Human Rights and Democracy in Action

Pilot Projects on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education

Addressing Violence in Schools
through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education

Points for Consideration & Suggestions for Further Action

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List of national reports

1. **GREECE**

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5. ROMANIA

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Project aims and overview

The main goals of this project have been to raise awareness on school violence, to explore educational policies and practices with regard to school violence and develop a recommendation scheme for the promotion of democratic citizenship and the prevention of violence at school. The innovatory aspect of this pilot-project in relation to pre-existing models is that it

- firstly, addresses and contextualises the issue of eliminating violence through ECD/HRE in the participant countries;
- secondly, it does so by engaging in the violence prevention model stakeholders and civil society institutions (NGOs, youth organisations) representing social groups affected by school violence.

In that respect the proposed pilot project aims to elaborate a sustainable and contextually relevant model for eliminating violence at school.

The project was developed in three phases.

a. Firstly, it examined the institutional framework, the policies and the research that has been conducted in each partner country with regard to school violence. The national reports produced have been compiled in a comparative report on Research and Policy regarding violence at school in the partner countries.

b. Secondly, it conducted a qualitative research based on focus-group interviews at the school community level aiming to explore the informants' perceptions regarding violence at school. The national reports on the analysis of the focus group interviews have been further elaborated on a comparative report on Conceptualisations of Violence in the partner countries.

c. Thirdly, it attempted to develop a reflective scheme on sustainable means for combatting violence and on suggestions for further action aiming at preventing and combatting violence at schools and building a democratic school culture.

1.2. Basic assumptions of the project and methodological approach

- School violence not only infringes upon the right to education per se, but it also violates other fundamental human rights, predominantly those of the right to human dignity and personal integrity. Therefore, eliminating violence at school is of primary importance for the embedment of human rights, democratic citizenship and social cohesion.

- Violence expressed at school cannot be read and understood as an exclusively school phenomenon.The central concept of the project is that violence at school stems from social hierarchies embedded in the broader society and within educational institutions in particular; school violence is reproducing stereotypes that generate prejudice, isolate, stigmatise and victimise certain social groups or practices. Prejudicial practices and bullying often victimise the less powered (vulnerable) groups, notably minority and migrant groups, persons with disability, LGBTIQs.

- Even though there has been considerable activity and policy intervention on the subject, it cannot be assumed that there is a clear and commonly accepted conceptualisation of violence. This pilot project has taken into consideration existing research and education practices focussing on the elimination of school violence, such as that developed by UNESCO, and aims to further elaborate an understanding on the way violence is perceived by the crucial social actors who make up the school community. Therefore the project adopts a bottom up approach.

- Understanding and addressing the phenomenon presupposes the engagement of the whole school community and its opening to the local society.

- The questions, which we posed to the school community, are: is there violence at school? And if there is, which are its characteristics? Who are affected by it? Can we identify specific social characteristics of the

perpetrator and the victim? Is there any correlation between social hierarchies and the affected social categories?

- An effective exploration of these questions requires to give voice to those social categories which are potentially most affected by violence. Therefore, the methodology to investigate the issue was based on focus group interviews, composed both by all the social groups operating within the school and by civil society representatives associated with groups affected by violence.

The aim of this document is:

- firstly, to develop a critical understanding of the way school violence is perceived and conceptualised by the crucial social actors in the participant countries;
- secondly, to reflect on sustainable means for preventing and combatting violence at school, as part of the wider goals of the CoE Charter on building a democratic citizenship and human rights education;
- thirdly, to formulate suggestions for further action aiming to raise awareness and develop strategies for preventing and combatting violence at schools.

