



DECIDES EUROPE

Preventing gender-based violence. The youth outlook.

Action protocol for gender-based violence in adolescents

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Action protocol for gender-based violence in adolescents.

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INTRODUCTION

Although all people have the right to live a life free from violence, international conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and national legislation give special protection to children and adolescents.

Educational establishments are places to enable the comprehensive development of children, adolescents and young people, allowing them to learn healthy ways of living. However, unfortunately, today they are more at risk than ever of experiencing violence at school, including gender-based violence (GBV).

Violence is an issue that often entails multiple social factors. Therefore, joint efforts and coordination between government agencies, civil society and families are needed to meet the challenges and share the responsibility of violence experienced by children and adolescents.

Prevention, detection and action protocols are a useful instrument to combat violence. For this reason, as part of the European Project **DECIDES Europe: preventing gender-based violence, the youth outlook**, the partner entities, Interarts Foundation and Asociación Trabe (Spain) Transcena Associata (Romania), and Kivindemuseet (Denmark), have drawn up guidelines for prevention, detection and action on violence in the educational setting.

This document aims to harmonise a series of actions and provide a common framework for detection and clear action on gender-based violence among teenagers, supporting and protecting the entire educational community to enable high quality education.

Violence takes various forms, including physical, psychological and sexual. Therefore, specific observation strategies and warning signs will facilitate timely and specific attention and treatment of each case, including reparation if necessary.

It is important to recall that parents, guardians and educators are responsible for preventing gender-based violence and safeguarding the integrity of the children and adolescents in their care.

OBJECTIVE

1. Improve the capacities of school staff to detect potential cases of GBV and contribute to building coordinated tools and instruments for early detection of GBV among adolescents at schools in Spain, Romania, and Denmark.
2. Unify terminology and design intervention guidelines that will serve to improve coordination between schools and local services (police, social services and other municipal services) in order to make GBV interventions more effective.
3. Enable swift but not hasty interventions. Action must be continued and uninterrupted, even when an authority or responsible person fails to respond, guaranteeing protection and respect for the rights of the child at all times.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Professionals who work and are in contact with adolescents, in formal and non-formal educational establishments.

METHODOLOGY

These guidelines for standard protocols of action at schools were developed through a participatory process with several stakeholders and also draw on existing best practices.

Three technical meetings were held in Spain, Romania, and Denmark, at which health, education and social work professionals shared knowledge and experiences on violence among adolescents. The aim was to discuss a possible common action framework in the schools in the target city supported and endorsed by the public authorities.

The sessions were conducted using a participatory and collaborative methodology, supported by feedback and training materials developed by gender and adolescent experts. Sessions included hands-on exercises, role-playing interviews with adolescent victims, adolescent aggressors and the families of both, and support techniques.

The full conclusions reached during these meetings are set out in Annex 1.

TYPES AND FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Violence does not solely mean hitting someone. All physical assaults also result in psychological damage. Abuse can be broken down into a number of categories that are often linked and occur simultaneously:

- Psychological violence: acts such as insults, contempt ("you're worthless"), humiliation, and ridicule ("who is going to love you with that face?"). Psychological violence may also mean ignoring someone (not speaking to them or pretending they do not exist) or threatening physical aggression ("if you don't listen to me, I'll smash your face in"). Like physical abuse, ongoing psychological abuse causes humiliation, which can shatter a person's self-esteem, and the consequences are even more lasting than those of physical abuse.

There are various forms of violence under the category of psychological abuse:

- Devaluation: damaged self-esteem, distorted self-image and feeling of guilt.
 - Isolation and social abuse: the woman is cut off from her social support and becomes dependent on the abuser.
 - Control and domination: loss of freedom, feeling unable to make decisions and fear.
 - Threats: the aggressor instils fear in the woman, rendering them unable to get away from an abusive situation.
- Environmental violence: seeks to intimidate and instil fear in women by acts such as breaking or throwing objects, driving recklessly or jeopardising family life. The consequences for women are emotional suffering and/or disturbed sleep.
 - Economic violence: the abuser's objective is to control the woman by making it difficult for her to access services, leading to economic dependence and ultimately, the financial inability to get out of the situation.
 - Physical violence is an intentional act to cause pain and/or physical injury. It includes beating, burning, kicking, punching, biting, maiming, using objects or weapons, and tearing hair out. At its most extreme, physical violence may lead to femicide, i.e. the gender-based killing of a woman. Some classifications also categorise trafficking and slavery as physical violence because there is often initial coercion, and the victims are subject to further violence as a result of their enslavement
 - Sexual violence: encompasses multiple acts that range from verbal harassment to forced penetration, and an array of types of coercion, from social pressure and intimidation to physical force. All forms of sexual violence are hurtful and may be enacted in the public or private sphere. Examples include rape (sexual violence including some form of penetration of the victim's body without consent), marital rape and attempted rape. Other types of sexual violence are forcing a person to watch sexual intercourse; forcing a person to have intercourse in front of others; forcing unprotected sex; sexual harassment; and, in the case of women, abuse related to reproduction (forced pregnancy, forced abortion and forced sterilisation).

