative interviews, and analysis of content, discourse analysis, and social network analysis.

The literature review was carried out through a combination of sources and methods, including books, studies, research papers, scholarly articles, published reports and statistics, and fieldwork. It examines the current state of knowledge on the topic of cyberbullying.

It was also important that existing knowledge was complemented with local realities and in order to understand the latter we conducted several pilots and fieldwork studies. In particular, the project carried out:

PROJECT PHASE	RESEARCH TOOL	PURPOSE AND RESULTS
Research phase 1	Desk research in all participating languages	To create the SIAC report: Promoting Safe Use of The Internet Safe Internet Against Cyberbullying (SIAC) LGBTQ Discrimination and The Current State Of The Art In The UK, Spain, Malta And Italy
Research phase 2	Piloting of the ecourse	To implement the E-course
Research phase 3	Online survey (self-assessment), focus groups and online questionnaire	To assess and evaluate the E-course

	UK	ITALY	MALTA	SPAIN
Phase 1: Desk research	1 chapter completed	1 chapter completed	1 chapter completed	1 chapter completed
Phase 2: E-courses piloting	50	50	50	50
Phase 3: Assessment of E-course	50	50	50	50

CURRENT STATE IN PARTICIPATING EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

The heavy reliance on the internet during the Covid-19 pandemic highlights the need for an urgent response to the increase of cyberbullying incidents all over the world. According to surveys and countries national statistics, cyberbullying and particularly cyberbullying towards LGBTIQ young people is a reality and an increasing concern among all Erasmus+ countries.

The combination of the anonymity and the absence of consequences play a very important role for the increase of cyberbullying incidents. This phenomenon has become more and more common during the last 2 years of the pandemic, resulting in an urgent need for both young people and youth workers to deal with it. As it will be presented in more details further below, cyberbullying, unlike standard bullying which usually common in school settings, does not face any territorial obstacles as it can happen throughout the day through SMS, SM apps, forums, game platforms, etc. where people can interact and share content.

When talking about Cyberbullying and LGBTIQ groups, it is easy noticeable that research and reporting evidence reflect that LGBTIQ groups are disproportionally affected. According to the FRA latest European LGBT survey, 91 to 97 % of school students have heard negative comments or seen negative conduct because a schoolmate was perceived to be LGBTIQ during school years.

Based on research findings from all project participating countries (UK, Italy, Spain, and Malta) bullying related to people identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender is much more widespread than bullying based on race, religion and gender. Additionally, the majority of the incidents are being concentrated on ages between 10-15 with average 13,5 years old. In particular, according to findings from the UK's Office for National

Statistics for the year ending on March 2020, in a research of 764,000 youths one in five children aged 10 to 15 in England and Wales have experienced at least one form of cyberbullying. Similarly, in Spain having the highest incidence rate occurring at the age of 11-14 years old. In particular, 13,5 years old is the average age of the victims cyberbullied. In Italy, based on data from the Gay Help Line which is the national contact center against homophobia and transphobia, receiving more than 50 contacts a day which is more than 20,000 a year, about the 60% of users fall into the 13-27 age group. Malta data revealed that cyberbullying has been increased and that 3 in 4 students have witnessed cyberbullying.

Additionally, during COVID period, the blackmail and threats suffered by LGBTIQ people have increased from 11% to 28%, while cases of bullying and discrimination at work from 3 to 15%. Furthermore, in the year in which the pandemic limited socialization to the web, 30% of LGBTIQ students who contacted the Gay Help Line said they had suffered cyberbullying and hate speech online.

Regarding the LGBTIQ in Spain, almost 70% of LGBTIQ students experience cyberbullying based on the affective-sexual orientation and gender identity in their online environment, which means new ways of internalizing prejudices and LGBTIQ-phobia by the same students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans. Also, it was noticed that in most cases cyberbullying continues to be a reiterative and long-term form of harassment.

In terms of other characteristics and factors, in UK up to 26% of victims of cyberbullying had a chronic condition or impairment. That proportion is significantly greater than the 18% prevalence of online bullying among kids who do not have a disease or a disability. As far as ethnicity is concerned, only 6% Asian or Asian British children reported any type of online bullying, while 21% of white children reported experiencing it, 18% of Black or Black British children reported being the target of online bullying, while the number for children from mixed racial or ethnic groups was slightly higher at 19%.

Nearly equal numbers of boys and girls, 20% of girls and 17% of boys, reported being victims of cyberbullying. This indicates that other factors, such appearance, colour, or sexual orientation, are more frequently the focus of cyberbullying behaviour than gender. This is not the case for Spain, as it shows that approximately the 60% of the cyberbullying victims are girls.

CYBERBULLYING IN EUROPE: REFLECTIONS FROM THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

During the project lifetime, desk research was conducted in all participating countries in order to unpack the current situation in Europe as well as to understand the different approaches and perspectives of the phenomenon of cyberbullying in different country context. The research focus not only on what constitutes cyberbullying and how it varies from traditional bullying, but also how it impacts members of LGBTIQ groups, the current legislation and intervention and prevention actions, etc. Through the research process, partners were in contact headteachers, staff, and governing bodies of schools and other educational organisations that provided clear, in-depth guidance, inputs, and advice for a sufficient package of educational materials and sources. In particular, the partnership had access to information on several topics dealing with issues like online safety, LGBTIQ, mental health, sexual harassment, race, religion, and nationality, among others. Additionally, a network of independent organisations, such as charities and NGOs, offered training, direction, advice, and other forms of assistance to students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. These contacts not only provided partnership's researchers with useful information but also a lot of these organisations who work with youth are willing to use the tools made available by the project to train staff and young people on the risks related to cyberbullying.

The partnership engaged a diverse set of participants in the online training course's piloting activities, including teachers, youth workers, volunteers, and other professionals who work with young people in order to test and optimize the training materials based on professionals' feedback for improvement.

Based on the pilot's feedback it is important to note how the e-course dramatically improved (by clarifying) the participants' perception about cyberbullying and how it has given them better knowledge and confi-

dence making them better prepared to teach the notions to other people.

In particular, as evidence from the UK pre-course and the post-course assessment questionnaire, it is clear that participants following the completion of the course not only have a higher understanding of the phenomenon of cyberbullying, especially with regards to LGBTQ groups, but they are also more aware of prevention practices and feel more confident to provide support to the victims, including from LGBTQ groups, and apply restorative justice principles and methods. Similarly in Italy, pilot participants made great improvements in cyberbullying awareness. According to the responses of participants in the pre assessment survey it was noted that cyberbullying towards LGBTQ+ youth was not entirely clear as well as most of them were not feeling comfortable with explaining cyberbullying prevention. Participants were not aware of the current challenges in the area of cyberbullying towards LGBTQ groups and were not aware of how to support a victim prior to the e-course. However, after completing the course, participants improved their knowledge on the current topics, learned important concepts that they can adopt and disseminate.

Also learning about preventive measures, as well as restorative justice methods was one of the highlights of the course. The values of restorative justice were not a very well-known topic for a lot of participants as well as the practices and benefits of using these approaches. Most of them were not familiar with the topic before the course, but the e-course helped them to understand the potential of restorative justice to help LGBTQ communities heal from cyberbullying.

In Spain, the findings show that participants had in general good knowledge of cyberbullying and cyberbullying towards LGBTQ groups. Similarly, regarding their knowledge related to restorative justice and restorative justice approaches, with half of the participants to acquire good knowledge and 22% excellent knowledge of this area.

Last, through SIAC project partners had the opportunity to exchange ideas and knowledge as well as to compare outcomes in different countries, discuss successes and best practices, and cooperate on creating the project's deliverables.

CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SIAC IN THE UK, SPAIN, AND ITALY

SIAC project gave the opportunity for partner countries to set light on a great concern regarding cyberbullying and specifically cyberbullying towards LGBTQ groups during COVID era. Cyberbullying is a common occurrence among young people. The likelihood of experiencing online harassment considerably rises as kids spend more time online and have more access to mobile devices.

Regarding legislation on bullying and cyberbullying, cases are handled according to laws that were established before the development of social media platforms, even though the present legal framework appears to be adequate to accommodate the occurrence of episodes of cyberbullying. And considering that there is no official definition of cyberbullying, it is urgent for legislation that would also reflect the role that technology plays in cases of bullying as well as to reflect online behaviors as new types of bullying and harassment emerge. These were concerns that are being raised and addressed in the e-course by promoting a more critical thinking approach. This source provides valuable knowledge to educators/youth leaders and youth organisations in fostering effectiveness and efficiency in education about risks and effects of cyberbullying, raise awareness among secondary school students and youth centres, and encourage reporting by victims and bystanders as it is based on sound learning principles and approaches which can suit different needs and learning styles.

SIAC project set a good basis focusing on cross-sectorial and cross-border collaboration, by fostering a wider dialogue with stakeholders in education, in order to adopt a co-creative and evidence-based approach to prevent and counter cyberbullying through education.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE APPROACH TO TACKLE CYBERBULLYING

Since the early 1970s, restorative justice has been discussed in many international fora and attracted the interest of many commentators, reformers, policy makers and researchers (Braithwaite 2002a; Gavrielides 2007). These debates have been complemented with numerous evaluations of restorative practices (Kilchling 1991; Umbreit and Greenwood 1997; Miers 2001; Miers et al 2001; Wilcox and Hoyle 2004; Vanfraechem *et al* 2010). However, little has been said about how restorative justice can be an appropriate approach to deal with cases of cyberbullying or even prevent them. Restorative justice can address cyberbullying and particularly, any effective response to cyberbullying should involve restorative justice practices that involve the whole community. According to Jennifer Shapka: “If we adopt restorative justice by including all actors: parents, the school through its school policy, the victims, the perpetrators and the community as a whole, we will be able to obtain results”. Restorative justice can then be used for educational purposes when its values are integrated into anti-cyberbullying initiatives. Restorative justice assumes “*the existence of a “social liaison” that bonds individuals in a relationship of respect for other’s rights and freedoms*” (Gavrielides, 2005).

Unpacking a bit more the benefits of restorative justice we need to explain what restorative justice is. SIAC project understood it within a broader framework, as “an ethos with practical goals, among which is to restore the harm done by including all affected parties in a process of understanding through voluntary and honest dialogue, and by adopting a fresh approach to conflicts and their control, retaining at the same time certain rehabilitative goals” (Gavrielides 2007: 139). There appears to be a consensus in the literature that the concept of restorative justice should extend to something far beyond the practical realm so as to capture its ethical dimension. Zehr and Mika (1998) provided a list of principles in an effort to clarify what constitutes restorative justice. Their list is composed of three major headings: (a) crime is fundamentally a violation of people and interpersonal relationships, (b) violations create obligations and liabilities, and (c) restorative justice seeks to heal and put right the wrongs. In the literature, there is consensus that restorative justice practices consist of: direct and indirect mediation, family group conferences, healing/sentencing circles and community restorative boards (Walgrave and Bazemore 1998; Crawford and Newburn 2003; Gavrielides 2007). Restorative practices emphasize values of empathy, respect, honesty, acceptance, and accountability among participants. Restorative practices are effective in addressing cyberbullying because of its focus on:

- Involving all those affected by the harm in the discussion and in determining its resolution,
- Listening and speaking to the needs of the offending person, the victim, and all others impacted with the cyberbullying,
- Healing and repairing harm, broken communication, and broken relationships, and
- Promoting shared community values and positive and productive forms of interaction ways as encouraging individual and community accountability.