The following document consists of three parts. The first part (chapter 2) drawing upon the findings of the focus group interviews and relevant literature aims to provide for a reflective understanding of school violence as it is conceptualised in the participant countries. More specifically, it discusses the awareness of violence at school, the definitions of violence, the reasons, forms and subjects of violence, the settings, places and occasions where violence takes place, the major variables of violence, and the main characteristics of perpetrators and victims. The second part (chapter 3), explores the concept of the "whole community" approach as a means for preventing violence at school and developing a democratic school culture. The third part (chapter 4), based on the views of the focus groups informants, outlines some suggestions for further action at two levels, those of the school community and the education policy. All of the suggestions for further action are options and

possibilities, and form an agenda for reflective action. They are not single-use solutions, nor would they be a panacea for all the multifaceted problems school communities face.

2.2. Perceptions of violence at school

2.2.1. Awareness of violence at school

Violence is a universal phenomenon that is inherent in social relations and exists everywhere in society (Smith, 2003). Since school is a social institution where social relations are being formed, violence is an integral part of it. Schools are potential sites of violence and violence permeates them as it permeates any other social institution (Zambeta et al., 2016). During the last decades there is an extraordinary rise in interest in the subject of school violence. What had been a largely neglected area of study, rapidly became a focus for hundreds of scholars and writers from different parts of the planet (Rigby, 2002).

In the view of all the partner countries, school violence is a matter of huge concern; no-one doubted that violence occurred in schools and that some children suffered appallingly as a result of it (Enyedi&Lázár, 2016; Zambeta et al., 2016; Mitulescu, Scoda&Şandru, 2016; Vujović, 2016; Rafalska&Styslavska, 2016). However, some of the partner countries argue, in direct contrast to general public perceptions, that violence is not increasing inside or outside schools. They mainly refer to physical violence that takes the form of physical punishment exercised by the teachers, a practice that seems to have decreased (Zambeta et al., 2016). What has certainly increased, in contrast to actual evidence of violence, is widespread fear and concern about school violence. Some of this concern is fueled by sensationalised reporting of violent incidents in mass media (Bickmore, 2011).

2.2.2.Definitions of violence

School violence is a very complex and highly ambivalent phenomenon and as a result there is not a clear and explicit definition of it (Benbenishty& Astor, 2005). Violence is a slippery term, which covers a huge and frequently changing range of physical, emotional, symbolic practices situations and relationships, and also a term which creates controversies (Henry, 2000). Researchers and practitioners use various terms in their descriptions of violent incidents, such as aggression, violence and bullying, and sometimes they use these terms interchangeably (see also Astor, Benbenishty, Pitner, &Zeira, 2004).

Themost commonly used term in the description of violent incidents at school is 'bullying'. Although in recent years there has been an especially widespread worry and discourse about 'bullying' (Bickmore, 2011), and theterm has been used as if its definition had been obvious, its content remains somehow diffuse (Zambeta et al., 2016). Bullying is understood by the school and the public in varying ways, and it is often used arbitrarily as a blunt instrument referring to any kind of aggression (Bickmore, 2011). Bullying, for some, is only an entry to the many-sided phenomenon of school violence, while for some others, it is the term they use to describe a whole spectrum of aggression (Zambeta et al., 2016). Some recognise as bullying mostly physical violence and maltreatment and tend to lay emphasis on the physical effects on bullied students describing other kinds of violence (verbal etc.) as 'normal' socialisation processes.

Nonetheless, the participants of this pilot project generally agree that 'violence' is a broader term than 'bullying', and that 'bullying' involves an imbalance of power between perpetrators and victims (Olweus, 1999), intent to harm or intimidate (Coy, 2001; Pepler& Craig, 1994), and usually a pattern of repeated aggression or aggressive exclusion (physical, verbal, and/or relational) over time (Benbenishty& Astor, 2005). However there are researchers who maintain that bullying is a form of social interaction and it can be a one-off experience (Randall, 1991; Stephenson & Smith, 1991).

The widespread fear and concern about bullying has been fueled by sensationalised reporting of violent incidents in mass media (Benbenishty& Astor,

2005), and has led to exaggeration in the way 'bullying' is used by teachers, students and parents. The ubiquitous use of the term 'bullying' and the excessive reference to it sometimes create collective attitudes and behaviours that are not based on the actual extent of the phenomenon. These collective attitudes and practices concern mainly the parents who are the most vulnerable to this kind of discourse (Zambeta et al., 2016).