ROADMAP

Cases of gender-based violence must be urgently addressed when detected. It poses a serious risk to health, and the professionals who are aware of it are professionally and legally obliged to respond. However, the school community must firstly deter violent behaviour and abuse by fostering comprehensive personal development to enable a harmonious, peaceful environment.

The first step to prevent GBV is education. Teaching health and sexuality as a subject is necessary, and Denmark is an example of good practice, where this subject is taught to all ages from 5 to 16. Schools must work on skills comprehensively so that pupils can:

- Discuss how abuse of children and adolescents can be prevented.
- Identify physical, mental, and sexual violence.
- Evaluate emotional dilemmas in relationships.
- Be aware of the importance of emotions and relationships in connection with health, wellbeing, and sexuality.

However, if GBV occurs, staff members and pupils must be alert and work towards full individual development, both by strengthening social and emotional skills that promote inclusion, respect for diversity and coexistence, and by knowing what to do when faced with violent situations or behaviour.

Preventing GBV at school must aim to stop the damage it causes. This process entails two levels of action within the school, which may even have an impact outside the school.

Level one: avert. At this level, actions seek to prevent and ultimately eradicate violence on the grounds of ethnicity, language, gender, prejudice, disability, discipline, education, upbringing and religious belief.

These actions cover the following:

- Fostering kindness and respect for human dignity, highlighting its feasibility as well as the benefits these have for the individual, family, community, and society.
- Preventing violence by recognising and denaturalising it, identifying the individual, family, social and legal consequences of violence, as well as developing of social and emotional skills to encourage non-violent resolution of interpersonal conflicts.

Level two: stop. At this level, actions aim to halt existing violence by detecting and addressing risk situations, identifying potential assailants, and building awareness of the damage caused by violent behaviour.

To ensure effective action, it is important firstly to distinguish between emergency and urgent situations:

Emergency

Immediate action is required when one or both of the following is identified:

- Serious physical or psychological injury (anxiety attack, state of shock).
- High risk to life (injuries, death threats).

Urgent

A situation may be urgent, depending on:

- How the violence is detected,
- What the adolescent needs,
- Level of severity (the aggressor is in possession of weapons; severity and frequency of violence; sexual violence; substance use by the aggressor and/or adolescent victim; aggressor displays highly controlling behaviour, etc.).

In all cases, action must be taken to:

- Guarantee protection of minors.
- Notify social services of violence.
- Protect the privacy of the minor and his/her family.
- Avoid duplicating interventions and unnecessary delays.
- Monitor the situation after any interventions and assess whether objectives have been achieved.

Existing action procedures

This section describes the legal procedures to address GBV in the three countries analysed: Spain, Denmark, and Romania.

The situations described draw on actual cases of violence in educational establishments to make recommendations for actions.

Situation 1. The victim reports gender-based violence

ACTION PROCEDURE IN SPAIN

When a pupil reports to a member of school staff that her partner or an ex-partner is behaving violently towards her, the following action must be taken:

- a) **Emergency:** first, you must contact the emergency health services and then report it to the police. These services will notify social services¹.
 - Social services will assess whether the adolescent’s family provides adequate protection to draw up an intervention plan².
 - If the family is deemed to provide adequate protection, social services will follow up the case and specific services (equality and/or gender-based violence support) will initiate action, in coordination with the school.

- b) **Urgent (not emergency):** all violence must be reported to social services.
 - If the adolescent is deemed to have inadequate protection, social services will draw up a coordinated intervention plan with the various services³.

¹ Social services will assess whether the minor’s family provide adequate protection and, if necessary, arrange an interview with the family.

² If so, social services (the ‘ETMF’, or Child and Family Team) will arrange a meeting with all services involved (school, health service, mental health, etc.). They will decide on measures to take, including providing protection of the minor if necessary and addressing the violence, involving various services (Madrid City Council’s Equality Service and/or support for victims of intimate partner violence).

³ Specific services such as child protection will intervene if the minor is unprotected, whereas intimate partner violence will be addressed by a specialist service and/or through the school.

- If the family clearly provides adequate protection for the minor, specialist services for violence will lead the intervention and it will not be necessary to coordinate, but rather merely to notify. Social services should be contacted if there are any doubts about the minor's protection.

Direct interventions on violence:

If the minor asks for **psychological support**, you must contact specialist services. Members of the equality team will go to the school to assess the request. It is vital that the services involved share information on the case. The services that receive a referral should confirm receipt of the case.

ACTION PROCEDURE IN DENMARK

Suspicion of violence and sexual abuse must lead to an immediate notification to the municipality and a report to the police. If there is a suspicion that a child or an adolescent may be subjected to violence or sexual abuse, it is good practice to inform the supervisor immediately. However, the duty to report is personal, meaning that it will always be you as the teacher who has the responsibility of informing the municipality. If the suspicion is directed at the parents, they should not be involved. If the suspicion is not directed at the parents, you should notify them immediately.