Restorative practices are ideal for dealing with cyberbullying and its adverse impact on the victims: while cyberbullying promotes negative social interaction, intolerance for difference, and abuse of power, restorative justice principles are all about helping people to learn, understand, and respect difference, transform power imbalances that affect social relationships, and build positive social interaction and empowered community involvement.

Restorative practices involve components of accountability, without using punitive measures.

This aspect of restorative justice, accountability with care and support, can be beneficial for the community in dealing with cyberbullying.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Following implementation of SIAC project, partnership gathered a few policy recommendations based on the desk research as well as the educational material pilot findings and feedback from participants and other professionals on the topic. To name a few, some of them include national and EU policies.

NATIONAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review national current legislation of cyberbullying and devise new laws considering the technology. Although the current legal system in the UK seems to be well equipped to deal with cases of cyberbullying, some of the laws of reference predate the advent of smart phones and social media and therefore may appear outdated to deal with cases of cyberbullying, which is a recent phenomenon. Our recommendation would be for policy makers to consider reviewing the current legislation of cyberbullying and devise new laws that consider the technological advancements that occurred over the past 15-20 years and are more focused on this specific issue.
- In Spain, Article 1 of the Organic Law on Education recognises the basic rights of students, such as respect for their personal integrity and dignity, and protection against any physical or moral aggression, and the right to respect the dignity, integrity, and privacy of all members of the educational community.
- Students must respect teachers and other school employees, as well as the rest of their classmates, avoiding situations of conflict and bullying in any form, including cyber-bullying. This provision is found in art. 1 of the Law for the Modification of the Child and Adolescent Protection System. In addition, all schools must include in their educational project a Coexistence Plan, which serves as a reference for students, families, and teachers to deal with bullying, as established by the Organic Law of Education. Each school's Coexistence Plan must include Internal Regulations, which include rules of behaviour that the student must respect. Bullying should be classified as a serious offence, with the consequent application of a sanction, which could lead to permanent expulsion from the school.
- Teachers and academic staff should also receive training on how to deal with challenging circumstances of bullying and cyberbullying towards LGBTIQ groups.
- It is imperative that prevention methods are accessible and able to stop cyberbullying from happening. Offline and online prevention methods are needed to ensure that cyberbullying does not change an individual's life forever. Tackling this phenomenon must not be a "one size fits all" approach, but varying circumstances must call for various preventative measures.
- The schools should ensure regular review and update of existing policies to include cyberbullying where appropriate, as well as to keep good records of all cyberbullying incidents. Finally, the schools should promote the positive use of technology. The IT department of the schools must use filtering, firewall, anti-spyware software, anti-virus software and secure connections to safeguard the pupils.
- Support civil society and educational staff in the implementation of practical measures against the phenomenon. It is necessary to 'rethink' of education to match the online era, where new media 'democratize education', empower young people and open pathways to tolerance for living and working in a multicultural environment. The blurring of borders between formal, non-formal and informal will require new teaching skills and constant evolution of the profiles of youth workers or schoolteachers. A holistic approach to education, individualised methods, professional coaching, and experience-based learning would also prompt individuals to take a step back from routine and promote change.
- Raising awareness among the youth. Schools are particularly suitable places of social interaction where a good deal of work can be done in order to limit the spread of cyber-bullying. Parents, schools, and law enforcement need to take an active role in raising awareness about cyberbullying. Active campaign programs are necessary to fight the increasing problems associated with cyberbullying.

EUROPEAN POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review EU current legislation of cyberbullying and devise new laws considering the technology. Similar to the recommendations for national policy makers, the UK recommendation to EU policy makers would be to work together with partner countries create laws that are more specific to cyberbullying and are

up to speed with the current technological advancements, some clear and comprehensive laws encompassing a wide range of case scenarios and specify severe rules for lawbreakers. Obviously, it would be important that in devising that, freedom of speech is also safeguarded.

- When looking into policies preventing and tackling cyberbullying, it needs to be noted that the absence of a common definition is, once again, one of the major problems when comparing any national policies with one another. In 2016, as Pozza et al. (2016:25) note: “only fourteen EU Member States provide an official definition of this phenomenon namely Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Spain”. The national policies became a patchwork of laws, which led to the need to create international measures and regulations. Now there are many international and European initiatives, legislations, and conventions in the fight against cybercrime, but the EU Member States (MS) are still required to implement measures into their own legislation and policies to be effective (EUCPN 2018).
- Increase responsibility put into tech companies to develop platforms providing safer spaces for users where they can feel free to express themselves without risk.
- Create an enabling policy environment for the prevention, detection, and reaction to (cyber)bullying, especially among children and adolescents.
- Combat peer violence amongst young people within formal and informal learning settings and online
- Raising awareness campaign on (cyber)bullying internationally.

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SIAC IN ITALY: SUMMARY FINDINGS

ABSTRACT

THE EUROSUD'S WORK DONE OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS CAN BE CATEGORIZED IN 3 PARTS:

PART 1: PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

EUROSUD project staff attended 1st TPM held in Malta in October 2021, 2nd TPM held in Spain in April 2022 and it organized a 3rd TPM in Bari in September 2022. Beside that the periodical project reports were produced. With reference to the communication activities, it is worth mentioning that all project newsletters and press releases were disseminated through EUROSUD's network and mailing list that include more than 7000 contacts.

PART 2: INTELLECTUAL OUTPUTS

After completing the desk research EUROSUD prepared a national report regarding Cyberbullying in Italy. The next step was the development of the training materials for the e-course in English and then translation of the entire e-course into Italian language. The core activity was a pilot testing of the e-course with 50 learners. Finally, EUROSUD drafted national chapters for the SIAC e-book summarizing the key findings.

Part 3: Project monitoring and evaluation

EUROSUD led on the evaluation of the project including leading on the evaluation of the project meetings, partnership, training course and intellectual outputs. The activities related to the collection, processing and evaluation of information regarding the project. For this, we had to work closely with the partners taking their feedback and integrating them into the project learning.

The main elements of success can be related to project partnership cohesion and commitment to carry out activities within due dates, successful project completion despite Covid-19 and innovative approach in communication to reach the wide target audience.

KEY OBJECTIVE OF THE COUNTRY REPORT

The objective of this country report is to bring together all the research and pilots findings in one place. In particular, country report integrates the theoretical learning and practical results of the pilots and training. It also includes best practices as source of inspiration and for potential know-how transfer and it might be of particular interest for young people at risk of being bullied especially due to their sexual orientation.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology that was used to conduct the desk analysis of the current state of art regarding the cyberbullying in Italy is a review of empirical studies, scholarly and peer reviewed articles, and websites that pertain to anti cyberbullying prevention programs available to youth. By examining the literature that already exists, the report served as a starting point for the development of curriculum and training materials for the e-course.

During the proposal phase, the project consortium selected e-course for piloting. The team agreed that all pilots will be done on English version of the course and that they would follow a similar structure adhering to a common framework to enable integration of the expected results. When the 50 Italian learners completed the e-course, all assessment forms were reviewed to reflect the hitherto defined key questions, roles, and processes involved, as well as related key challenges and opportunities in the specific context of pilot.

CURRENT STATE OF THE ART IN THE COUNTRY

EUROSUD carried out desk research using its expertise and networks to collect required data and recent reports about cyberbullying in Italy. These findings contributed to the project leaning experience and creation of curriculum in Intellectual output 1. Once the data were collected, EUROSUD translated the report from into English. From the desk research work, we can highlight the the following key findings:

In November 2021 the Ministry of Education of Italy has released data from the ELISA platform on bullying and cyberbullying. A total of 314,500 students attending 765 state secondary schools and 46,250 teachers from 1,849 State School Institutions participated in the monitoring. Here is what emerged:

- 22.3% of high school students have been bullied by peers (19.4% occasionally and 2.9% systematically); 18.2% have taken an active part in bullying a peer or classmate (16.6% occasionally and 1.6% systematically);
- 8.4% have experienced cyberbullying incidents (7.4% occasionally and 1% systematically);
- 7% have actively taken part in cyberbullying incidents (6.1% occasionally and 0.9% systematically).

Many students point out that they have been bullied based on prejudice:

- 7% have been bullied because of their ethnic background (5.5% occasional and 1.5% systematic),
- 6.4% have homophobic bullying (5% occasional and 1.4% systematic)
- 5.4% are reported to have been bullied because of their own disability (4.2% occasional and 1.2% systematic).

It turns out it is necessary to take into consideration that a part of these phenomena does not emerge, remaining unaware of the school and teachers' awareness.

It emerges that within the school, despite having been appointed, the figure of the referring teacher is unknown. And that only 11.5% have in-depth knowledge of the Orientation 2021 guidelines. Less than 50% are the schools that have implemented the protocol for taking charge of bullying and cyberbullying situations.

2021 was the year in which, according to Ilga Europe, Italy falls to 35th place in the ranking of European countries for policies to protect human rights and equality of LGBT + people (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans). In 2021, LGBT + people in Italy affected by discrimination, hatred and violence for their sexual orientation and gender identity were many. Gay Help Line, the national contact center against homophobia and transphobia, received more than 50 contacts a day (between line and chat) which is more than 20,000 a year. About 60% of users fall into the 13-27 age group. The incidence of prejudice and discrimination has a particular weight

on children: this is because the problems already begin with coming out in the family. For 17% of adults who contacted Gay Help Line, coming out resulted in the loss of financial support from the family: most of these were consequently abandoned and put on the street. The Refuge Lgbt + home welcomes these young people and supports them so that they are able to overcome the trauma they have suffered and to achieve their autonomy through training and job search.

Victims find it hard to report: the phenomenon of under reporting has a worrying effect on the recognition of the extent of discrimination and violence. Figures from the Gay Help Line tell us that in the COVID period, the blackmail and threats suffered by LGBT people have increased from 11% to 28%, while cases of bullying and discrimination at work from 3 to 15%. Furthermore, in the year in which the pandemic limited socialization to the web, 30% of LGBT + students who contacted the Gay Help Line said they had suffered cyberbullying and hate speech online.

IMPLEMENTING SIAC IN THE COUNTRY

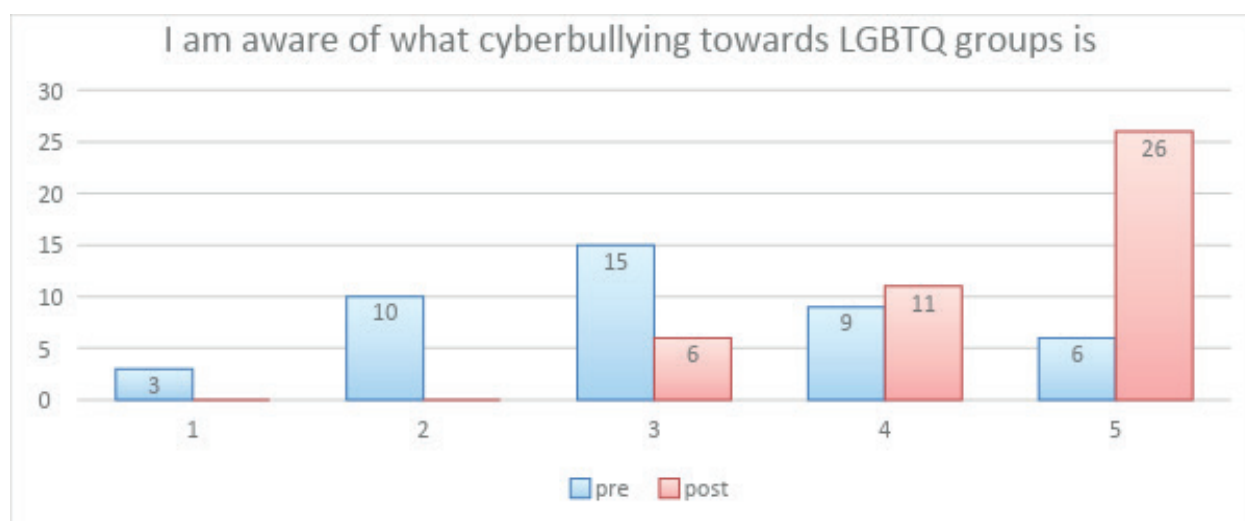
After the e-course on preventing cyberbullying towards LGBTQ+ youth was developed, EUROSUD team initiated widespread promotion and pilot with at least 50 learners from across the country. Once the target of 50 learners was reached, EUROSUD proceeded with analysis of collected data.