2.2.3. Reasons of violence

The reasons of violence were attributed to family factors, school- structure related factors and society-related ones.

Family

The informants identified the family's organisation and structure, along with disadvantaged backgrounds, as susceptible to be factors of perpetration. The correlation of family and students' involvement in incidents of violence at school is often met in the literature, as the way family operates, its structure and its upbringing practices are often associated with perpetration or victimisation (Rigby, 2002; Christenson, Anderson & Hirsch, 2004). Loose family ties and immigration of parents, as well as use of violence by parents as a rearing practice are also stated as factors related to violence.

School-structure related factors

The school as a social institution was related to violence. Institutional and pedagogical violence such as the evaluation of students, the rigidity and density of the curriculum, the tension of school time which creates haste and frustrationand disciplinary methods (Harber, 2002) were mentioned as potential factors that either constitute or generate violence at school. The school's role as an institution of social control (Foucault, 1977) is therefore related to violence (Watts &Erevelles, 2004).

Lack of communication between teachers and parents, as well as teachers and students might induce violence. Strengthening communication among school staff, parents and students has indeed been a focal point of school violence research and intervention (Padrós, 2014). School size is correlated to violence: bigger schools make managing violence a challenging task (Harber, 2002).

Furthermore, the existence of Roma or sometimes black students at school seems to trigger conflicts, which are neither efficiently dealt with by teachers, nor are they prevented by the curriculum, since the latter promotes official knowledge and fails to take into account the different cultural backgrounds of students (Rostas&Kostka, 2014; Watts &Erevelles, 2004; Akiba et al., 2002). The curriculum's failure to meet students' real educational needs contributes to the perpetuation of social hierarchies and produces achievement differences (Apple, 1993), something that also has implications for the extent of violence at school (Akiba et al., 2002).

The participants emphasised school's inefficiency to take students' different starting points under consideration and thus its responsibility in the reproduction of social hierarchies (for example, in the case of students with disabilities). The lack of inclusive practices, which render schools "*barrier-free*" (Thomas, Walker & Webb, 2005, p. 23), accessible to their members in terms of infrastructure and education and promote equality and collaboration by considering community as a whole (ibid), were presented as a potential factor that generates violence.

Society-related factors

Society-related reasons of violence were associated with the influence of media (Meeks-Gardner et al., 2003) and economic crisis (Zambeta et al., 2016; Vujović, 2016).

2.2.4 Forms and subjects of violence

a. peer violence

Even though, there is not a clear and unanimous definition of school violence (Henry, 2000), strong similarities between the forms of violence, the school-dynamics, as well as, the specific subjects among whom violence is expressed, can be identified at the schools of the participant countries. According to the participants, school violence is expressed mostly among students and takes on many forms such as verbal violence (insulting and calling names, threatening to cause fear, aggressiveness with words, and consequent intimidation), non-verbal violence and physical violence (aggressiveness with acts), psychological violence (displays of favouritism or scapegoating, taking out anger, hurtfulness), social exclusion and isolation, and "visual harassment", a recently spreading form of violence that occurs through sexual content or rape-scenes shown around on smart phones (Enyedi&Lázár, 2016; Zambeta et al., 2016; Mitulescu, Scoda&Şandru, 2016; Vujović, 2016; Rafalska&Styslavska, 2016).