Notification must take place to the municipality of residence for the child or adolescent. Go to the local website for the municipality to find out to whom the notification should be filed to ensure that it arrives as swiftly as possible. There are no formal requirements of a notification; you may submit it in written or oral form. You can also submit an anonymous notification to the municipality and to the social appeals board. It is important that the notification is as accurate as possible in the description of the child's or adolescent's situation.

When the municipality receives your notification, the authority responsible for dealing with notification must – within 24 hours – assess whether the health or development of the child or adolescent is endangered and if so, whether there is a need to take immediate action. If it is decided that the child or adolescent needs special support, the municipality must examine the conditions of the child or adolescent.

It is important that the necessary support is provided. It is the responsibility of the municipality to examine the circumstances, make decisions and initiate the right support.

ACTION PROCEDURE IN ROMANIA

In Romania, interventions in cases of gender-based violence in school are governed by child protection legislation, primarily Law 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of the rights of the child with amendments, Law 217/2003 on preventing and combating domestic violence, and legislation on sexual violence under the criminal code. The concept of gender-based violence has been provided for in Law 202/2002 on equal opportunities and equal treatment of women and men since 2018.

The Commission for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence, Corruption, Discrimination in Schools and the Promotion of Interculturality is responsible for all prevention and intervention on violence at all schools. The methodology regulating their functioning covers many forms of violence and abuse taking place in schools such as physical violence, corruption, discrimination, bullying.

The guiding secondary legislation specific for cases of domestic and sexual violence is the Government Decision 49 / 2011 - Framework methodology on prevention and intervention in a multidisciplinary team and in a network in situations of Child Violence and Domestic Violence and the Methodology of multidisciplinary and inter-institutional intervention on children exploited and at risk of exploitation through work, children victims of human trafficking, as well as migrant children victims of other forms of violence on the territory of other states. This document is correlated with the provisions of the Order of the Minister of Labour and Social Justice 2525/2018 Procedure for emergency intervention in cases of domestic violence. Currently in Romania the phrase „gender-based violence” is not in use in secondary legislation.

According to these documents, cases must be solved in a multidisciplinary team composed of child protection representatives, police and school representatives, including school management, teachers and councillors. The responsibility for solving cases goes primarily to the child protection services and structures.

The School Inspectorate at county level is in charge of methodological coordination of the activity within the school units, but also in charge of monitoring and evaluation of the results of the school actions in collaboration with the Police Inspectorate and the local child protection services.

a) Intervention in emergency cases:

- Pupils/auxiliary staff/security who witness an emergency situation contact the designated teacher.
- The police and ambulance service are called (on 112).
- The family of both victim and aggressor pupils are convened.
- The social services are notified.

The case will be handled according to police and social services procedures. The conclusion will be reported to the county school inspectorate.

Courses of action differ depending on the severity and type of violence. In all cases the following measures will be proposed:

- Various services will manage the case including risk needs assessment, psychological counselling, protection plan for the child and the family.
- Social services report the case to the police.

Local and central institutions may work with private services for protection of minors and victims of domestic violence.

b) Intervention in urgent cases:

When the pupil's friends or teachers report signs of abuse, the following actions are taken:

- The school counsellor will have an interview with the pupil to find out if she is suffering abuse. If the pupil rejects the suspicions, no further action is taken.
- The school counsellor, teachers and class tutor will monitor the pupil for further signs of abuse and if necessary, have another interview.

If the suspicions concern a fellow pupil and the suspected victim and aggressor are a young couple, the school counsellor will interview both separately.

If the suspicions concern a member of the pupil's family, social services will be called immediately to make further investigations. Child Protection Services take over these cases. Domestic violence at home may be the cause, in which case the police and local specialist social services will investigate. The school is not obliged to file a report or follow up the case.

Summary of existing action procedures

SPAIN	DENMARK	ROMANIA
<p>Emergency cases: contact emergency health services and then the police.</p> <p>Non-emergency: notify social services.</p>	<p>Inform the authorities: Notification to the municipality and a report to the police.</p>	<p>Emergency cases: contact the designated teacher, police and ambulance service, the families of both victim and aggressor, and social services.</p> <p>Non-emergency: the school counsellor will interview the pupil.</p>

Situation 2. Detection and/or observation by others

ACTION PROCEDURE

1. The pupil's friends tell teachers she is suffering violence.

The friends tell the trusted school team because there is clear evidence that a girl is being isolated, controlled and even suffering direct violence from her boyfriend.

Possible observation indicators:

2. The pupil's marks and/or performance drop suddenly and for no apparent reason.

3. The pupil socialises only with her boyfriend and his friends and stops spending breaktime with her friends.

4. Physical marks that always have an explanation.

The pupil repeatedly explains this through external causes such as falls, accidents at home, being clumsy, etc.

5. Sudden, unexplained changes in character.

The pupil may have been sociable and friendly with classmates and for no apparent reason becomes more distant and colder.

If one or more of these indicators is detected, the school must draw up an intervention plan to address the case, assessing the severity of the violence, whether the family protects the minor, and what she wants or needs. As mentioned above, you must always notify social services. You can also consult other public services such as the Equality Service, in Madrid.