The pre and post assessment survey was completed by 43 Italian participants and the analysis was carried out using Excel, in which EUROSUD staff entered all the responses and compared them.

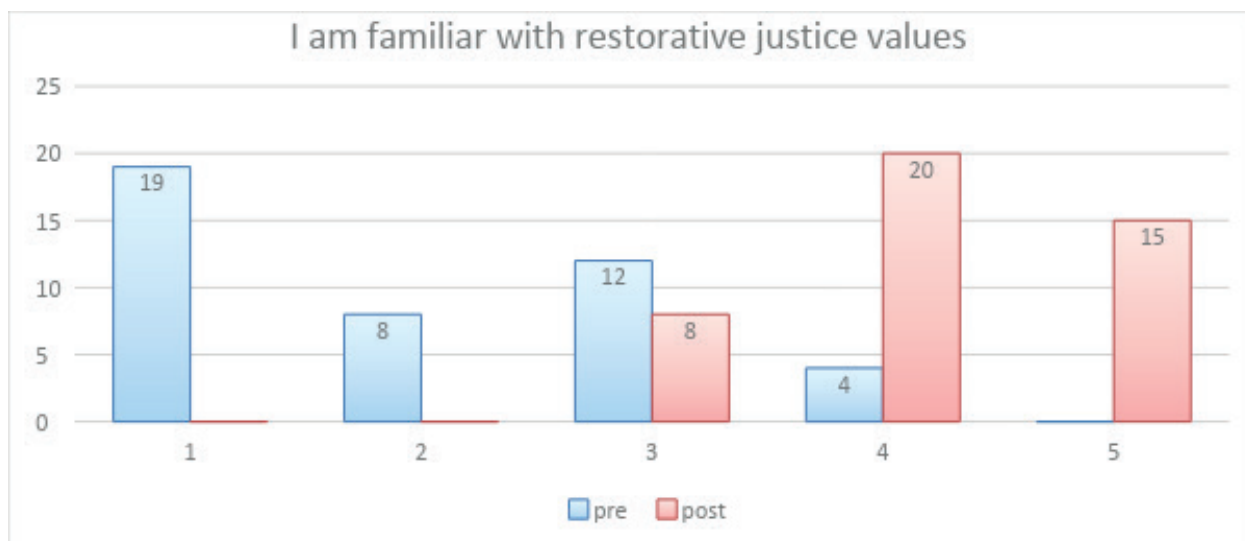
The first part of pre and post assessment form consists of 11 questions that participants could answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means they are new to the topic and 5 means they are familiar with it. On the other hand, in the second part of the surveys participants had to select to what extent do they agree with statements. Finally, in the third part of the post assessment survey participants had to write the most important things they learnt during the course.

MAIN FINDINGS:

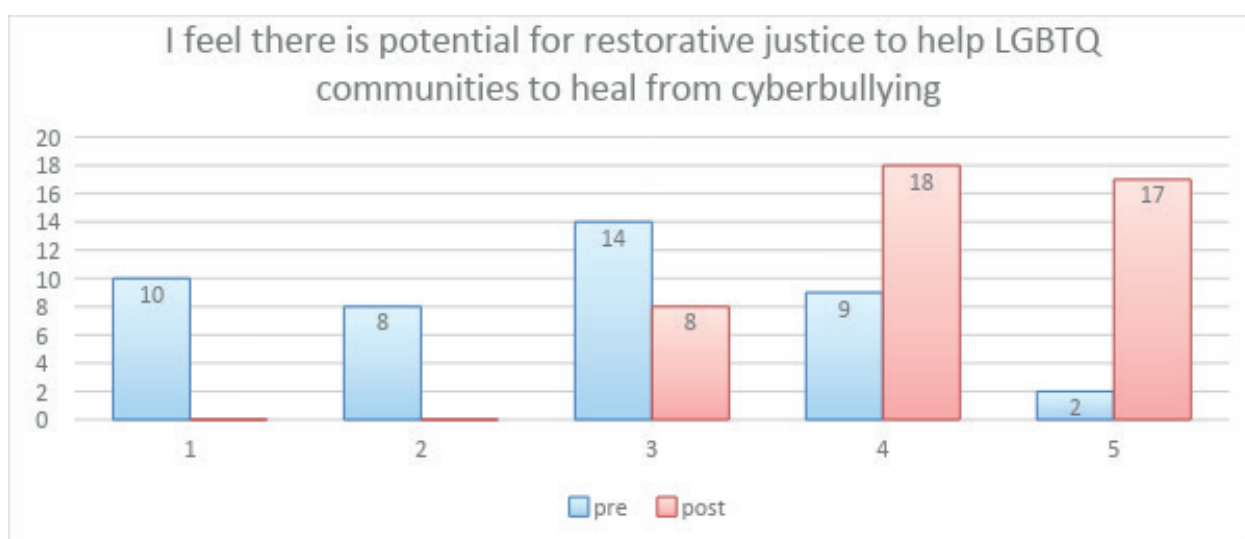
- Participants have made great improvements in cyberbullying awareness. After completing the course, most participants are aware of what cyberbullying is (17 of them selected n.4 and 25 selected n.5 as their reply)
- According to the responses of participants in the pre assessment survey it can be noted that the phenomenon of cyberbullying towards LGBTQ+ youth was not entirely clear. However, after completing the course, participants improved their knowledge on the current topic.



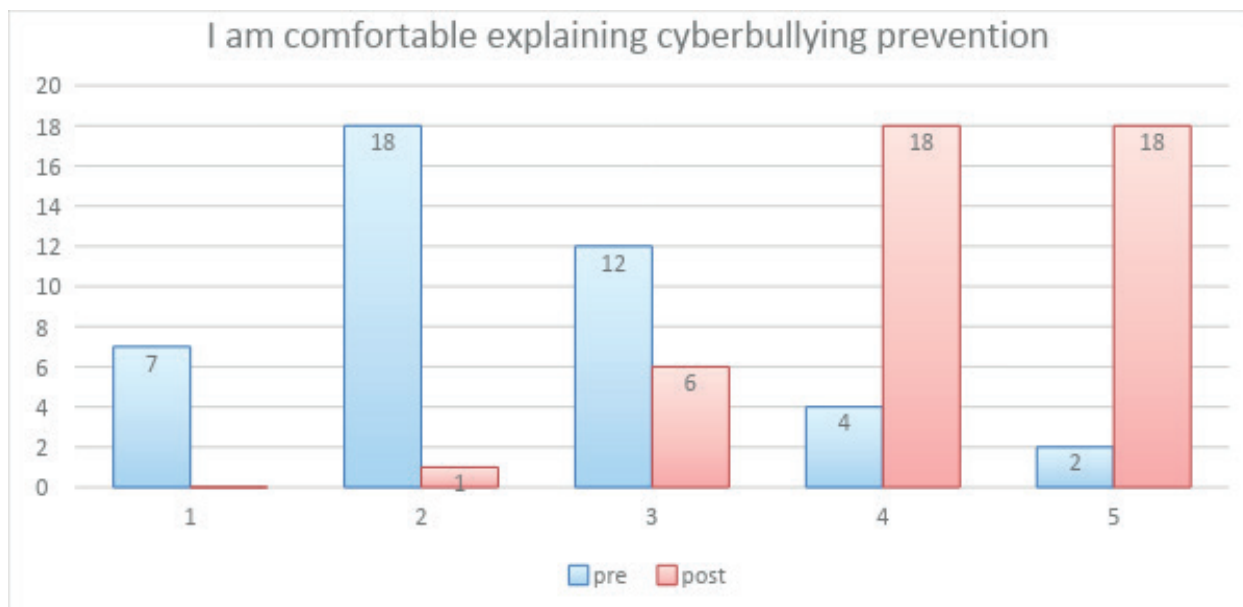
- It can be said that the values of restorative justice were not a very well-known topic for Italian participants. Most of them were not familiar with the topic before the course, but the e-course helped them to understand it more clearly.



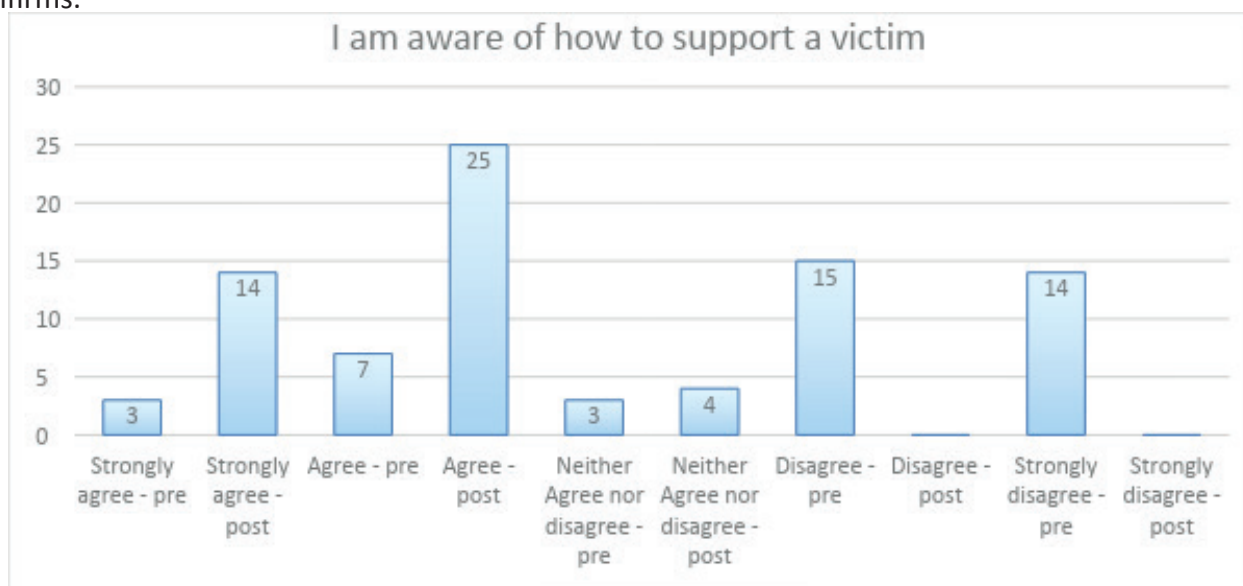
- Participants had some knowledge about the forms of cyberbullying prior to the e-course, but the time spent completing it has moved them forward.
- Restorative justice practices were an emerging topic for the participants. Prior to the e-course, learners did not have enough knowledge on this matter. Although progress can be seen after the e-course, 30% of the groups did not reach it.
- The potential of restorative justice to help LGBTQ communities heal from cyberbullying was a completely new topic for half of the group. In addition, another fraction of the participants was familiar with this issue. In addition, the e-course helped a hesitant group to make improvements.



