

LGBT EDUCATION

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GLOBAL NEWS: ANTIBULLYING

Dilemmas in rating antibullying quality of school policies

14 April 2020 - The European ABC-project attempted to develop a certification for antibullying policy in high schools. The project ends in May, but was confronted with a series of dilemmas that are not yet solved. Especially *scoring* was a dilemma. Should we score school at all? If we do, how? Can we use scoring only as a diagnostic instrument or also as a public quality label? Will governments or the European Union be willing to adopt such a label or at least to encourage self-evaluation of schools? We need your advice and would like to encourage you to fill in a short questionnaire about these dilemmas: <https://www.gale.info/abc-eva>.

Scoring?

The first dilemma we encountered was a discussion about whether we should score schools at all. Some partners thought the schools were too afraid of getting a negative image, while others were thinking that schools were best suited to score



themselves rather than to be scored by others. In the ABC-project it was ultimately decided to offer a diagnostic score to schools, while allowing them to not publish their results.

How to score

A second dilemma was on what basis schools would be scored. There are a number of scientific findings that give direction to what an effective antibullying policy is supposed to be. But some partners thought // imposing // such criteria or guidelines on schools would be taking away their freedom to make our own choices. Another possibility was to score schools on the



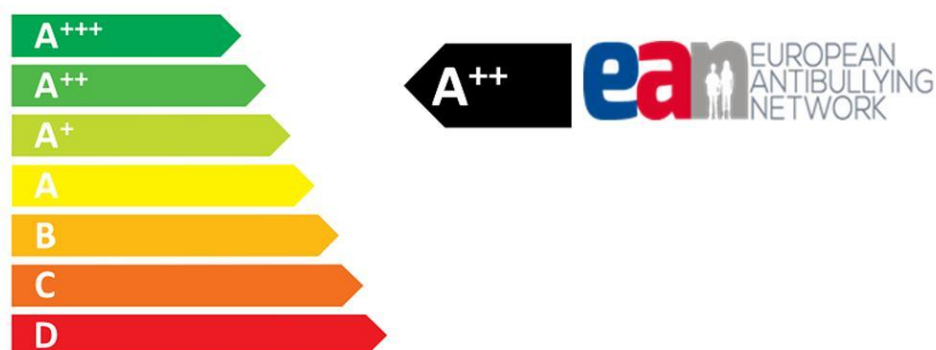
number of people that are involved in implementing the policy, the perceived commitment, or the way it is communicated to all the members of the school. At the end of the project, a diagnostic tool was developed that takes gradual growing commitment as a criterion for the extent antibullying policy is agreed on in a school.

Diversity sensitivity

Another complicated issue was how to integrate diversity. Should we have a separate item on diversity, or on a series of diversity topics or groups? In one of the international meetings with teachers and students, the students advised to integrate diversity sensitivity in all items, but at the same time to make it specific.

European energy label

One idea was to create a European antibullying “energy” label, like we have for refrigerators, washing machines and apartments. Why not having a quality label for a school antibullying policy? Again, this idea was controversial because it implies that there can be a reliable external way of measuring the quality of antibullying policy.