Actions to take:

- a) The reference person from the school team must intervene to make contact with the pupil and ascertain her needs.
- b) Assess a possible referral to specific services.
- c) Carry out educational and preventive work such as courses and workshops open to the pupil, or defining a support strategy with peer mediators. This reduces the likelihood of absenteeism and provides support for the adolescent.

If an emergency situation arises at any time during the process, follow the emergency steps set out above, reformulate the intervention plan and assess, focusing on protecting the adolescent.

Indirect intervention on violence:

It is important that schools provide training and information to their students on GBV. One recommended option is to provide capacity building for students as peer educators. These trainings allow students to develop the role of mediator and companion in cases of gender-based violence. They can also be more likely to detect cases and warn **when the child victim of violence does not ask for support**.

INTERVIEWS

When GBV is detected or suspected, school staff must have a conversation with the parties involved. Educating pupils about GBV has proven to be effective in prevention, as there is a lower risk of violence among young people who are aware. For this reason, schools play a key role in working with all pupils, especially boys. This section explains the purpose of holding an interview with the victim, the aggressor, and the families of both, and provides recommendations and suggestions for such meetings.

Interviews with adolescent victims of GBV

Objectives:

- Find out from the pupil her specific circumstances, perception, and assessment of the situation.
- Show your readiness to support her.

Recommendations:

- Create an atmosphere of trust and safety so that the pupil feels comfortable: listen to her without questioning her interpretation of the facts, making judgments, or criticising her actions. Trust and commitment from the pupil are important so that she does not abandon the intervention and you can continue helping her.
- Facilitate an atmosphere in which the young woman can express her feelings. Do not block her emotions, even if they seem inappropriate to you. Accept her pain, shame, guilt and fear without showing rejection, surprise, fright or surprise.
- Directly address the issue of violence and try to detect how accepting she is of it. If she does not recognise that she is the victim of gender-based violence, the school staff will have to help her and accompany her until she feels safe to express herself and reflect on what happened, respecting her time. Make it clear to the pupil that she will never be alone; the school will support her throughout the process.
- Tell the pupil clearly what actions the school will take without imposing criteria or making decisions for her. Tell her what external and community services are available.

What to avoid:

- Language that may make her feel guilty or lay blame, such as, "why are you still with him?"
- Giving the impression that everything will be easily resolved.
- Being paternalistic or overprotective, as this does not help the victim.
- Expressing weariness, disapproval or reproach if she decides to go back to him or not to report him.
- Being suspicious of what she says.
- Downplaying the importance of what she tells you or minimise the violence she is suffering.
- Casting doubt, even if you know her partner and it seems impossible that he could have done what she says.
- Causing initial stress by pressing her for precise details.
- Judging her or imposing your value system on her.
- Thinking that she wants to hide things from you if she does not tell you everything or give the details you want.
- Telling her what to do before she asks.
- "Rescuing" her or imposing your own pace on the interview.
- Pressuring her and/or threatening not to help her if she does not end the relationship.
- Criticising her boyfriend.

Interviews with the victim's family

Objectives:

- Provide guidance and information to the family on what happened.
- Provide information about specialist services available and how to use them (see section below on Supporting the victim's family).

Recommendations:

- Create a climate that allows them to cope with their anxiety without downplaying the subject.

- Advise on how facilitate communication with their daughter.
- Inform them that the school will support them through the entire process.
- Explain what actions the school will take and seek to involve them.
- Reach agreements on a joint line of action.
- Inform them of external services specialising in gender violence to which they can turn.
- Provide them with some background reading on the subject that may help them.

What to avoid:

- The family may feel guilty for not having noticed or for not having acted before, so it is important not to blame them.

Interviews with alleged aggressors

If the aggressor is a pupil at the school, it will launch a sanctioning process as part of its coexistence plan. Schools can help pupil aggressors by stressing the educational value of their actions, reviewing and diversifying measures that the school can adopt. In the case of GBV, you must always consider the need for **specialist intervention** and referral to the appropriate authorities, coordinating action with them.

Objectives:

- Find out the pupil's perception and assessment of the situation.
- Prevent him from becoming an abusive partner in adulthood by helping him overcome the violence, building an egalitarian and respecting attitude in his interpersonal relationships.

Recommendations:

- When the pupil does not recognise or identify the situation as gender-based violence, actions should be planned to help him understand inequality in human relationships, its meaning in intimate relationships, and the punitive consequences of violence.
- Give examples of violent situations to aggressors identify them.
- Inform him of what actions the school will take, such as disciplinary measures accompanied by a re-education plan.
- Inform the aggressor of external services to which he can turn for help.

What to avoid:

- Confrontation.
- Making direct or indirect references to the source of information.
- Meetings and encounters with the girl or her family.

Interviews with the aggressor's family

Almost all of the guidelines for interviewing the victim's family also apply to the aggressor's family.

Objectives:

- Create a climate of trust, openness and reassurance and explain how violence works against women on a social level, so that they can understand the origin of their son's actions.