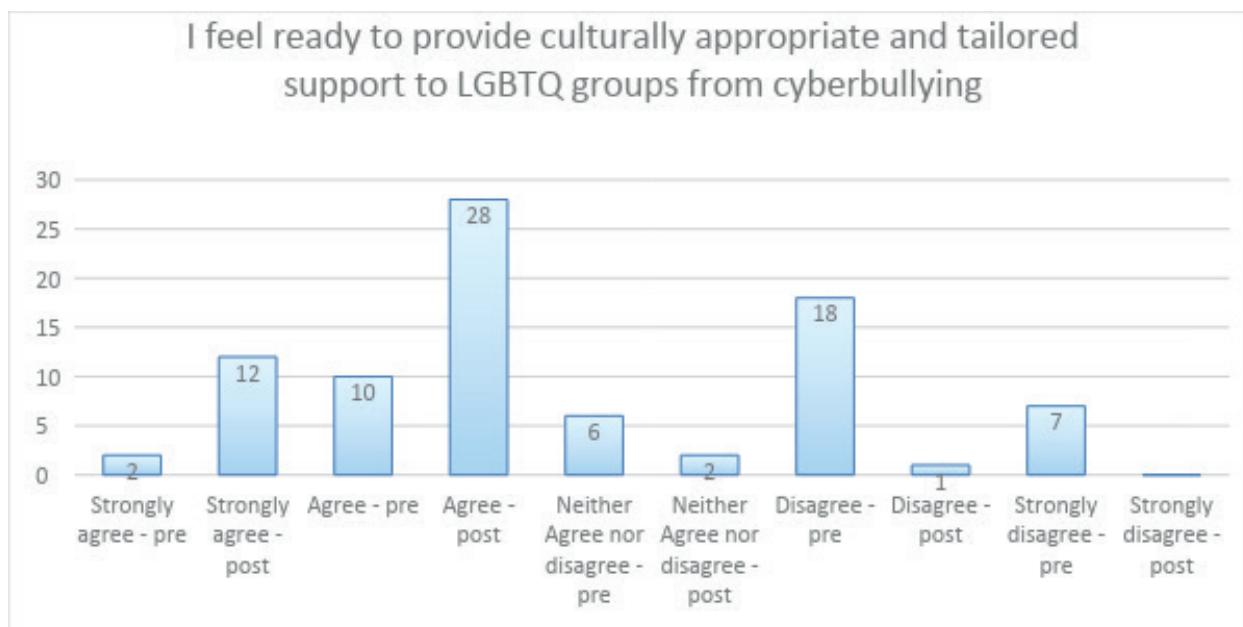
- Based on the following graph, participants were not feeling comfortable with explaining cyberbullying prevention. On the other hand, based on the post-survey data, participants are now feeling more comfortable explaining it.



- At the outset, participants were not aware of the current challenges in the area of cyberbullying towards LGBTQ groups. As a result, it has been possible to notice a positive change, and participants are aware of the current challenges in the area of cyberbullying against LGBTQ groups.
- To begin with participants were not aware of how to support a victim prior to the e-course. As a consequence, to the e-course, participants are ready and aware of how to support a victim, as the graph confirms.



- Initially, participants did not feel ready to provide culturally appropriate and tailored support to LGBTQ groups from cyberbullying prior to the e-course. Thanks to the e-course, participants are ready and know how to provide culturally appropriate and tailored support to LGBTQ groups from cyberbullying as the graph confirms.



- Thanks to the SIAC e-course participants learned that the LGBTQ community can help them better understand the world and differences, recognize the signs of cyberbullying, and act appropriately based on the circumstances. Participants learned important concepts that they can pass on to colleagues and friends. Also learning about preventive measures, as well as restorative justice methods was one of the highlights of the course.
- In the end, it has been discovered that cyberbullying is not only a social media-related problem, but nowadays gaming is also a huge problem due to how many people play games online, with whether acquaintances or strangers.

CASE STUDIES AND BEST PRACTICE IN THE COUNTRY

Regarding the projects we came across, we could identify good practices and programs that have lessened the effects of cyberbullying and helped combat it:

Arcigay is the main Italian LGBTI non-for-profit organization, the largest in terms of number of volunteers and activists throughout Italy. Since 1985 Arcigay fights for equality, self-determination, and against stereotypes and prejudice towards LGBTI people, as well as against any form of discrimination. The NGO operates all over Italy through 72 local committees and affiliated associations. Arcigay can count on thousands of LGBTI as well as straight volunteers and activists who work passionately towards reaching the goals, while promoting NGO's activities both locally and nationally.

At the national level, Arcigay acts as an advocacy player, politically and institutionally, coordinating campaign efforts, initiatives and programs aiming at the promotion and protection of LGBTI rights. At the local level, Arcigay supports its committees and affiliated associations by promoting their growth and development, offering training and education events to their members, creating opportunities to exchange best practices and resources among them, acting within a broader framework of national initiatives, projects and programs. Arcigay operates independently from any government, political party, ideology or religion. Financially, their support comes from members through their annual membership fees, from private parties through donations, and from grants and funds obtained by private and public institutions by participating to public calls. Arcigay operates with transparency and invests the great majority of its resources on the realization of actual projects. Only a minor part of its funds is invested in its structural administration.

Arcigay currently collaborates with several Italian and foreign NGOs, as well as with the main local, national and international institutions.

The Italian Association for the Prevention of Cyberbullying and Sexting (A.I.C.S.) was born with the aim

of preventing and combating the spread of Cyberbullying and Sexting phenomena among adolescents at a national level and with the aim of helping victims to defend themselves. Their goal is the care of digital relationships through meetings and training aimed at students, parents and teachers who are held in hundreds of schools throughout Italy. The Association is made up of a team of psychologists, lawyers and professionals specialized in the education and school sector, especially on the subject of Cyberbullying and virtual risks.

The objectives of the A.I.C.S. are:

1. prevention and combating the phenomena of cyberbullying and sexting;
2. raising awareness of the community at national level on issues related to the risks of the digital world;
3. organization of dissemination and training events throughout the country;
4. creation of a community of enthusiasts;
5. promotion of social solidarity;
6. communication of information of general utility;
7. collaboration with schools, associations and institutional bodies, as a place for socialization and a training ground for life.

Elsa platform

Following the entry into force of Law 71/2017 and the issue of the Guidelines for the prevention and contrast of cyberbullying (note MIUR prot. N. 5515 of 27-10-2017), the Ministry of Education has engaged in the implementation of a national training plan for referent teachers to combat bullying and cyberbullying. The ELISA Project (E-Learning Training of Teachers on Anti-Bullying Strategies) was born thanks to collaboration between the Ministry of Education - General Directorate for Students and the Department of Training, Languages, Interculture, Literature and Psychology of the University of Florence.

The ELISA platform equips schools and teachers with tools to effectively intervene on the issue of cyberbullying and bullying. To meet this objective, two specific actions have been set up, which do not involve economic burdens for the participants: E-Learning Training and Monitoring.

The National Anti-Cyberbullying Center (CNAC) offers a first free legal consultation to victims of cyberbullying or their families, in order to allow them to know and exercise their rights. The Center also provides assistance to those who have committed cyberbullying and do not know how to remedy it. The CNAC was created by the Italian Institute for Privacy and Data Enhancement (IIP), a primary study and advocacy center dedicated to the issues of protection and enhancement of personal data, information and identity in global society. of ICT. The Institute involves and connects many of the best Italian privacy law specialists and also significant representatives of public and private sectors who work with personal data, often sensitive, on a daily basis. CNAC is sponsored by Facebook, Google and Microsoft. In particular, the CNAC is among the Facebook trusted partners, the YouTube trusted flaggers and is part of the Advisory Board of the MIUR “Generazioni Connesse” project.

The CNAC makes use of the collaboration of psychologists, psychiatrists, psychotherapists, sociologists and technicians in the information technology (IT) sector.

“KID_ACTIONS – Kick-off preventing and responding to children and Adolescent cyberbullying through innovative monitoring and educational technologies” aims to address cyberbullying among children and adolescents through interactive education and gamification within formal and nonformal learning settings at the EU level. The project, financed by e Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020), supports teachers, educators, and youth workers in fostering effectiveness and efficiency in education about risks and effects of cyberbullying, raise awareness among secondary school students and youth centres, and encourage reporting by victims and bystanders.

At the core of the KID_ACTIONS project lies the creation of a Digital Education Platform, which contains an advanced social media monitoring system and gamified education tools in order to empower young people to recognise and react effectively to cyberbullying. In the framework of the project, a set of tailored educational toolkits was produced and disseminated – these were co-created with and experimented by over 1,000 children and adolescents with their educators across 10 European countries.

KID_ACTIONS also aims to foster a wider dialogue with stakeholders in education, in order to adopt a co-creative and evidence-based approach to prevent and counter cyberbullying through education. In doing so, the aim is also to strengthen cross-border collaboration on matters related to cyberbullying.

“Bully free schools” certification

The “bully free school” UNI/PrD 42:2018 certification is issued by the CSQA, a nationally accredited body, and is designed to help schools set up a professional intervention procedure in the event of bullying or cyberbullying. The certification represents a set of “actions” that the school puts in place: a training plan for teachers, ATA (administrative-technical-assistant) staff, students and parents; precise procedures to deal with any phenomena that can be traced back to bullying, ranging from the process of reporting it, its taking charge, the management of the problem that has emerged and the measures put in place to resolve it.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

No teen should have to deal with the shame of being publicly humiliated, which makes it pretty obvious that dealing with cyberbullying cases quickly and efficiently is extremely important. However, would it not be a better idea to simply prevent the cyberbullying from ever happening at all? It sounds impossible, and to be completely honest, preventing every case of cyberbullying is very improbable, but why not prevent the ones that we can by putting in place correct measures. With SIAC project, EUROSUD together with other partners wanted to support teachers, educators, and youth workers in fostering effectiveness and efficiency in education about risks and effects of cyberbullying, raise awareness among secondary school students and youth centres, and encourage reporting by victims and bystanders. Although SIAC project set a good basis, it is necessary to foster a wider dialogue with stakeholders in education, in order to adopt a co-creative and evidence-based approach to prevent and counter cyberbullying through education. With this being said, the future action must focus on strengthening cross-sectorial and cross-border collaboration on matters related to cyberbullying.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Italian law provides certain concrete protection measures related to the cyberbullying phenomenon: Law n. 71 (2017) Provisions for the protection of minors for the prevention and contrast of the phenomenon of cyberbullying.

This law introduces some significant measures: the warning from the Quaestor, the possibility of calling into question the Privacy Guarantor, as well as the possibility of identifying in the school environment and, more specifically among teachers, a reference person for anti-bullying.