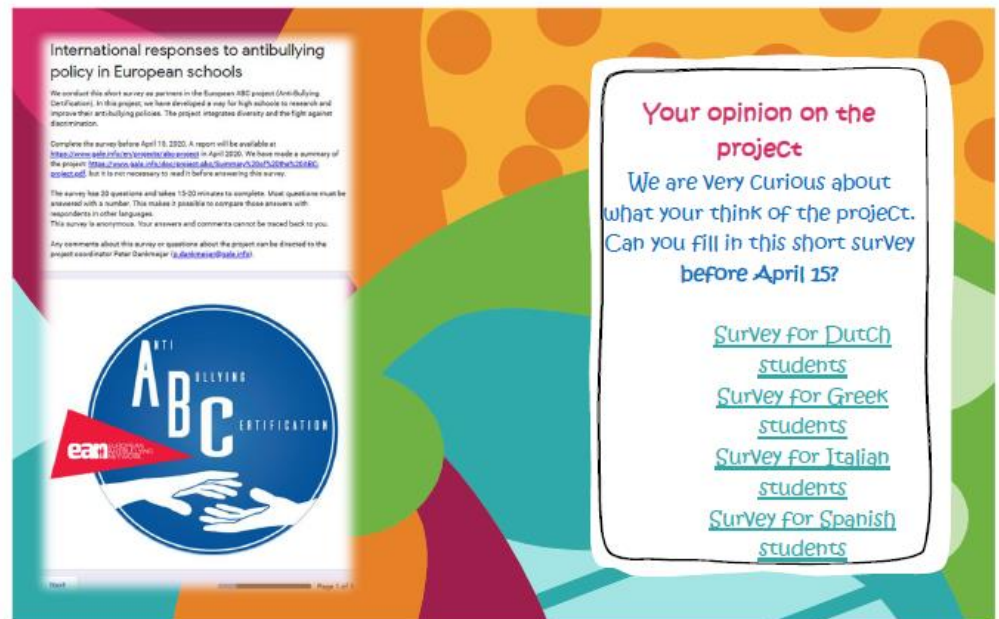


European recommendations

Finally, the project attempted to make European level recommendations for policy on all of this. A challenge of European policy is that it considers *education* as falling under the subsidiarity principle. This means that decisions about education should be taken at a national or local level and not on an international level. As a consequence, the possibilities to advocate for improved European policy on antibullying are limited. Still, the project formulated recommendations which ask the European Community to consider if and how guidelines for antibullying could be formulated on the international level.

GALE and her partners are very interested in how other people and organizations think about these issues. Please consider filling in the short questionnaire <https://www.gale.info/abc-eval> <https://www.gale.info/abc-eval> (until 24 April) or to join the discussion on <https://www.gale.info/en/how-to-combat-bullying> (27 April – 10 May).

Sources: [ABC-project](#), [draft version of the certification procedure](#), [survey on antibullying dilemmas](#)



Recommendations for European antibullying policy

7 April 2020 - A review of European policy on antibullying shows that international institutions claim to have little influence on education in general. They could possibly influence the quality of antibullying policy in schools by focusing on the broader concept of combating violence or discrimination. But in practice, combating bullying may have a different focus and requires a consistent school policy, which international institutions cannot influence because influence on the education system is taboo. The ABC-project, which experimented with certification of antibullying in schools, made six recommendations to build a European road map against bullying.



Strengths and shortcomings in Europe

The review of the ABC-project of global and European policies shows how both the Council of Europe and the European Union share a vision in which peace, conflict resolution, democracy and equality are central topics. Both have legal and social strategies to implement these values. In the European union there is a substantial budget for antibullying projects, which will only grow with the expansion of the Erasmus+ program. However, a few shortcomings in the European strategy could be pointed out.

- The Council of Europe and the European Union does not have a competence in the educational area. The principle of subsidiarity limits its scope. This principle is there because the content of education is

considered a local competence. However, the safety in schools is also part of the education system even though it has little to do with the content of education. There is a question whether the European Union could not be more pro-active in this area. The EU has numerous safety regulations.

- In the area of funding, the focus is often on sharing of good practices. While this is useful, it does raise the question which good practices are best practices and why. Some projects and initiatives like the NESET-reviews provide a meta-analysis which helps to get an overview. But it seems that such guides to better impact are not yet shared well enough to guide new policies on the national or European level.



- The number of European projects funded for antibullying projects is extensive. It is so high that it falls outside the scope of the ABC-project to review them properly. This raises the question whether there is a development in these projects or whether they repeat each other.

Recommendations

The ABC project proposes the following recommendations.

1. The European Union could do a review of funded projects that focus on, or include bullying. The result of such a review should be to help focus future antibullying projects to go beyond sharing of subjective good practices and become part of a more systematic development program to combat bullying in Europe in a more systematic way.
2. The European Union could consider if European level guidelines for social safety and inclusion in schools, agreed on by Member States, would be possible and strengthen the strategies to combat early school-leaving, gender-based violence and social inclusion.
3. The European Union could consider making it a priority to open a tender for an ongoing European campaign to stimulate awareness of bullying and structural ways to combat it. The choice of a EU-“Day Against Bullying” could be a focal point in such an annual campaign and get more “body” and support.
4. Part of such a campaign could be the development of a clearing house of projects and methods. In this effort, the EU and EAN could team up with the Swedish organization “Friends” which already is working on a similar global database in the context of the World Antibullying Forum.