Recommendations:

- When the family shows anguish or guilt, help them face the facts and try to reassure them without downplaying the issue.
- They may become defensive or refuse to recognise the facts. If so, you must warn them about the consequences of GBV not only for the victim but also for the aggressor, and therefore the need to act and seek help for their child.
- It is important to inform them of the measures that the school will take and seek to involve them.
- The school and family should agree on action with the aggressor pupil.
- Inform the family of external services that they can turn to for support.

What to avoid:

- Avoid terms that lay blame and make value judgements, such as "violence", "abuser" and similar.

SUPPORTING THE VICTIM'S FAMILY

When a family discovers that their daughter has suffered gender-based violence, there may be confusion, guilt, shame, rage and anger, which can lead to real crises in family life. On occasions, families deny or want to hide the abuse because of shame, and the girl is also frequently blamed for both the violence and any subsequent issues in the family.

It is important for school staff to be able to help the victim's parents understand what has happened and how to deal with it. Staff should convey the following information in their interview with the family and/or during follow-up.

Helping families understand daughters experiencing GBV:

- Adolescents subject to intimate partner violence often keep it a secret. This is partly a result of the violence and partly due to the feelings she may be having.
- The abusive partner may be isolating her and have convinced her that no one will believe her. She could be confused and disoriented due to the cycle of violence: he may alternately treat her badly and then treat her adoringly; insult her but later tell her he cannot live without her. The cycle of violence may make her repeatedly believe he will change. She could have become used to giving in to avoid conflict, making her think she is in control of the situation and not in need of help. She may also find it very difficult to accept that her partner is hurting her. Teenagers typically feel invincible, so she may think she can solve the situation herself.
- She may not want to believe that what she is experiencing is violence. It is less harmful to see it as a tiff with her partner; to think he has a 'strong character' and that such jealousy

is normal. She may convince herself that the aggression (physical, verbal or psychological) was a one off and will not happen again. In addition, she might think it was her fault, and feel shame, fear and guilt.

Helping families understand how GBV has happened:

The following knowledge about GBV may help families understand why they were not aware of their daughter's situation to cope with possible feelings of guilt.

- Abusive partners often use tactics that are not necessarily overly violent but may be more difficult to detect, such as isolation, imposing ideas, control, coercion, and emotional blackmail.
- Domination can be subtle, indirect and covert, and disguised or mixed with displays of affection and love. Although we broadly think of violence in terms of physical assault, it is essential to understand that unequal, dominant conduct that seeks submission is the gateway to a relationship characterised by gender-based violence and physical violence.
- Abusive conduct is often normalised by society's concept of romantic love. For example, jealousy is seen as normal (and even desirable), but is the perfect alibi for isolation. Possessive behaviour is seen as a sign of love and violence is excused on the premise that he is 'passionate'. Isolation tactics hamper and limit communications between the victim and her family, preventing them from realising anything is wrong.
- Men who perpetrate gender-based violence have very a different public and private image and conduct. In public they are usually 'normal' and do not behave violently in their social relationships, although this depends on the case. In private, however, they may be psychologically and physically violent, as if they become someone else.

Due to the dynamics of violent relationships, women also behave very differently in public than when alone with the aggressor. In public they often hide the abuse, behaving submissively so as not to give any 'cause' for abuse, although this way also isolates them further.

- In young people, many of the warning signs of violence are often confused with typical adolescent attitudes or 'normal' conflicts. (For further information see section "Strategies for adequate intervention" point 3 "Social stereotypes that can hamper detection")

WORKING WITH ABUSIVE PUPILS

In addition to holding an interview with the aggressor, as we have seen in the previous section, early action with teenagers who have behaved violently to an intimate partner is vital to prevent the situation from recurring.

The measures listed below can help to identify and prevent gender-based violence among adolescents:

- Inform the aggressor on the criminal nature of GBV.
- Identify and highlight gender stereotypes and the differentiated gender roles assigned to girls and boys.
- Raise awareness of sexism in society and personal attitudes.
- Break down myths and beliefs about "romantic love".
- Work on identity building or rebuilding: respect for human rights, non-dependent relations, expression of feelings, esteem and self-esteem.
- Provide emotional education, especially related to empathy, identifying and expressing feelings, self-control, and channelling emotions non-violently.
- Set up recognition, responsibility and reparation programmes when violence has been detected, working also on amending behaviour, accepting regulations, and fostering cooperation as an alternative to imposition.
- Programmes to develop personal autonomy, responsibility, respect and training in equal interpersonal relationships.
- Develop communication skills.
- Work on citizen competence by exploring moral dilemmas and civic dilemmas.
- Work on tolerance to frustration and the ability to accept "no" and "yes" from others.
- Active listening, learning to argue and dialogue. Work on peaceful and resilient conflict management.
- Provide new adult role models who have managed to forge equal relationships, regardless of gender stereotypes.

STRATEGIES FOR ADEQUATE INTERVENTION

There are various warning signs that a girl is suffering violence from her partner. This section offers guidelines that can help school staff to detect and react to these situations.