Law n.69 (2019) Protection of victims of domestic and gender violence - it introduces into the penal code (in article 612-ter, Criminal Code) the crime of illicit diffusion of sexually explicit images or videos, Revenge Porn (a term which the legislator, however, does not use).

The right to be forgotten based on the EU regulation 2016/679 has been introduced into the Italian law: Italian Government Legislative Decree No. 196 of 2003, the so-called Privacy Code; Italian Government Legislative Decree No. 101 of 2018, containing provisions to supplement and amend the Privacy Code of 2003. The new regulations have been in force since 19 September 2018.

Following implementation of SIAC project, EUROSUD organization believes it is necessary to propose some policy recommendations intended to support policy makers, PAs, non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, educational staff, social services, health and care professionals, and other relevant stakeholders at all levels.

1. Recommendation: Create an enabling policy environment for the prevention, detection and reaction to (cyber)bullying, especially among children and adolescents.

When looking into policies preventing and tackling cyberbullying, it needs to be noted that the absence of a common definition is, once again, one of the major problems when comparing any national policies with one another. In 2016, as Pozza et al. (2016:25) note: “only fourteen EU Member States provide an official definition of this phenomenon namely Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic,

Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Spain". The national policies became a patchwork of laws, which led to the need to create international measures and regulations. Now there are many international and European initiatives, legislations and conventions in the fight against cybercrime, but the EU Member States (MS) are still required to implement measures into their own legislation and policies to be effective (EUCPN 2018).

2. Recommendation: Support civil society and educational staff in the implementation of practical measures against the phenomenon;

It is imperative that prevention methods are accessible and able to stop cyberbullying from happening. Offline and online prevention methods are needed to ensure that cyberbullying does not change an individual's life forever. Tackling this phenomenon must not be a "one size fits all" approach, but varying circumstances must call for various preventative measures.

The schools should ensure regular review and update of existing policies to include cyberbullying where appropriate, as well as to keep good records of all cyberbullying incidents. Finally, the schools should promote the positive use of technology. The IT department of the schools must use filtering, firewall, anti-spyware software, anti-virus software and secure connections to safeguard the pupils.

3. Recommendation: Combat peer violence amongst young people within formal and informal learning settings and online;

It is necessary to 'rethink' of education to match the online era, where new media 'democratise education', empower young people and open pathways to tolerance for living and working in a multicultural environment. The blurring of borders between formal, non-formal and informal will require new teaching skills and constant evolution of the profiles of youth workers or school teachers. A holistic approach to education, individualised methods, professional coaching and experience-based learning would also prompt individuals to take a step back from routine and promote change.

4. Recommendation: Raising awareness campaign on (cyber)bullying locally and nationally

EUROSUD project staff is convinced that raising awareness among the youth is a way forward. Schools are particularly suitable places of social interaction where a good deal of work can be done in order to limit the spread of cyber-bullying. Parents, schools, and law enforcement need to take an active role in raising awareness about cyberbullying. Active campaign programs are necessary to fight the increasing problems associated with cyberbullying.

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SIAC IN UK: SUMMARY FINDINGS

ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying is a global phenomenon which is particularly on the rise among adolescents and young adults, who use technology like email, chat rooms, social networking websites, and cell phones to harass and threaten others or are the victims of such behaviours. Given that the internet has no geographical restrictions and can be reached anywhere in the world where there is a network available, this issue is pervasive worldwide and has frequently similar incidence rates across different nations. Although there are numerous international initiatives attempting to address all forms of online bullying, each country determines which are the most effective strategies to manage this phenomenon. As a result, laws addressing this issue might vary in focus and severity depending on the country. This chapter examines the prevalence of cyberbullying in the United Kingdom, taking into account a number of different aspects, including statistical data, targeted groups, how the current legal system can be applied in cases of offences from both a civil and criminal standpoint, what are the primary prevention strategies employed by schools and other organisations that work with children and young people, and what kind of support is offered to those involved in incidents. A particular focus is given to cyberbullying related to LGBTQI+ groups. Additionally, it examines the experiences and lessons discovered during our organization's handling of the project, as well as the outcomes of interactions with stakeholders.

KEY OBJECTIVE OF THE COUNTRY REPORT

To discuss cyberbullying in the United Kingdom, including incidence, risk categories, protective measures, legal framework, and support networks, as well as to examine the work carried out by our organisation throughout the course of the two-year project.

METHODOLOGY

This report is the result of the work carried out by the SIAC project partnership over the past 20 months. It

contains information about the current state of affairs of cyberbullying in the UK, with reference elements such as incidence of cyberbullying, current law, and best practices. Additionally, it analyses how the government and civic society organisations are currently addressing the issue. As a result of our organization's participation in the project's activities to achieve its goals, our interactions with the other partner organisations, and with the pertinent parties involved at different project stages, it also analyses the lessons gained throughout the project.

A mixed methodology, including a review of current websites and literature on the subject with a focus on national sources, as well as interviews with relevant stakeholders, was used to realise the first project output (LGBTI Discrimination and the current state of the art in the UK, Spain, Malta, and Italy). Surveys were the mechanism employed to gauge participant satisfaction with the online course during the piloting activities.

CURRENT STATE OF THE ART IN THE COUNTRY

During the year ending March 2020, research on internet bullying was published by the UK's Office for National Statistics. According to their findings, 764,000 youngsters, or around one in five children aged 10 to 15 in England and Wales (19%), encountered at least one form of online bullying behaviour. One in four (26%) of the children who encountered online bullying did not tell anybody about their experiences, and more than half (52%) did not consider the actions to be bullying. 10% of all children between the ages of 10 and 15 reported experiencing one or more of the most frequent forms of online bullying, including being called names, insulted, or sworn at, as well as receiving mean communications about them. Seventy two percent of kids (72%) who had experienced online bullying had at least some of it happen at school or while they were in class (Office for National Statistics, 2020).

According to the same study, up to 26% of victims of cyberbullying had a chronic condition or impairment. That proportion is significantly greater than the 18% prevalence of online bullying among kids who do not have a disease or a disability.

Nearly equal numbers of boys and girls, 20% of girls and 17% of boys, reported being victims of cyberbullying. This indicates that other factors, such as appearance, colour, or sexual orientation, are more frequently the focus of cyberbullying behaviour than gender.

As far as ethnicity is concerned, only 6% Asian or Asian British children reported any type of online bullying, while 21% of white children reported experiencing it, 18% of Black or Black British children reported being the target of online bullying, while the number for children from mixed racial or ethnic groups was slightly higher at 19%.

In terms of sexual orientation, statistics show LGBTQ people are more likely than members of other groups to experience bullying both offline and online. According to a 2019 report by the BBC, bullying related to racism, sexism, or religion is less widespread than bullying of those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBTQ). According to a survey of more than 1,000 teachers who work in primary or secondary schools in the UK, 13% of kids experience bullying because of their sexual orientation. This contrasts with 11% for reasons related to race, 7% for reasons related to gender, and 2% for reasons related to religion. Nearly 75 percent of teachers reported witnessing homophobic bullying, according to the study (BBC, 2019).

While some reports such as the Stonewall School Report show that there has been a drop over the past 10 years in anti-LGBTQI bullying and a growing acceptance of these groups among the student population, there is still a high number of pupils (almost 50%) who still experience bullying at school (Stonewall, 2017).

CYBERBULLYING AND THE LAW

Cyberbullying (as well as traditional bullying) in the UK are not specifically criminal offences. It only becomes a criminal offence if the bullying causes alarm or distress to the victim (under the Harassment Act 1997).

Although there has been talk about putting laws in place to deal with online or cyberbullying in UK parliamentary circles, the general consensus has been that the current legal system is sufficient to deal with the virtual manifestations of real-life offences and that the current legal system was adequate to deal with similar occurrences. Cyberbullying offenders may be held accountable under both criminal and civil laws, including:

Protection from Harassment Act 1997;

The Malicious Communications Act 1988;

The Communications Act 2003;

The Public Order Act 1986;

The Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015

The Obscene Publications Act 1959

The Gender Recognition Act 2004

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006) – This act permits staff members and teachers to seize goods from students, including cellphones.

With regards to LGBTQI groups, they have the freedom to choose whether, when, and how to come out as well as who knows about their sexual orientation and gender identity. Without that person's consent, it is improper and occasionally illegal to out someone. If someone "outs" another person or exposes their gender identity, sexual orientation, or HIV status after they have made these disclosures online, it may be illegal if they are doing so in violation of the law or if they are doing it to harass, extort, or threaten this person (Galop, 2022).

In substance, although the existing legal system lacks explicit legislation against cyberbullying, it appears to be able to address most instances of online abuse and cyberbullying. The 2017 Digital Economy Act is an encouraging move towards directly addressing online bullying on social media sites. According to the act, "The Secretary of State must issue a code of practice giving guidance to persons who provide online social media platforms for use by persons in the United Kingdom (Legislation.gov.uk, 2017).

Since there have been more reports of cyberbullying on these platforms, especially in more recent times when many people may have relied solely on virtual world engagement for social interaction due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this provision is very important. It offers guidelines for pursuing matters involving social media communications, containing detailed instructions on how the prosecution office should handle typical crimes that may be committed on social media platforms.

TACKLING CYBERBULLYING IN THE UK

The UK Government has produced guidelines to help maintained schools prevent and take action against cyberbullying, create environments that are safe and disciplined so that pupils can learn and realise their full potential (<https://tinyurl.com/2rm9ttfe>).

This is done in line with Section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which mandates that schools

should have policies in place to promote appropriate conduct and stop bullying in all its manifestations among pupils. These actions ought to be included in the school's behaviour code, which must be shared with all students, teachers, and parents.

Similar provisions apply to Independent schools under The Education Regulations 2014, stating that they must ensure that bullying is prevented as far as reasonably possible with the creation of an appropriate plan.

A key provision is also the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), present in the Equality act 2010, which covers age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Under this Duty, schools must:

- remove all forms of unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited in the Act.
- promote equal opportunities among those who share a protected trait and those who do not share it
- encourage positive interactions between individuals who share a protected trait and those who don't.

Successful schools have clear rules in place to deal with bullying and unruly behaviour, so that when issues do happen, they can be handled immediately.

Any definition of bullying used by a school for the purposes of its own behaviour policy should be made clear to students, parents, and staff. Bullying is kept from becoming a major issue in the first place by the environment that successful schools foster. To make the best decisions, school employees, head teachers, and governors are in the best position to respond to the specific problems that their students are facing. This act basically leaves each individual school to make their own decisions about the policy to apply and how to respond to episodes of bullying.

Outside the school system, in the UK there are also several organisations and agencies that work on tackling cyberbullying and providing the adequate support to the victims. These include, among others:

Childnet International, Childnet International a non-profit organisation working with others to help make the internet a safe place for children.

The **Anti-Bullying Alliance**, a coalition of organisations and individuals that are united against bullying.

The **Better Internet for Kids** Portal, which provides information, guidance and resources on better internet issues from the joint Insafe-INHOPE network of Safer Internet Centres in Europe, and other key stakeholders

Kidscape, a charity committed to helping all children grow up in safe communities, through training, awareness, and advice

The **POSH (Professionals Online Safety Helpline) Helpline**, which supports professionals working with children and young people.

The **Cybersmile Foundation**, a charity committed to digital wellbeing and tackling all forms of bullying and abuse online.