5. Another part of such a campaign could be the development of a European “map” of national antibullying policies and related best practices, and the use of country assessments to stimulate national dialogue and cooperation to enhance such policies. In this effort, the EU and EAN could team up with GALE which already is working on this type of mapping.
6. The international development to legitimize ideological and political hate speech and systematic social exclusion of social groups should be more recognized as a serious threat to antibullying, violence and general, human rights and democracy. The EU should consider developing a coherent view on how to deal with political hate speech and exclusion and the concrete implementation of antibullying and violence.

Sources: [Review of Antibullying Guidelines in Europe](#), [ABC-project](#)

LOCAL NEWS: GREECE

In Greece, even teachers make homophobic remarks about LGBT students

15 March 2020 - The Greek LGBT youth organization Colour Youth did a school climate survey and concluded that the situation of LGBTI using Greek schools is still deplorable. A majority of students here that even teachers use homophobic slurs to watch LGBTI students. The results are not surprising, previous research shows similar findings. But it seems the Greek government is hesitant to implement concrete measures to stop the blatant discrimination.

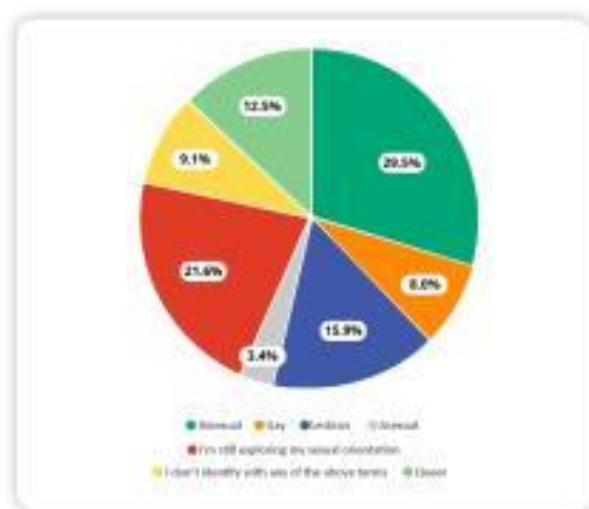
Homophobic remarks

The research was done with a survey and answered by 3747 students within the spectrum of LGBTIQ+. More than 40% of the respondents did not identify with traditional LGBTI categories.

84.9% of LGBTI students hear in school the word "gay" associated with negative connotations. Homophobic remarks are heard

by 74,2% of other students. More than half of

the students (58.1%) also hear such remarks from teachers. 62,5% of the respondents indicate that teachers are present at least sometimes during these unpleasant experiences. But 34.3% of the respondents indicate that teachers do not intervene.



Discrimination due to gender stereotypes

96% say that they have heard remarks about students who do not behave in quite a “manly” way and 86.6% here’s remarks about girls who don’t behave in a traditional feminine way. About 1 in 2 respondents (51.1%) say they have heard negative remarks about gender expression by teachers. 74.4% of students say they hear transphobic comments, 18.3% of them say these remarks happen often or very often.

One in three sexually harassed

One in three students was verbally harassed due to their sexual orientation (32%), gender (31.1%), and/or gender expression (50.3%).

About one in seven children have been subjected to some form of physical harassment and/or physical violence in relation to their sexual orientation (14.6%), gender (12.6%), and/or gender expression (19.3%). One in three



LGBTQ students (33.0%) state that they have been sexually harassed. Of the people who have experienced violence at school, 27.9% have never mentioned it to teachers while the ones that reported it state that the way it was not little effective (30.8%) or not at all effective (26.6%).

Little effect of Greek antibullying campaigns

It should be noted that 59.2% of the respondents declared that they have experienced awareness campaigns on school bullying. Still, 65.1% of LGBTQ students have never heard anything positive about LGBTQ people in a school class. On the contrary, 54.4% state that they have heard negative references to LGBTQ people or issues in the classroom. 60.1% of the students report that none of their school books include information on LGBTQ issues. 57.7% the children feel that it is hard to talk about LGBTQ issues in the classroom, and they feel a little or not at all comfortable to talk to their teachers (71.9%) and hardly at all comfortable to talk to the school management (83.1%).

Recommendations to start national office

it was recommended to establish a Gender and Sexuality Office within the Ministry of Education or the Educational Policy Institute. Such an officer should establish and implement a range of measures to prevent bullying and give attention to sexual diversity in the curriculum. In the short term Colour Youth says it is important to issue a specialized circular from the Ministry to the schools in order to clarify the framework of LGBTQI+ students' rights that is. Apparently this is unclear for teachers and school managers until now.