1. How to detect inequality and violence:

- Pay attention to changes in attitude or behaviour
- Look out for and monitor possible signs of violence
- Set up detect or support mechanisms or programmes at the school
- Plan detection strategies in the classroom
- Provide gender-awareness training to the educational community
- Show sensitivity to the topic and willingness to listen and offer support
- Provide pupils and their families with information that help them to detect control or violence in relationships as early as possible

2. Warning signs that an adolescent is suffering GBV⁴:

- Unexplained, vague or suspicious medical complaints
- Visible bruises, scratches or marks
- Unusual psycho-social symptoms such as acting infantile, insecure, scared

⁴ Adapted from <https://guides.womenwin.org/gbv/readiness-and-response/recognising-gbv>

- Inability to concentrate or focus on a specific task
- Depression, withdrawal or suicidal tendencies
- Self-destructive behaviours such as cutting
- Sudden or extreme shifts of moods or emotions; increased irritability, anger or rage
- Exaggerated startled response
- When a child starts misbehaving
- Sudden change in how a girl carries herself or how she walks
- Symptoms associated with a venereal disease, such as sores
- Signs of pregnancy, nausea, lack of energy, increased appetite, protruding stomach
- Fearfulness
- Excessive crying
- Broken bones
- Bed-wetting, nightmares, fear of going to bed or other sleep disturbances
- A sudden acting out of feelings or aggressive or rebellious behaviour
- Social isolation – being withdrawn or introverted, does not appear to have any friends
- Running away from home
- Overly sexualized behaviour
- Multiple bruises that are all in different stages of healing
- Testing as HIV positive
- Infections in the genital areas, especially sexually transmitted infections
- Discomfort / difficulty in walking or sitting
- Fear of medical examinations
- Stained underwear, soiling or wetting
- Psychosomatic factors e.g. recurrent abdominal or headache pain
- Refuse to be comforted by anybody else
- A child who has done well in school starts to get behind in her/his schoolwork
- A child drops out of school
- They may start to use drugs and alcohol

3. Social stereotypes that can hamper detection

Lack of sleep

Stereotype: “they have no self-control”, “they’re up all night playing video games”.

Young women who are controlled and dominated by their partners are likely to be sad or anxious, which can affect their sleep and may result in insomnia. Sometimes the partner will repeatedly contact her via phone or social media during the night to check she is at home, which also significantly affects sleep.

Aesthetic and bodily changes

Stereotype: “they are obsessed with their image”.

Teenagers in a violent relationship suffer permanent anxiety which may lead to eating disorders such as appetite loss or binge eating. People around them may mistakenly think they are obsessed about looking good. Changes in diet may also be because the boyfriend puts pressure on her to conform to the mainstream idea of the ‘perfect body’. Abusive partners also often exert control

through appearance, with demands such as, "don't wear that that skirt, it's provocative", or "you're making yourself up so guys will notice you". To avoid conflict, the young woman may give in and do what he says, changing her image to suit him.

Unusual mood swings and angry reactions.

Stereotype: "they can't stand each other".

Emotional instability is frequent among victims in a violent relationship. There may be sadness, anxiety and fear during violent episodes and elation when the partner is not being violent, although this state becomes less and less frequent, so it is important to monitor young women who are continuously unhappy.

Withdrawn and far less participation in class.

Stereotype: "she has no interest in studying".

One of the characteristic signs of a controlling relationship is the attempt to isolate the woman by separating her from her friends and family. It is therefore important to find out if she is still seeing her friends as usual or spending time only with her boyfriend.

Loss of interest in life.

Stereotype: "she never wants to do anything".

Permanent anxiety, stress and sadness due to an abusive relationship often result in loss of interest in things that were previously enjoyed. In addition, the abuser will often discourage or pressures their girlfriend to drop out of activities (hobbies, studies, sports, etc.) to isolate her.

Apparent infatuation.

Stereotype: "They are obsessed with their boyfriend".

As mentioned above, isolation is a control technique. The girl may seem obsessed about pleasing him, but in fact she is trying to avoid him getting angry, which means being continually on the lookout for his demands.

Other warning signs:

- She rarely talks about her emotional problems.
- She doubts her own feelings and judgment.
- She believes she is worth little or nothing.
- She feels bad about herself or underestimates herself.
- Even if she disagrees, she accepts her partner's decisions.
- She puts her partner's needs over her own.
- She sacrifices her independence for the desire to be loved.
- She does not know if she wants to end the relationship or continue.
- She has health problems.
- Her appetite changes.
- She is afraid of her partner.

- She is suddenly unable to focus on what she does.
- She is very distracted.
- She refuses to hear comments or opinions about her partner or her 'new lifestyle'.
- She does not want to go on holiday or go away for weekends unless he goes with her.

4. Reasons why young people may not talk to anyone about a violent relationship:

- Believing they can handle and change it.
- Fear that adults will underestimate or not care about what is happening.
- Fear of pressure from friends and family to leave him when they still think they love him. Possible conflicting feelings or not wanting to end the relationship.
- Fear of losing their freedom in that once their family finds out about the problem, they will be monitored at all times.
- Fear of 'everyone' finding out what has happened.
- Shame to admit that friends and family who warned her were right.