Another form of violence is that expressed by students towards animals (Mitulescu, Scoda&Şandru, 2016). Violence against animals might have implications for violence against human beings (McMahan, 2005).

b. Institutional and pedagogical violence

School violence is also expressed by teachers to students in the form of punishment (Saltmarsh, Robinson & Davies, 2012). Punishment refers to reprimands, expulsions, and to any act that validates fear, pain or intimidation to students (Zambeta et al., 2016). Moreover, school violence is expressed by students to teachers (students' aggressiveness towards teachers) (Espelage et al., 2013), by parents to teachers, and by parents to students (Enyedi&Lázár, 2016; Zambeta et al., 2016; Mitulescu, Scoda&Şandru, 2016; Vujović, 2016; Rafalska&Styslavska, 2016).

c. parental aggressive involvement

Parents take justice into their 'hands' because as they often report, teachers don't act sufficiently in their attempt to tackle violent incidents (Olweus, 1997).In some cases parents are reported expressing violence towards teachers but also towards students who have assaulted their kids at school interfering thus to the operation of the school. Parental involvement in school life is a widely discussed and debated issue, as it is genuinely mediated by class and culture (Lareau, 2000; Buttler& van Zanten, 2007). In several cases it is met with reservation on the part of the teachers being perceived as undermining their professional identity (Zambeta et al., 2007).

2.2.5 Settings / places/ occasions where violence takes place

Violence takes place inside and outside the school premises (Enyedi&Lázár, 2016; Zambeta et al., 2016; Mitulescu, Scoda&Şandru, 2016; Vujović, 2016; Rafalska&Styslavska, 2016). Specifically, violent incidents often occur in the classroom, but also in the public areas of schools such as school playground, corridors,stairs and washrooms (Bickmore, 2011; Astor & Meyer, 2001). These incidents take place mostly during the break, but very often before or after school, at the road to/from school, at the bus station, on the bus, at students' neighbourhood, at the places where they hung out, and at school trips and excursions. Moreover, an increasingly prominent arena for violence, takes place in cyberspace through the electronic communications (Keith & Martin, 2005).

4.2.4. Major Variables of School Violence

Gender

Gender-related and sexualised forms of violence are critical in shaping dominant (heterosexual) masculinities and femininities in schools (Connell, 1996; Renold, 2000).In most countries, boys' violence is a means for granting someone's conformity to masculinity in same-sex groups (Zambeta et al., 2016; Enyedi&Lázár, 2016; Mitulescu,Scoda&Şandru,2016), whereas girls' violence –when emerged- is

related with (feminine) consumerist practices (Vujović, 2016). As such, peer (same-sex) groups (re)produce definitions of gender (Connell 1996). Conformity with appropriate gender norms might provoke violent incidents (Zambeta et al., 2016). Homophobia, closely affiliated with obedience to gender norms, was only reported in Greece, Hungary and Montenegro.

National Origin and Ethnicity

Findings concerning violence due to national origin and ethnicity as emerged in the partner countries' reports are related with the victimisation of Roma students (Zambeta et al., 2016; Enyedi&Lázár, 2016; Mitulescu, Scoda&Şandru, 2016; see alsoKende, 2007) as well as second generation students (Zambeta et al., 2016; see also Verkuyten&Thijs, 2002; Devine, Kenny &Macneela, 2008). However, national origin and ethnicity are not always recognised by the informants as central factors in the school context (Vujović, 2016). Violence in relation with the level of education is not differentiated between primary and secondary education in most national reports. Nevertheless, in Greece such incidents occur less frequently on primary than on secondary level of education and seem to be less evident in primary school in the past, compared to the present. Nevertheless, violence is not absent, as participants also mentioned the visibility of such incidents in secondary education.

Disabilities

Research portrays students with disabilities as both perpetrators (Kaukiainen et al., 2002; Kuhne& Wiener, 2000; Whitney et al., 1994) and victims (Norwich & Kelly, 2004; Little, 2002). Respectively, informants in most countries related disabilities with both violence perpetration and victimisation (Zambeta et al., 2016; Rafalska&Styslavska, 2016; Mitulescu, Scoda&Şandru, 2016). Additionally, the intensity and the patterns of violence are differentiated across national reports, since parents may also exert violence on students with disabilities (Zambeta et al., 2016).