Sources: ILGA Rainbow Digest March 2020, [Colour Youth, 2020 First Greek National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of LGBTQ Youth in Greek Secondary Education](#)

LOCAL NEWS: EUROPE | TRADE UNIONS

European trade union federation starts project for inclusive education

8 February 2020 - The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) has initiated a project to promote concrete measures for inclusive education. Previous research showed that teachers and other education personnel often do not feel prepared and supported to teach students from diverse socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The project promises to include LGBTI issues.



Education Trade Unions
and Inclusive Schools:
Embracing Diversity in Education

Lack of practical training on inclusive teaching

This new project is just getting started, but ETUCE and education trade unions have been focusing on diversity, equality and inclusion for some years. These issues are getting more political attention, and education personnel are committed to giving all learners the best education possible. However, the research in ETUCE's recent [EU CONVINCe project](#) showed that teachers and other education personnel

often do not feel prepared and supported to teach students from diverse socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The key reasons are a lack of relevant and practical training on inclusive teaching and learning and the lack of support for education staff and institutions.

Input for ETUCE action plan

Through this two-year project, co-funded by the European Commission, ETUCE will promote concrete measures for the implementation of upcoming *ETUCE Action Plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion* at national and local level. The project will also enrich our Database of Good Practices, creating an extensive catalogue of workable approaches for building inclusive learning environments across Europe. At their first meeting on 23 January 2020, the project's international Advisory Group worked with a researcher to prepare an online survey for ETUCE member organizations. The survey will offer a snapshot of trade unions' expertise and activities related to the various aspects of inclusion in education, including but not limited to migration and ethnic diversity; LGBTI issues; gender equality; students and teachers with special needs.

Sources: [ETUCE news item](#), [introduction to ETUCE project](#)

LOCAL NEWS: EUROPE | PROSOCIALITY

ALICE #prosociality conference supports coming out

12 January 2020 - The final conference of the ALICE-project led to students coming-out. The project promoted "prosociality" as a positive way to establish safe and pleasant school and community cultures. Although it was not specifically focused at combating bullying or discrimination, the both positive and generic way seemed to create opportunities to also create space for non-normative identities. That is, if the facilitators have the sensitivity to include diversity topics.



Without fear

The conference took place on 10 January in Heraklion, the capital of Crete. The results of two years experimenting with prosociality in high schools in 5 countries were presented. At the end of the project, students made a series of drawing and digital images to symbolize what they had learned about prosociality. One of the awarded images was called “Sense por” which is Catalan for “without fear”. It was made by a girl who used the ALICE-lessons to explore her own identity and the safety in school. The schools was proud to help he present an image referring to this (see picture with this article).

Peter Dankmeijer, GALE director, did one of the key note speeches and stressed the necessity to include different kinds of diversity in the general concept op prosociality. The sensitivity of teachers, school leaders and the authorities is essential to create the space adolescents need to develop fully. The speech inspired one of the attending students from Italy to come out as a lesbian to her teachers during the conference.



System approach needed

In this speech, Dankmeijer noted that the ALICE-project focused a lot of attention on the curriculum. He hoped that future projects could also give more attention to how prosociality in integrated in the system of schools. There were several indications that when the school and authorities support integration of prosociality in the school system, this will take prosociality beyond individual teacher intentions. A system approach will support real sustainability of innovations like these. For example, in a school where direct democracy and non-violent communication were part of the system, it was much easier to be prosocial, even without lessons. Coming out or establishing gender-neutral toilets were without challenges in such a school.

Prosociality with one eye shut

However, in schools with a punitive system where students were supposed to conform to standards and nor really listened to, it was a huge challenge to “teach” prosociality. Students tended to mistrust the teachers’ intentions. They were likely to consider the ALICE-lessons more like an advanced way of forcing them to self-discipline than as a help to be truly prosocial out of their own authentic choice. Part of this general top-down norming is the way such schools take gender and supposed heterosexuality of students

as given. In one of the participating countries, the local authorities even went so far to exclude LGBT issues from the curriculum, because “high school students are not ready to label themselves as LGBT”. It was no wonder no students from this country did not express any prosocial concerns about sexual diversity, let be that students came out during the project. Prosociality without integral inclusion of diversity becomes like walking with one eye shut.

See also: [ALICE-project](#)



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Colophon

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