IMPLEMENTING SIAC IN THE COUNTRY

An extensive investigation of the country's existing state was conducted before the SIAC initiative was put into action in the UK. We looked at several facets of cyberbullying when conducting research for the project outputs, like what constitutes cyberbullying and how it varies from traditional bullying, who are the categories most affected, how it impacts members of LGBTQI groups, and so forth. We examined current legislation to see which major statutes protect individuals from cyberbullying and what disciplinary actions should be

taken when such occurrences occur. We also examined the country's current infrastructure, which aims to assist individuals and groups in preventing and combating cyberbullying and the victims of it. We think the current system is well suited to handle the difficulties brought on by this expanding phenomenon. For head-teachers, staff, and governing bodies of schools and other educational organisations, the government has provided clear, in-depth guidance and advice. This includes a comprehensive list of links where it is possible to find information and guidance on several topics dealing with issues like online safety, LGBTQI, mental health, sexual harassment, race, religion, and nationality, among others. To protect the wellbeing of students and employees, schools and other educational institutions have all implemented policies. Finally, a network of independent organisations, such as charities and NGOs, offers training, direction, advice, and other forms of assistance to students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Throughout the project, we have made contact with several organisations working with youth who will be happy to use the tools made available by the project to train staff and young people on the risks related to cyberbullying.

Working on this project with the other foreign partners has also been intriguing because it has allowed us to compare outcomes in different countries, discuss successes and best practises, and cooperate on creating the project's deliverables.

Our organisation engaged a diverse set of participants in the online training course's piloting activities, including teachers, youth workers, volunteers, and other professionals who work with young people.

The feedback from the piloting activities, which will be analysed in more detail in the long version of this chapter, shows appreciation for the course from the people who took part in the pilot. It's interesting to note how the course dramatically improved the participants' perception about cyberbullying and how it has given them better knowledge and confidence making them better prepared to teach the notions to other people. As evidence we have drawn up a comparison between the pre-course and the post-course assessment questionnaire (included in the long version), which clearly shows how participants in the course not only have a higher understanding of the phenomenon of cyberbullying, especially with regards to LGBTQ groups, but they are also more aware of prevention practices and feel more confident to provide support to the victims, including from LGBTQ groups, and apply restorative justice principles and methods.

CASE STUDIES AND BEST PRACTICE IN THE COUNTRY

Among the many examples of best practices in the United Kingdom, it's worth noting the great work carried out by third sector organisations, who carry out a fundamental role in raising awareness among the population of cyberbullying through information sharing and campaigns, support individuals and organisations by providing guidance and expertise, and delivering training programmes so that relevant stakeholders can acquire the skills and knowledge to address cyberbullying effectively.

These include, for example, **The Anti-Bullying Alliance**, a coalition of organisations and individuals, working together to stop bullying and create safer environments in which children and young people can live, grow, play and learn; **Kidscape**, an organisation providing practical support, training, and advice to challenge bullying and protect young lives; and many others, such **Restorative Justice for All**, promoting conflict resolution through restorative justice practices.

Some of the programs focusing on prevention and intervention by adopting restorative justice are the following:

A Chance for Change Addressing gender-based violence among youth through restorative justice - The Chance for Change: Empowerment & Restoration" (C4C) project aims to tackle stereotyped attitudes and behaviours shaping gender inequality leading to discrimination and violence among young people through a bottom-up approach. That is why C4C created a youth-led, media-based educational model for youth workers focusing on restorative justice preventative methods that will help reduce stereotyped attitudes within informal and formal educational environments, promoting a safe and inclusive culture that will help reduce

the likelihood of GBV amongst young people.

Reunited - The rEUnite project gathers citizens from different horizons and backgrounds in debates directly linked to the European historical milestones, with a view to raise their awareness of remembrance, common history and the aim of the EU to promote peace, European values and the well-being of its people. rEUnite Project's main objective is to contribute to the citizen's understanding of the European Union, its history and diversity. rEUnite deepens on the opportunity to shape our common future through the past events and consequences in history. It has become apparent that topics such as solidarity, civic engagement and social cohesion are needed to be addressed in debates and reflexive spaces in the EU context. As well, areas like youth work and non-formal education can contribute to foster European values in the society nowadays. Specifically, rEUnite raises awareness of remembrance and how it can differ between nations, insisting on the idea that events that might seem specific to a country might, in fact, be related to other similar events in other European countries, emerging visibility about this interconnection.

Enhaga - Challenging cyber harassment, bullying and discrimination to make online gaming a safe and more inclusive space for female gamers

ENHAGA is a two-year project that develops and implements innovative practices to eliminate cyber harassment for female gamers through the development of an online game with associated tools to empower young girls on how to react to cases of cyber sexual harassment and further report incidents and eventually muting those who are often reported from online chat; the project promotes awareness raising activities about the need to ensure harassment-free gaming environments for all.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

According to statistics, cyberbullying is a common occurrence among young people in the UK. The likelihood of experiencing online harassment considerably rises as kids spend more time online and have more access to mobile devices.

Although there is no official definition of cyberbullying in the UK, cases are handled according to laws that were established before the development of social media platforms, even though the present legal framework appears to be adequate to accommodate the occurrence of episodes of cyberbullying. Accordingly, it would seem that there are some areas where more specific legislation would be needed to reflect the role that technology plays in cases of bullying as well as to reflect online behaviours as new types of bullying and harassment emerge and the current law may not be the best way to address them.

The work developed by the SIAC project partnership is very important as it provides free and accessible resources for everyone who wishes to learn more about cyberbullying and tackling this issue effectively. It contains detailed information about how to recognise this phenomenon, prevent the occurrence of such episodes, and deal with incidents successfully. It will provide a valuable resource to educators/youth leaders, organisations and players around the phenomenon of cyberbullying with a special focus on LGBTIQ, as it is based on sound learning principles and approaches which can suit different needs and learning styles.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL POLICY MAKERS

Although the current legal system in the UK seems to be well equipped to deal with cases of cyberbullying, some of the laws of reference predate the advent of smart phones and social media and therefore may appear outdated to deal with cases of cyberbullying, which is a fairly recent phenomenon. Our recommendation would be for policy makers to consider reviewing the current legislation of cyberbullying and devise new

laws that take into account the technological advancements that occurred over the past 15-20 years, and are more focused on this specific issue. It would also be important that more responsibility is put into tech companies to develop platforms providing safer spaces for users where they can feel free to express themselves without the risk of being attacked and bullied.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EU POLICY MAKERS

Similar to the recommendations for national policy makers, our recommendation to EU policy makers would be to work together with partner countries create laws that are more specific to cyberbullying and are up to speed with the current technological advancements, some clear and comprehensive laws encompassing a wide range of case scenarios, and specify severe rules for lawbreakers. Obviously, it would be important that in devising that, freedom of speech is also safeguarded.

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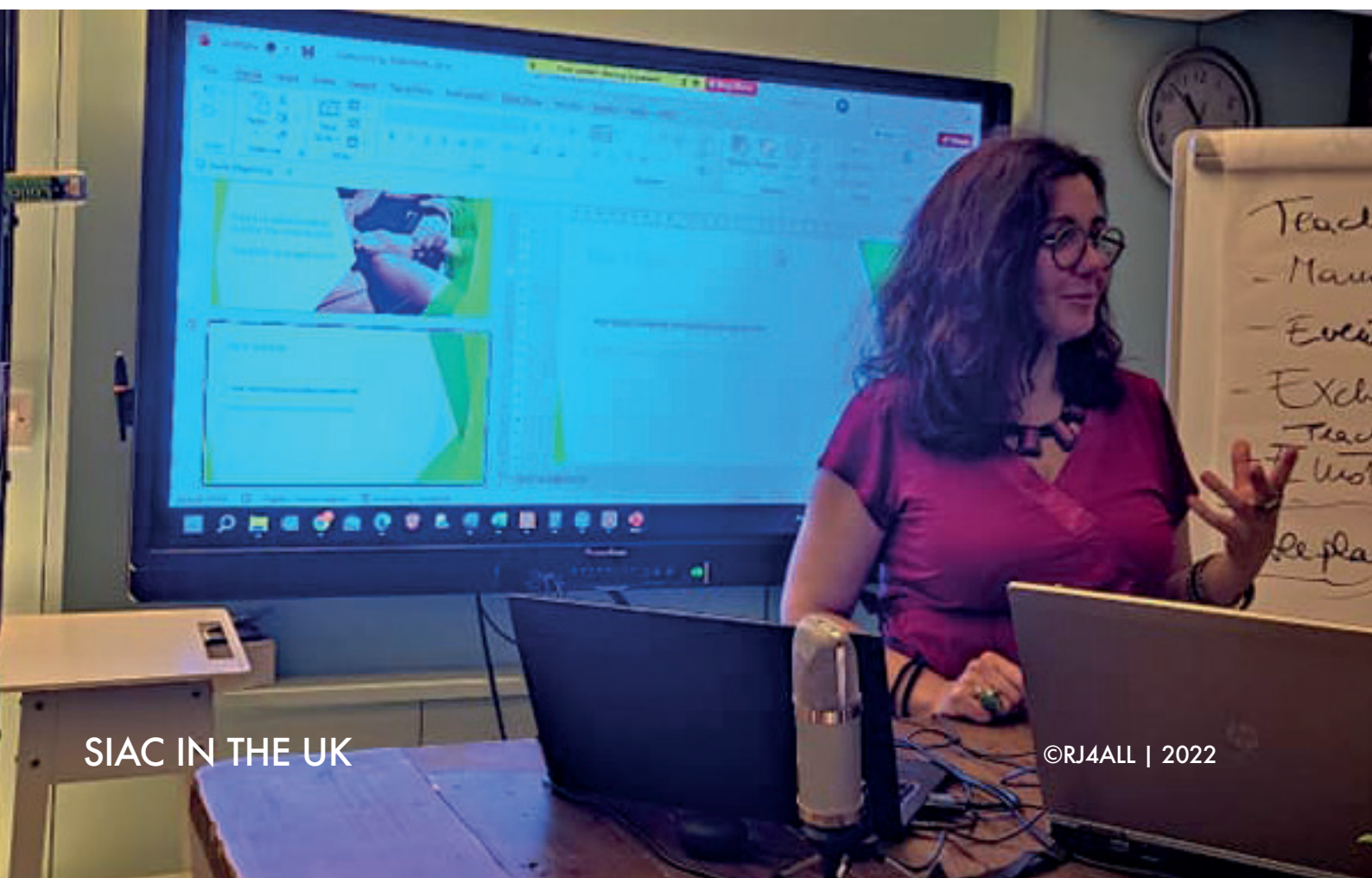
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SIAC IN SPAIN: SUMMARY FINDINGS

ABSTRACT

In order to help both young people and youth workers to better deal with cyberbullying, the SIAC project has already carried out the development and implementation of a curriculum on preventing cyberbullying and an accredited e-course for cyberbullying prevention. The curriculum has served as a support methodology for young people to deepen their knowledge in cyberbullying analysing the current situation and providing new methods and approaches promoting a safe use of the internet and some tools and methods for the prevention of it. The e-course has been elaborated and implemented with the aim to learn about new, effective strategies for controlling bullying and to raise awareness among the youngest regarding the problems that emerge from the wrong use of the internet. In addition, local conferences have been held in the countries of the participating organisations in order to present the overall project, disseminate its results and raise awareness on the presentation of cyberbullying.