5. Psychological "first aid":

- Create an atmosphere of calm, trust and safety.
- Do not punish her for what is happening to her. Even if she justifies it or refuses to leave the harmful relationship, she is the victim of violence (and her behaviour is a consequence of this).
- Convey the conviction that leaving a harmful relationship is possible, even if it seems very difficult or impossible (he has convinced her otherwise).
- Encourage her emotionally and motivate her to recover.
- Seek solutions to immediate problems that arise (support, communication with him, safety, etc.).
- Try to combat the isolation, which is one of the most common abuse strategies. It is essential to be there for her as much as possible, show her how important she is to you, and encourage her friends to call or spend time with her (not to talk about her partner but to do normal activities for their age).
- If she has decided to end the relationship but is afraid, help her make a plan to overcome it.
- Do not force her to end the relationship when she is not ready.
- Discourage her from seeing or talking to him after splitting up, even if she wants to ask him to explain why he did it, reproach him (very common temptations), or resolve practical issues (recovering or returning belongings, for example). If she has to do this, make sure someone goes with her.
- Do not pass on news or comments about her boyfriend, neither positive nor negative.
- Find out if she gave him (or suspects he might have obtained) her social media passwords to consider mitigating risks and damage.
- Although it might seem necessary, it is not recommended that she cut off access to social networks or mobile phones. Not allowing her to use these will significantly isolate her and even damage her personality (albeit online, but this is very important). This would result in much more punishment than protection. It is important to explain this to families.
- Explain the **cycle of violence** so that she learns to see it in her relationship and can resist structural strategies.
- Convince her that her wellbeing and physical and mental safety are your only interest and that they must also be her priority.

- Even if she tells you not to tell anyone, you must seek help to find out what can be done for her. Tell her what services can help her.
- Encourage her to go to specialists.
- Support her decisions if they seem positive and advise against those that do not, but do not make decisions for her (except if she is at risk). Trying to 'rescue' her against her will is a very common temptation, but experience has proven this to be futile. Accept the time she needs and her resistance to initiatives.
- Do not discourage or reject the relationship, even if this is a recurring situation. This is part of the process and she needs your full support every time (even if you find it difficult).

6. Warning signs that a young man may be abusive to his partner:

- He talks about girls and women disparagingly using stereotypes, prejudices and/or violent language.
- His behaviour is challenging and/or violent. He regularly fights with peers.
- He despises the feminine, overvalues the masculine and mocks peers who he considers to be beneath him.
- He resorts to violence to resolve conflicts or problems and gets angry easily if things do not go his way.
- He is intolerant of frustration and blames other people.
- He mocks and lacks empathy.
- He sees jealousy and control as a form of love.
- He seeks to humiliate women, especially his partner.
- He is protectionist and paternalistic towards his partner.
- He may justify men using violence against women in debates.

ANNEX 1. Conclusions of the technical meetings

Below are the conclusions reached during the three technical meetings held in Spain, Romania, and Denmark, at which health, education and social work professionals shared knowledge and experiences on violence among adolescents.

a. Conclusions on preventing gender-based violence:

- I. Teach health and sexuality as a subject. An example of good practice is Denmark, where this subject is taught to all ages from 5 to 16.
- II. Work on skills comprehensively so that pupils can:
 - Discuss how abuse of children and adolescents can be prevented.
 - Identify physical, mental and sexual violence.
 - Evaluate emotional dilemmas in relationships.
 - Be aware of the importance of emotions and relationships in connection with health, wellbeing, and sexuality.

b. Conclusions on interviews with the victim:

- I. The style of the interview must be close and empathetic, in all cases.
- II. True active listening is key.
- III. In the initial interviews, do not make judgements or speak of the punitive thing, but aim to build a bond.
- IV. With the aggressor's family, assessing the possibility of violence against the mother is key.
- V. With the victim's family, handling the parents' anguish, guilt and uncertainty is important and difficult.
- VI. Do not promise what you cannot deliver.
- VII. Information must be kept confidential.
- VIII. Never make the victim and aggressor confront each other.

c. General conclusions on creating a protocol:

- I. Carry out awareness-raising and violence prevention with families so that this type of situation is not their first contact with violence.
- II. Set a protocol for preventive activities with families.
- III. The protocol must include referring aggressors and families to specialist services as one of the steps and describe what the available services are in each country.
- IV. Protocols should include specific guidelines for violence against the LGBTBI community.

ANNEX 2. School identification form

This form template allows schools to record gender-based violence prevention activities. It provides an inventory of activities carried out with pupils, families and other relevant institutions.