Social class – Social Inequality

In general, in research there is no ubiquity concerning the interrelation between socio-economic status and violence in schools (Rigby, 2004). Although some researchers may find that socio-economic factors may be related to victimisation (O'Moore, Kirkham & Smith, 1997), others do not support this finding (Rigby, 2004) or find very small correlation (Wolke et al., 2001). Focus group participants across reports stated that perpetrators and victims belong to both most deprived and most privileged social groups (Zambeta et al., 2016; Rafalska&Styslavska, 2016; Enyedi&Lázár, 2016;Vujović 2016).

The concept of symbolic violence is important in order to understand how social inequalities are reproduced (Bourdieu &Passeron, 1990). Symbolic violence among different socio-economic strata, in the form of isolation is testified; nevertheless, it is not mentioned in the context of social hierarchies in schools, since it is not often noted as such (Zambeta et al., 2016). Forms of violence are not related with socio-economic background. However, in Greece physical violence is reported to be perpetrated by lowest socio-economic groups and non-physical (exclusion, threats) by the most privileged ones.

4.2.5. Main Characteristics of Perpetrators and Victims

Perpetration and victimisation are often explained in psychological terms (Ringrose&Renold, 2010). Participants in focus groups also described perpetrators and victims in such manner, but without providing any perceptible personality characteristics opposing perpetrators to victims; therefore, roles may be interchangeable (Rafalska&Styslavska, 2016; Enyedi&Lázár, 2016). Moreover, perpetration of violence was emphatically related with students (Enyedi&Lázár, 2016; Rafalska&Styslavska, 2016; Mitulescu, Scoda&Şandru, 2016) and less so with teachers or parents (Zambeta et al., 2016;Vujović, 2016; Mitulescu, Scoda&Şandru, 2016).

Main Characteristics of Perpetrators

Perpetrator's tension (Enyedi&Lázár, 2016), vulnerability, insecurity, group dependence and coercion to violence perpetration (Mitulescu, Scoda&Şandru, 2016; Vujović, 2016) demonstrate the peer group dynamics that fortify perpetration (Rose et al., 2010). Furthermore, bodily traits (e.g. physical strength) (Ma, 2001) and (poor or high) achievement (Rose et al., 2010) are related to perpetration according to focus group participants.

Main Characteristics of Victims

Participants described victims as passive (Zambeta et al., 2016;Vujović, 2016; see also Olweus, 2003), with low self-esteem, unpopular, and excluded from peer groups (Zambeta et al., 2016; Vujović, 2016; see also Rose et al., 2010). Victimisation may result in isolation, since it is often concealed from school or family members (Zambeta et al., 2016; Enyedi&Lázár, 2016;see also Roberts &Coursol, 1996). Obesity (Griffiths et al., 2006) and lack of conformity with fashion commands are also reported as body-image related characteristics of victims (Vujović, 2016).

4.3. Means for Combatting violence at school. The "Whole Community" approach for a Democratic School Culture

Violence at school violates human rights and endangers the right to education *per se*. In tackling violence, schools need to enhance social awareness and boost a democratic school culture grounded on the principles of EDC/HRE.

Based on the outcomes of this pilot project we could argue that schools can be perceived as the public spaces where issues such as violence are addressed in response to the aims of the community to tackle them. This could happen if schools could be transformed into inclusive and democratic systems placing emphasis on social justice, respect for others, critical inquiry, equality, freedom, concern for the collective good (Giroux, 2004), and in fact build a democratic school culture by following the "whole community" approach.

The “whole community” approach as a means for preventing violence at school has been central in several projects, most prominently in the Council of Europe’s Pestalozzi programme (Council of Europe, 2012). However, the concept of the whole community seems to be reduced to the school community, i.e. educators, parents and local community and as a matter of fact the notion of community is conceptualised in terms of locality (Lajovic, 2012). While the spatial aspect of community cannot be ignored, the relational dimension is essential for a non-static and dynamic understanding of the term. According to Boyes-Watson (2005), community is not only a mode of connection in terms of locality, but also a way and a sense of belonging, which generates social action. This approach entails a shift of power from central government institutions to the community, by establishing networks of relationships among citizens and organisations in order to achieve balanced partnerships.