KEY OBJECTIVE OF THE COUNTRY REPORT

The main objective of this report is to bring together all the research, pilots, learning and findings of the project into one e-book that will feature chapters in the participating languages as well as a comparative chapter in English.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for the development of this research is divided into two phases:

The pilot implementation of the e-course with the participation of 50 users through the e-learning platform. These participants completed a pre-evaluation questionnaire, followed by the completion of the training units and then the post-evaluation questionnaire.

Once the 50 users had completed the questionnaires, the data and information obtained was analysed in order to determine the results obtained in Spain through the pilot test of the e-learning course.

After these two previous phases, we have proceeded to the preparation of this report, which focuses on the implementation and results of the SIAC project in Spain. Thus, thanks to the elaboration of this chapter we

will be able to contribute to know in a concrete way the functioning of the project according to the partner country.

CURRENT STATE OF THE ART IN THE COUNTRY

A research and collection of data has been carried out in order to face cyberbullying in Spain and contribute to the development of the curriculum in IO1. From this piece of research, we can highlight significant findings in terms of data, legal frameworks, support systems and local training in Spain.

In terms of rates of cyberbullying among young people, the highest incidence rate occurs at the age of 11-14 years old. It is also worth mentioning that 6.9% of students have experienced cyberbullying, 3.7% have experienced traditional bullying together with cyberbullying and 3.3% have been a cyberbully.

Therefore, it was concluded that in most cases cyberbullying continues to be a reiterative and long-term form of harassment. The common profile of cyberbullying victims was identified as:

- 1) Women in 66,7% of cases,
- 2) 13,5 years old on average; older than those students who suffer another type of bullying,
- 3) Teenagers started experiencing bullying at the age of 12,3.

With regard to technological media, the smartphone was identified as the one most used in terms of cyberbullying (90% of cases). Moreover, it has been shown that most cyberbullying occurs between the ages of 8 and 9 and it affects girls more than boys.

Regarding the LGBTQI, almost 70% of LGBTQI students experience cyberbullying based on the affective-sexual orientation and gender identity in their online environment, which means new ways of internalizing prejudices and LGBTQI-phobia by the same students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans.

In relation to the legal frameworks, Spain is the only country in the European Union with a text in the Penal Code about cyberbullying since 2013 in which violence is considered as a violation of the law which can also lead to prison sentences. However, legal loopholes are found in the Penal Code since only acts with sexual aims are typified. In 2015 the organic law regulating stalking and sexting was introduced, whilst cyberbullying in schools is also considered a violation of the law.

Concerning support systems in Spain, many educational initiatives against cyberbullying have been launched by public and private organisations. These initiatives focus on cyberbullying prevention, detection and implementation strategies.

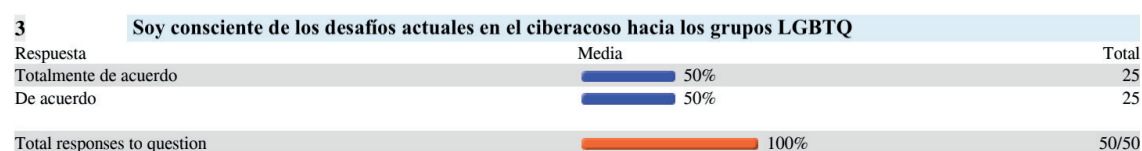
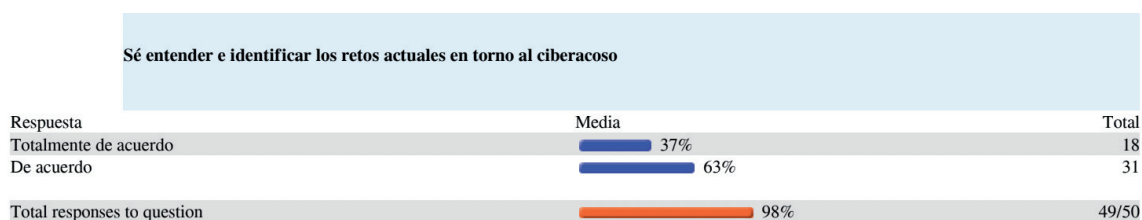
In respect of local training, Spain has associations made up of psychologists, lawyers, teachers and experts in different fields which aim to offer support and advice to those suffering bullying, including the victims and their families, but also the teachers within the educational environment where bullying situations occur through specialised and adapted training programmes on ICT and safe use of internet.

IMPLEMENTING SIAC IN THE COUNTRY

A pilot of the e-course has been implemented in Spain in which 50 individuals have had the opportunity to participate. Firstly they registered themselves on the e-learning platform of the [e-course](#) to access it. Then

they did a pre-assessment questionnaire in order to test their overall knowledge on the topic of cyberbullying, then go through structured training units aimed at expanding their knowledge and help them learn new and innovative practices, strategies and actions to face cyberbullying and finally do a post-assessment questionnaire to test what they have learned during the training. After this, a feedback form also allowed us to deeply know what seemed more or less helpful or interesting to each participant.

Lastly, all the data collected has been analysed and the results obtained are the following: before the training, it has been determined that approximately half of respondents were aware of what cyberbullying is, what cyberbullying towards LGBTQ is and think about forms of cyberbullying. Almost half of respondents had knowledge about cyberbullying towards LGBTQ groups, 60% of the respondents stated that they acquired good knowledge of that area and 26% of them affirmed that they acquired excellent knowledge of that area. Related to restorative justice, 50% of the respondents revealed that they acquired good knowledge of that area whilst 22% of respondents manifested that they acquired excellent knowledge of that area.



CASE STUDIES AND BEST PRACTICE IN THE COUNTRY

Regarding the initiatives encountered, we could find programmes and best practices which have had a great impact on reducing the consequences of cyberbullying and contributing to fighting against it:

Asegurate Program: It is an initiative developed with funding from the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness together with the Sexting, Cyberbullying and Emerging Risks on the Network project. The platform PDA BULLYING has been developed by this project as a proposal of good practices for bullying and cyberbullying prevention, detection, and intervention within educational environments as well as other forms of peer violence.

ConRed Andalucía: It is a programme for the prevention of school bullying and cyberbullying in the classroom developed by the regional government of Andalusia. The goals of this programme are to boost and support educational centres in building awareness among the school community of the importance of preventing and eradicating peer bullying and cyberbullying, and to train in developing strategies which facilitate positive relationships, early detecting any form of bullying cases and responding to any possible situation of this type.

Zeroacoso Programme: it is a platform developed in Spain to prevent, persuade, and support the fight against school bullying and cyberbullying. The Zeroacoso functioning is based on communication through anonymous messages and privacy which makes tackling the problem from different points feasible, and combating each of the factors that allow school bullying to happen.

Action Guide for Families and Educators against Cyberbullying: developed by Red.es, a public entity attached to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation and through the Secretary of State for Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence. The guide deals with the necessary educational, preventive and

intervention aspects to fight school cyberbullying and sexual cyberbullying to minors (grooming).

!En nuestro INSTITUTO NO! project: a Coalition of EDUCATION CENTERS against LGBT bullying. It is an initiative created by the Spanish State Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Trans and Bisexuals (FELGTB) and the entities belonging to the RED EDUCA project, and developed in June 2017. The main objective of this project is to create a coalition of safe schools in order to lead the efforts against school bullying. The alliance involves students, social professionals, teachers, families, maintenance and administrative staff

App Delintest: it is an educational project carried out by the Pantallas Amigas association and aimed at secondary education students to foster the awareness of the boundaries and legal consequences of what we do on the Internet, so we can prevent the cyber-crimes committed by teenagers and also their effects on the victims, the authors of the crime and their environments.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

The IO1 of this project has functioned as the bedrock to highlight the great concern that cyberbullying implies for Spanish society and specifically to vulnerable young people such as the LGTBQ community. We have been able to learn more closely that the irresponsible use of the internet and new technologies has become a main factor in promoting cyberbullying, especially within the educational community, where the active role of educational staff, parents and other family members is really significant to fight against this new form of harassment which has increased notably with the more frequent use of technological devices due to the covid-19 pandemic. This situation has favoured the dependence of young people on the internet, technological devices (mainly smartphones) and social media, where hate messages are becoming increasingly frequent. This situation may lead to growing dangerous behaviours. Indeed, it has taken the lives of the victims in extreme situations. It is clear that we have to urgently act to fight against cyberbullying. Therefore, the implementation of the IO2 has assisted us in identifying a significant number of individuals who presented limited knowledge on cyberbullying and increasing and developing in them new knowledge which include strategies, initiatives and practices on prevention and interaction of cyberbullying and support to people who suffer from this new form of harassment. Through the e-course, the participants have acquired good and excellent knowledge on cyberbullying and how it should be tackled.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

NATIONAL POLICY:

In Spain, Article 1 of the Organic Law on Education recognises the basic rights of students, such as respect for their personal integrity and dignity, and protection against any physical or moral aggression, and the right to respect the dignity, integrity and privacy of all members of the educational community.

Students must respect teachers and other school employees, as well as the rest of their classmates, avoiding situations of conflict and bullying in any form, including cyber-bullying. This provision is found in art. 1 of the Law for the Modification of the Child and Adolescent Protection System. In addition, all schools must include in their educational project a Coexistence Plan, which serves as a reference for students, families and teachers to deal with bullying, as established by the Organic Law of Education. Each school's Coexistence Plan must include Internal Regulations, which include rules of behaviour that the student must respect. Bullying should be classified as a serious offence, with the consequent application of a sanction, which could lead to permanent expulsion from the school.

EUROPEAN POLICIES:

One of the European Commission's main tools to address cyberbullying and to provide recommendations is the European Anti-bullying Network, established as an international non-profit association, was created in

2013 in the framework of the EU-funded project “European Anti-bullying Network”, and officially registered in Belgium in 2015. the EAN is therefore an active network of organisations working across Europe to combat bullying and school violence.

As the phenomenon of bullying has become an issue of great concern in our societies, at school and beyond, the European Anti-Bullying Network is actively working to ensure that all children and young people can enjoy a safe school and social environment, where all measures are taken to empower and protect them from any bullying-related harm and pain.

Also notable in the EU is the recent Better Internet for Kids (BIK+) strategy, which aims to improve age-appropriate digital services and ensure that all children are protected, empowered and respected online.

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SIAC IN MALTA: SUMMARY FINDINGS

ABSTRACT

The SIAC project has become a strategic partnership between four Erasmus+ countries. The project aims to support youth workers and other professionals working with young at risk of cyberbullying to help them increase their skills, knowledge and confidence to better young peoples' resilience and knowledge regarding the safe use of the internet. VisMedNet Association organised the first transnational project meeting in Valletta Design Cluster on 12th October 2021. The partners have started by conducting desk research to gather data about the current situation regarding cyberbullying and formulate a shared vocabulary between the partnering countries. To do that, VisMedNet has created a template used by partners to structure data collection. Then VisMedNet conducted desk research in Malta involving stakeholders, which featured all the national scenarios and, therefore, a sound basis for needs analysis. After completing the desk research VisMedNet has formed a national report regarding Cyberbullying in Malta. Also, VisMedNet contributed to the dissemination process throughout the project by posting on social media accounts, updating the project website, and publishing the newsletter with partners. After completing the national report, the methodological tool was developed in English and then translated into Partners' national languages, and VisMedNet led the distribution of responsibility. The next step was the development of the e-course in English and then into the national languages of the partner countries. In May 2022, SIAC Handbook was published with the contribution of all partners.