SCHOOL IDENTIFICATION FORM	
Name of the school	
Contact person	
Phone	
Email	
Address	
PROGRAMMES / ACTIONS	
PROGRAMMES	ACTIONS
FOR TEACHERS	Training
FOR PUPILS	Specific workshops offered by other entities.
- Prevention	
- Awareness	
- Training	
FOR FAMILIES	
- Advice	
- Training	
COORDINATION WITH OTHER ENTITIES	
ENTITY/ INSTITUTION	PURPOSE OF COORDINATION
Social services	Case referral
Equality service	Case referral
Family planning	Case referral
Police	Case referral
Health service	Case referral
OTHER INFORMATION OF INTEREST	

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON GBV

General

- European Union's actions to end GBV
https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-based-violence/ending-gender-based-violence_en
- Council of Europe Convention to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women And Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)
<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168008482e>
- Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32012L0029>
- Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. Main results report
<http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/violence-against-women-eu-wide-survey-main-results-report>
- Special Eurobarometer 449: Gender-based violence
https://data.europa.eu/euodp/data/dataset/S2115_85_3_449_ENG
- UN Women global database on Violence Against Women
<http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en>
- European Institute for gender equality – Gender Based Violence
<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence>
- Youth Power
<https://www.youthpower.org/youthpower-issues/topics/gender-based-violence>

Country specific:

SPAIN

- Website of the Ministerio de la Presidencia, Relaciones con las Cortes e Igualdad, delegación del gobierno para la violencia de género (Spanish government)
<http://www.violenciagenero.igualdad.mpr.gob.es/>
- Instituto de la mujer – Ministerio de la Presidencia, Relaciones con las Cortes e Igualdad
<http://www.inmujer.gob.es/elInstituto/conocenos/home.htm>
- National Strategy for the Eradication of Violence Against Women (2013-2016)
http://www.violenciagenero.igualdad.mpr.gob.es/planActuacion/estrategiaNacional/docs/Estrategia_Nacional_Ingles.pdf
- Plan Nacional de Sensibilización y Prevención de la Violencia de Género
http://www.violenciagenero.igualdad.mpr.gob.es/planActuacion/otrasMedidas/pdf/Plan_nacional_sensibilizacion_prevencion_violencia_genero.pdf
- Asociación Stop! Violencia de género
<https://stopviolenciadegenerodigital.com/>
- Asociación Adolescentes Sin Violencia De Genero
<http://adolescentessinviolenciadegenero.com/>
- Fundación Anar – Ayuda a Niños y Adolescentes en Riesgo
<https://www.anar.org/>

- Institut Català de les Dones
<http://dones.gencat.cat/ca/inici>
- Plantar cara a la Violència, Violència Contra les Dones, Departament de Joventut de la Generalitat de Catalunya
[http://jovecat.gencat.cat/ca/temes/conviure-inclusio-social/plantar cara a la violencia/violencia contra les dones/](http://jovecat.gencat.cat/ca/temes/conviure-inclusio-social/plantar-cara-a-la-violencia/violencia-contra-les-dones/)
- Protocol de Joventut per a l'abordatge de la violència masclista
[http://jovecat.gencat.cat/web/.content/ documents/arxiu/conviure/gener/recursos per a professionals/protocol joventut abordatge violencia masclista jovecat.pdf](http://jovecat.gencat.cat/web/.content/documents/arxiu/conviure/gener/recursos-per-a-professionals/protocol-joventut-abordatge-violencia-masclista-jovecat.pdf)
- Guía de actuación contra la violencia de género en el ámbito educativo
- <https://igualdadyviolenciadegenero.carm.es/documentos/202699/4328688/Gu%C3%ADa+de+actuaci%C3%B3n+contra+la+violencia+de+g%C3%A9nero+en+el+%C3%A1mbito+educativo/2df854b8-2979-4f9a-9bf5-fbeab3a71020>

DENMARK

- Danner
<https://danner.dk/>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Equality
<http://um.dk/da/ligestilling/vold-i-familien/>
- Tør Du Tale Om Det?
<http://toerdutaleomdet.dk/>
- Danish National Action Plan to Prevent Violence in Intimate Relationships (2014)
<https://www.ft.dk/samling/20181/almdel/sou/spm/321/svar/1563180/2026354.pdf>

ROMANIA

- National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men
<http://anes.gov.ro/>
- Asociația pentru Libertate și Egalitate de Gen
<http://aleg-romania.eu/>
- PROIECT “Corpul meu îmi aparține – violența sexuală în rândul tinerilor: conștientizare și centru de consiliere”
<http://aleg-romania.eu/corpul/>
- SiEuReusesc
<https://sieureusesc.ro/>
- International Conference «A Shared Voice to a Gender Based Violence-Free World – Intervention Mechanisms and Good Practice Models on Gender-Based Violence»
<http://anes.gov.ro/?s=violen%C8%9B%C4%83+bazat%C4%83+pe+gen>
- Cercetare: Alice în Țara Manualelor O explorare a personajelor care îi inspiră pe copii în școală
http://media.hotnews.ro/media_server1/document-2015-07-3-20275024-0-raportul-integral-alice-tara-manualelor.pdf
- Exploratory Study on the Implementation of the Protection Order and the Domestic Violence Provisions of the Criminal Code of Romania in 2012 – 2016
<http://transcena.ro/wp-content/uploads/Study-Network-VAW-RO-2017.pdf>

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