In this pilot project our understanding of the “whole-community” does not entail a nostalgic adoration of the pre-industrial sense of ‘*gemeinschaft’,* (as it is defined by Ferdinard Tönnies), which involves the existence of an organic life based on traditional ties and emotional bonds among the members of a community attached to a certain place. In contemporary complex, highly urbanised, industrial and post-industrial societies traditional bonding fades, social relationships are largely impersonal and political allegiances are forged around contractual rights and obligations. On the other hand, contemporary modes of belonging and political engagement are rather reflexive and non-abiding by traditional long-lasting commitments (Hustinx&Lamertyn, 2003). Skepticism towards grand narratives and traditional ideologies, distanciation towards one’s own context, presentism as against nostalgic images of the past, acceptance of hybridity and awareness of other cultures are perceived as basic components of contemporary urban citizenship identities. These qualities are considered as corresponding to the notion of “cosmopolitanism”, which is a virtue of post-modern citizenship as defined by Turner (2000).

In this context of fluidity and uncertainty an attempt to construct the “whole community” as a public space of citizenship engagement, involvement and

commitment seems quite optimistic and challenging. Bob Jessop, considering the notion of deliberative (participatory) democracy, suggests the viewpoint of what he calls the "romantic ironist": "in contrast to cynics, ironists act in 'good faith' and *seek to involve others* in the process of policy-making, not for manipulative purposes but in order to bring about conditions for negotiated consent and self-reflexive learning … become a self-reflexive means … coping with failures, contradictions, dilemmas and paradoxes that are an inevitable feature of life. In this sense participatory governance is a crucial means of defining the objectives as well as objects of governance as well as of facilitating the co-realisation of these objectives by reinforcing motivation and mobilizing capacities for self-reflection, self-regulation, and self-correction" (Jessop, 2002, p. 55).

Since schools are learning-focused institutions, they might find it relatively easier to cope with the ironic challenges of "self-reflexive learning", "self-regulation" and "self-correction" in the realisation of democratic school practices. A more difficult challenge for schools would be to define who are the important "others" to be involved in the democratic process. The crucial question is "who has the right to participate" in a democratic school governance model? Who has the right to address problems, such as violence in schools? Who has the right to be heard? In other terms, the question is who are the important "stakeholders" in building the school's "whole community"? In times of globalisation and international flows of movement, citizenship-as-we-know-it is an insufficient basis of legitimacy in defining participatory governance, not least because it would exclude social strata and populations that are already represented among the student population. Moreover, citizenship based legitimacy is confined in state-centred vision of policy-making (Heinelt, 2002, p. 27). On the question of legitimacy Heinelt (2002), citing Schmitter (2002), argues that "persons/organisations who could potentially be invited or allowed to participate [because] they possess some quality or resource that entitles them to participate" are distinguished as "rights-holders, space-holders, knowledge-holders, share-holders, stake-holders, interest-holders and status-holders" (ibid.). More specifically (and based on Schmitter's analysis again):

- rights-holders are defined in terms of citizenship rights;

- space-holders are those who are legitimated on the basis of living within a certain territory;
- knowledge-holders are perceived on the basis of expertise;
- share-holders are defined in terms of ownership;
- stake-holders are understood as those who are materially or spiritually affected by decision making;
- interest-holders are those related to a particular interest group;
- status-holders are those officially representing organised interests. (Klausen& Sweeting, 2005, pp. 225-226).

According to Klausen and Sweeting (2005) participatory governance is characterised by horizontal relationships between the social actors involved and networking at the level of the community. Community involvement places emphasis on the group level instead of focussing to the individual. It implies a sense of commonality and integration; there can be several types of communities such as communities of identity, communities of place, or communities of interest (ibid, p. 218).