KEY OBJECTIVE OF THE COUNTRY REPORT

The report has shown the current situation in Malta concerning cyberbullying, especially toward LBTIQ communities, and helped to determine the stakeholders in Malta. The report's primary objectives were to discover cyberbullying trends and experiences in Malta, come into contact with initiatives in this area, and develop training/self-help tools to overcome the phenomenon. The report outlines how the community-building approach is the appropriate one for Malta to start and maintain an onward and upward process towards sustainable adoption of the outputs and results of the project. It also outlines the approaches and the dichotomy in Malta between the relatively liberal legal infrastructure for LGBTIQ+ rights and open-mindedness that may provide an optimistic picture for the near future and, on the other hand, vocabulary in common terminology that is indicative of the baggage we still carry on the subject.

METHODOLOGY

To carry out the desk research in Malta, VisMedNet first identified stakeholders who work closely with youth and LGBTIQ communities, then designed a questionnaire and sent it to stakeholders to help structure the desk research. After receiving the answers from stakeholders, VisMedNet started collecting data to determine the current trends and experiences of cyberbullying in Malta, along with local initiatives which actively involved in supporting the victims and working to better the situation concerning bullying in general. The data collection took place via an online website/social media, phone/ online call interview, e-mail exchange, and hardcopy material on bullying concerning LGBTIQ and the role of social media. Then the partners designed a learning path and content for an online course on

PREVENTING CYBERBULLYING TOWARDS LGBTIQ+ YOUTH: A RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH

The course is available online, and the partners intended to pilot the course with at least 50 learners per partner country, which is a relatively high number for the size of Malta, but that can be reached with the right support of learners and incentives that smoothen the take up of the course. At the time of this report's publication, Malta has a very slow uptake and start, but strategies are in place to ensure a successful implementation.

CURRENT STATE OF THE ART IN THE COUNTRY

Each organisation conducted desk research using their expertise and networks to collect critical data and recent reports about cyberbullying in their countries, identifying local, regional, and international issues. After the desk research, VisMedNet analysed the received findings, created a reference source document, and sent it to partners as a structured guide. After completing desk research and forming partner countries' country reports, the partners published the SIAC Report document. The document pools information and data about general trends in cyberbullying, specifically about LGBTIQ. The purpose is to identify common areas, diverse approaches to the phenomenon, remedies and interventions, and systemic and ad hoc measures. During the creation of Malta's national report, the data collection process took longer than expected as the lack of a common definition word-wide. Because of the nature of the subject, data is often not forthcoming from victims. After gathering data from various sources, Cyberbullying in Malta has been increasing, and many of the cases did not specifically target LGBTIQ communities. In Malta, cyberbullying is common among Form 3 and 4 students in Maltese state schools. According to local helplines such as Kellimni.com, the victims often expressed concern and fear of losing control, as cyberbullying is often a continuation of other forms of bullying. In Malta, victims usually encounter bullying differently, especially at school or youth centres and then persist online. In Malta, there is a need to train teachers and educational staff on how to deal with challenging circumstances, such as bullying.

Other statistics from the thesis make excellent fodder for a needs analysis in Malta.

- 64.9% of perpetrators deemed their cyberbullying actions as not being very serious.
- Victims who claimed to have felt ashamed, alone, and angry.
- Several victims claimed to have missed school (16.1%), and had thoughts of self-harm (17.3%) and suicidal ideation (13.2%).
- Most victims who informed someone about this bullying (58.7%) claimed to have told a friend (69.2%) or a parent/guardian (64.4%); however, few informed school staff such as teachers (9.6%).

Kellimni.com is a locally based online helpline. They were also involved in the desk research by VisMedNet in Malta. They stated that cyberbullying victims often expressed concern and fear of losing control, which might be externalized self-destructive behaviour. Many a time cyberbullying is often a continuation of other forms

of bullying. The same picture was painted by APPOGG, stating that in many cases, they encountered bullying that often started at school or youth centres and then persisted online. In many instances, the bullies know the victim very well and cyberbullying starts at the termination of a friendship. Patterns of cyberbullying are different as they can happen day and night, and the victim can be reached safely in their home.

One worrying element in this scenario in Malta is the statement by MGRM that despite surveys among the LGBTIQ community consistently showing a 12% incidence of threats and violence experienced by respondents, official reports to the police are not forthcoming.

By way of the SIAC project-centred mindset, the good thing is that the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) recommends that teachers and academic staff should also receive training on how to deal with challenging circumstances. Acknowledging the problem and the need is an important milestone.

IMPLEMENTING SIAC IN THE COUNTRY

The course implementation in Malta is still going on as we have faced several challenges and had several surprising and not-so-surprising outcomes. While reaching out to several stakeholders, they aired their perceived need for training in this area and their low knowledge about technological platforms where cyberbullying occurs. It is fair to say that the cases they mentioned were in Whatsapp groups, a technology they know well. In Malta, we live in small communities where people interact and socialise with each other relatively easily and frequently.

- Malta (the archipelago's main island) is 27kms long and 17kms wide.
- The largest town in Malta has a population of 26,000.
- The population of Malta and Gozo was 450,000 ten years ago, and it now stands at 550,000 after an influx of ex-pats for employment reasons.

An influx augmenting the population by 25% in a decade has inevitably brought about a larger mix of ethnicities, cultures and social dynamics. This has helped bring about a mix of reactions, including those of claustrophobia, overpopulation and overdevelopment. Society has other things to worry about; therefore, LGBTIQ+ may not be the most important concern in Maltese society. This is a challenge that VisMedNet encountered at the start of the SIAC pilot in Malta. This meant a much higher effort to recruit learners, but the numbers are growing with the help of multiplier partners.

To recruit participants to take the course, we reached out to professionals or soon-to-be professionals who are

- present and future teachers in secondary schools,
- teachers in vocational education,
- youth workers,
- support workers working directly with LGBTIQ+ and
- present and future social workers.

Especially the Secretariat for Catholic Education, as the body responsible for the running and training staff of all the Catholic Schools in Malta. The head office staff invited key staff present in the schools and was responsible for psychosocial well-being through mentoring and training. To date, the registrations from this channel are approximately 16, and they are mainly female dominated.

Two important feedbacks about the format have been given following the start of the SIAC pilot activities in Malta:

1. the materials are sound and relevant to the needs of the different target groups, and
2. an element of human interaction via blended learning or a couple of online discussions within the community of learners would have helped.

Another suggestion related to content was that for further development in the future and better prospects of adoption, the course would benefit from a selection of suggested dynamics for interventions so that learners feel better enabled to apply what they learn during the course. This may be an element of storytelling or demonstrations about how schools may have approached detection and intervention.

The contact persons gave this feedback to the organisations supporting VisMedNet. Feedback from the learners is still forthcoming.

CASE STUDIES AND BEST PRACTICES IN THE COUNTRY

Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ provides support to voluntary youth organisations intending to increase their potential for empowering young people and enhancing their capacity to offer better services and opportunities for young people in their communities. They also organise LGBTI+ youth support events in Youth Cafés where they support and provide an alternative space for the youth between 13 and 25 years, where they can interact with their peers in a safe environment to empower their values and develop personal skills. Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ also runs the Youth Information Service One Stop Shop (YIOSS), and they provide an online youth worker service to young people between the age of 13 and 30 for free.

Another critical practice is the Cyber Crime Unit set up in 2003 within the Police Force. The Unit assists in cybercrime. Different sections of the Police Force analyse digital evidence seized in connection with investigations and identify persons committing crimes over the internet.

Secretariat for Catholic Education supports Catholic Church schools in Malta and Gozo by providing administrative, social and curricular practices and working closely with youth workers. The youth work they provide also caters for bullying cases.

The BeSmartOnline Project is a national initiative that works toward establishing a Safer Internet Centre in Malta which was co-funded by the European Union. It aims to empower and protect youth and children from risky online behaviours.

Kellimni.com is a project managed by SOS Malta. Its team consists of professionally trained operators ready to support 24/7 through SmartMessaging, e-mails, chat or be a participant in a forum free of charge. Kellimni.com offers support to Maltese/non-Maltese residents of Malta regardless of their background. They also provide information regarding cyberbullying and ways to prevent bullying from occurring.

BeBrave is an organisation that seeks to raise awareness of different forms of bullying, facilitate assistance for individuals suffering from bullying, and reform individuals displaying bullying behaviour in Malta.

ARC(Allied Rainbow Communities) was founded to create community. They promote further growth in communities and create opportunities for giving back to society, with our target group being LGBTIQ+ people and allies on the Maltese Islands.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

Throughout the project's lifetime, primarily focusing on the e-course implementation, professionals such as teachers must be invested in instilling youth confidence in speaking and having tools and channels for sharing concerns and upsetting situations. This shows the need for training youth leaders in schools to take a more proactive role in youth/victim support services in spaces where youths spend their time in school, youth centres and social media.

One of the most favourable outcomes has been that the stakeholders/organisations working with VisMedNet on the pilot are now more aware of the process of working on cyberbullying acquired even by analysing the structure of the SIAC course, which raised an important point, but more training is needed.

However, there is low awareness of the frequency of cyberbullying at all levels, making it very difficult to build a complete picture of the situation. Our recommendation would be to raise awareness about the phenomenon so that this may work for:

youths and parents who need to be aware of the safety (and dangers) of the internet,
change mindsets and raise the prospect of lower hurdles for the coming out process,
victims, perpetrators (why not?) and bystanders to seek help and
educators, youth leaders, and support services professionals to improve their competencies in the area.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL POLICYMAKERS

Our recommendation would be to raise awareness about the phenomenon at the policymaking level by
Implementing policies to raise awareness of Maltese society's safe use of the internet, cyberbullying and hardship faced by LGBTIQ+ communities,

Providing a safe space for youths and parents to discuss and express their experiences/opinions,

Allocating a budget for educating Maltese society, especially youth, on the phenomenon,

Training educators, youth leaders, and support services professionals to improve their skills in tackling cyberbullying on the micro level

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APPENDICES

DELIVERABLES

- Transnational research report on cyberbullying towards LGBTIQ groups: [LGBTI Discrimination and the Current State of the Art in the UK, Spain, Malta and Italy](#)
- Preventing cyberbullying towards LGBTIQ youth: A restorative justice and human rights approach: <https://rj4all.uk/online/training/course/view.php?id=3>
- Training Handbook for youth workers: [Preventing cyberbullying towards LGBTQ+ groups: A Training Handbook for youth workers](#)

DISSEMINATION

- Press release August 2022: <https://siacproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/PRESS-RELEASE-August-2022.docx.pdf>
- Press release April 2022: <https://siacproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/PRESS-RELEASE-April-2022.pdf>
- Press release November 2021: <https://siacproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/November-2021.pdf>
- Press release October 2021: <https://siacproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/NEWSLETTER-OCTOBER-2021.pdf>
- Press release January 2021: <https://siacproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/SIAC-first-press-release-final.pdf>
- Newsletter 1: <https://siacproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/newsletter1-1.pdf>
- Newsletter 2: <https://siacproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/newsletter2.pdf>
- Newsletter 3: <https://siacproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Newsletter-3.docx.pdf>

EVALUATION

TPM Italy

<https://siacproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/TPM-Italy-Evaluation-report.docx.pdf>

TPM Spain

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SIAC Theory of Change

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