The "Whole Community" approach implies the holistic integration of the various "-holders" in participatory governance aiming at horizontal relationships and networking. In this sense, "Whole Community" approach is an umbrella term for the involvement and engagement of the whole community in democratic school governance; this would actively involve crucial stakeholders, such as teachers, students, parents and educational leadership in schools. More importantly, the highlight of this approach is the involvement of civil society in school, so as to develop habits of civic and political engagement based on relationships of trust, cooperation and support. The opening of the school to the community enhances the democratic commitment of both school and community stakeholders and strengthens collective commitment to the basic principles of democratic coexistence and respect (Thomas, 2012; Bangs & Frost, 2012).

Hence, based on the aforementioned, we should aim to work for an open, democratic school (Freire, 1994), which embraces the Whole Community Approach and focuses on building a democratic school culture that develops EDC/HRE, and

promotes a sense of civic responsibility along with intercultural understanding, as well as respect for human rights.

In this kind of school, teachers could work not individually but collegially in response to the perceived needs of their pupils (Ball, 2013), and would stimulate students to think critically, to question, to have a passion for knowledge and creative curiosity, to feel the joy of learning (Freire, 1994). Such a school would teach students to resolve conflict situations and develop competences and skills that will help them face challenges, it would inspire conciliation and peace, promote an understanding of identity and diversity (Held, 2005; McKinnon, 2005; Tan, 2005), and would meet the needs of teachers, students, parents, education leadership and the community as a whole (Bigelow, 2006).

In order for this to happen the innovative potential of schools, teachers and communities need to be released (Fielding & Moss, 2011); education communities should re-establish trust in teachers and schools and build a proper sense of an inclusive school. Teachers need opportunities to reflect on their work experience, communicate with colleagues and the school community; the capabilities of students, parents and other local stakeholders need to be developed so that they participate, discuss, challenge and critically analyse their everyday experiences (Ball, 2013). A new democratic professionalism based on the fundamental values of human rights and democracy needs to be built, with teachers' professional agency at its core (Stevenson & Gilliland, 2015).

4.4. Suggestions for further action

A. At the school's community level

- *Engagement of the whole community*

As already mentioned, the highlight of this approach is the opening of the school to the wider community.The "whole community" should be the school's public space of deliberative democratic governance, based on dialogue, transparency, tolerance and respect for heterogeneity. Social awareness on

inequalities and discriminatory practices, secularity, affirmation of social, cultural and gender diversity are basic components for building the whole community as a sustainable strategy to prevent violence at school. Some stakeholders that could contribute to violence prevention and management are the local authorities (municipality), municipal social services (social workers, psychologists), activist groups, non-governmental and civil society organisations, museums and universities. Through the opening to the local community, school violence is highlighted and conceptualised as a social phenomenon which is to be collectively problematised, addressed and managed. Developing and maintaining a dialogue among teachers, parents, students and other local authorities is an intervention of prior importance for combatting violence. This could be implemented through regular meetings to resolve emerging issues regarding school life by promoting teamwork and creating a positive school climate (Cowie et al., 2008). This collaboration would possibly lead to more efficient conflict resolution strategies and to a common approach to regulations regarding discipline, since schools' disciplinary methods are often punishment oriented, hence inefficient or inappropriate, as reported by the participating countries.

- Democratic school governance: *A school charter on children's and human rights*

As emerged from the focus groups analyses, discussing upon the issue of violence at the beginning of each school year (and then on a regular basis during the school year, as we will see below) is very important for the prevention, management and combatting of violence. This discussion would engage teachers, school principals, parents and students in a dialogue, so as to reach mutual understanding and agreement on a mutually agreed charter/school plan based on the principles of EDC/ HRE, such as tolerance, inclusion, and respect.

- *Developing Students' active participation in school governance*

Students are themselves a vital stakeholder in the school community and should feel that the school meets their expectations and needs. School governance should encourage the development of active democratic citizenship on the part of the students (Down & Smyth, 2012; Whitty, 2002), that is, among other things, active participation of the students in the formation of the school life regulations and activities (Biesta, Lawy& Kelly, 2009). This could be achieved by the utilisation of the institution of students' councils for the promotion of school dialogue.

- *Teachers' awareness, professional autonomy, responsibility and commitment*

Teachers' professionalism and personal commitment to their work are indispensable for addressing and coping with school violence. According to many participants of the focus groups interviews, what is needed in order violence to be handled in schools is critical educators who are committed to human rights, who actively seek to keep informed, use a range of teaching styles, and encourage students to be active participants in the wider societal context; teachers who are aware on issues, such as homophobia and xenophobia, teachers who can communicate effectively with both students and parents, who have confidence in their own abilities, as well as high morale, self-esteem, positive energy and the motivation to innovate and develop differentiated practices that improve learning and inclusion (Johnson &Hallgarten, 2002).

- *A school policy of prevention and counselling*

A clear policy of prevention is vital for dealing with violence. Such a policy should be planned, designed and decided upon at the school level. One suggestion would be the preparation of an action plan on addressing possible violent incidents, for all members of the school community to be aware of possible ways to deal with

violence. For instance, a suggestion, which came up from the partner countries' focus groups, was the development of peer mediation processes. Peer mediation is a widely researched type of conflict resolution education initiative with impressively positive effects (Bickmore, 2002; Burrell, Zirbel& Allen, 2003; Harris, 2005; Jones, 2004). Moreover, conflict resolution could be assisted by counselling services by psychologists, who might work towards enhancing communication among the members of the school (school staff, parents, teachers).

- *Parental awareness and support*

The importance of parents' role in the education framework was extensively discussed by all the informants in this project. Specifically, Parents' Schools were mentioned as an enabling strategy in strengthening their active participation in tackling violence. In some participant countries Parental Counselling Schools were perceived as essential in order to facilitate parental awareness and support in the school's violence prevention policy. Parents' associations should also be encouraged to participate in school life and contribute to collective processes, such as in decision making (Schwerdtfeger Gallus, Shreffler, Merten, and Cox, 2014).

B. At the education policy level

- *Pre-service education (universities) / emphasis on humanities and social sciences education*

In order to facilitate prevention and combatting of school violence teachers must be capable of understanding and analysing violence as a social phenomenon. All the informants of this project underlined the critical role of initial teachers' education in fostering teachers' readiness to deal with violence at schools. It was supported that the relevant university departments should encompass humanities and social sciences modules, something that is not always the case for the university departments attended by future teachers.

- *Continuous support of school's and teachers' work*

Teachers, in order to respond to the aforementioned challenges and become capable of combatting school violence, need support from trained professionals, such as social workers and psychologists, as well as moral rewards from the society. They also need further training and teaching seminars that would make them capable to address school violence incidents. Moreover, teachers need time and space to discuss with their colleagues and collectively reflect upon their work experience. In this manner, teachers would take time to elaborate further on their practices and share their concerns with colleagues during pedagogical sessions. This strategy could also prevent teachers' burnout.

- *The importance of Early Childhood Education*

It is considered essential that any measure in the direction of developing active democratic citizenship in the framework of human rights education needs to start from early years which are fundamental (Samuelsson &Kaga, 2008). Early childhood institutions can be, first and foremost, places of democratic political practice and as a matter of fact public spaces for building and enhancing a democratic citizenship culture.

- *Policies on the development of education leadership*

Education leadership also has a vital role in promoting and supporting democratic school culture and in the development of a positive school climate that can work in a preventive way against violence. Education officials, such as school principals and school advisers, can decisively act in this respect, by promoting a culture of dialogue and by facilitating teachers' efforts to work towards the development of a democratic school. In order to ensure education officials' capacity

to correspond to their critical duties, it was suggested that they should be properly selected, trained and evaluated.

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