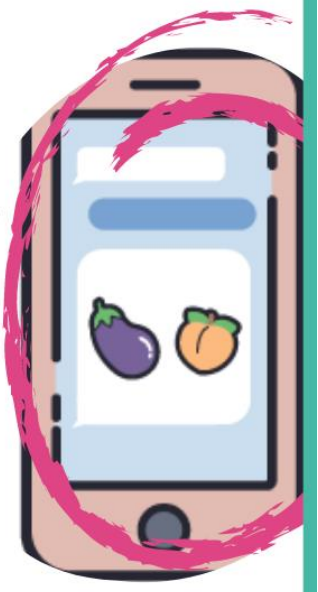
CYBERSAFE MOOC

CURRICULUM

CYBERSAFE MOOC

Building teachers' competence about cyber violence against girls



International Child Development Initiatives

May 2022

CYBERSAFEMOOC
BUILDING TEACHERS COMPETENCE ABOUT CYBER VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS

CYBERSAFE MOOC
Intellectual Output 2 – Curriculum
Published in May 2022

Author: Sarah de Vos, International Child Development Initiatives

International Child Development Initiatives

In cooperation with:

Women's Support and Information Center
There is a way out of violence!

SERIOUS GAMES INTERACTIVE

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

Nexus
Changing lives affected by sexual trauma

University of Ljubljana
Faculty of Social Sciences

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This document was funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. The content of this document represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

Content

1. Introduction 5

2. Understanding and recognizing online violence against girls 9

2.1 Online violence against girls 9

2.2 The main types of online violence against girls 12

2.3 Causes of online violence against girls 18

2.4 Recognizing signs 19

2.5 Legislation 23

2.6 Exercises *25*

A. Exercises for teachers *25*

B. Exercises for young people *30*

3. Preventing online violence against girls 33

3.1 Understanding the consequences of online violence against girls 34

3.2 What young people can do to prevent online violence 36

3.3 Understanding young people's online behaviour 40

3.3 How teachers can create a safe setting for a workshop 44

3.5 Exercises *47*

A. Exercises for teachers *47*

B. Exercises for young people *52*

4. Responding to online violence against girls 56

Learning objectives of this chapter 56

4.1 How can young people respond to online violence? 57

4.2 How can teachers respond to online violence? 63

4.3 Exercises *69*

A. Exercises for teachers *69*

B. Exercises for young people *73*

1. Introduction

This curriculum was designed as part of the CYBERSAFE MOOC project, a two-year Erasmus+ project launched in September 2020. The project intends to build teachers competence about online violence against woman and girls in the following countries: Slovenia, Greece, Estonia and United Kingdom.

The problem

In an increasingly digital world, young people across Europe are socially interacting online more and more. The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed children's daily lives even further online. Children around the world have shown an increased use of technology in both leisure and educational activities and the amount of time spent online has increased substantially due to lockdowns worldwide. While access to the digital world is increasingly important to participate in society and online spaces provide many positive opportunities, they also increase risks of online violence.

In this project we address gender-based online violence, as girls are disproportionately affected by online violence, especially by those forms that have a sexual element (online sexual violence). While the exact incidence of gender-based online violence is unknown, statistics suggest that the problem is significant and growing.

Online sexual violence often takes place within the school setting. Technology and mobile phones are very present in schools nowadays. A survey among headmasters that was carried out during this project showed that headmasters regularly notice signs of problematic and potentially harmful online behaviour, such as: online exclusion, spreading rumours, creating fake profiles or websites to impersonate someone, humiliating or exposing someone online, online threats of violence, online hate groups, sharing sexual images/videos without the consent of the person in it, blackmailing with sexually explicit material and online stalking. Headmasters are alarmed by these observations and express the need for increased skills and knowledge among school staff to recognize, prevent and respond to online violence. School professionals are often not well-equipped to address the problem or to react in a safe, sensitive, and adequate way when their students become involved as a victim, perpetrator or bystander.

Our solution

This project is a continuation and builds upon the results of a previous project conducted in the same countries, namely the EU-funded project CYBERSAFE that ran between 2019-2021. In the CYBERSAFE project, a practical, innovative, game-based and evidence-based educational programme was developed: the **CYBERSAFE Toolkit**, which aims to increase awareness on how to recognize, prevent and respond to online gender-based violence among young people (13-16 years old) and promotes safe, responsible online behaviour. The Toolkit consists of an Online Tool and a Guide for Facilitators, which provide teachers (or other professionals working with young people) with all necessary materials to deliver 4 different workshops about online violence.

In order to contribute to the prevention of online violence against girls, teachers need to have a profound understanding of the phenomenon, its causes, consequences and different manifestations. They need to know what can be done to recognize, prevent and respond to online violence by young people themselves (to be able to transfer this knowledge and skills to them), as well as what role teachers can play in this. This is where the **CYBERSAFE MOOC** will come in, which aims to deepen teachers' understanding of the possible impact of online gender-based violence on anyone involved and enhance their

ability to address the issue and respond to cases in an adequate, non-judgemental way, free of victim blaming patterns and stereotypical assumptions of gender roles. Through a MOOC (massive online open course) based on this curriculum teachers will acquire the knowledge and the skills needed to have a more sensitive and open attitude towards young people when it comes to online violence, and to create an atmosphere in class in which open dialogue about the topic can take place. So that young people can freely discuss the issue, voice their opinions, and disclose or report incidents when they experience or witness online violence.

By addressing the issue of online violence against girls in the classroom teachers raise awareness among young people on how to behave online in a **safe and responsible way**; how to form and sustain **healthy online relationships**; and how to ensure **online gender equality**. Increased awareness can lead to changes in behaviour. Once young people understand what online violence against girls is, the harm it may cause to the victim, and the legal consequences the perpetrator may face, they are less likely to share their own or someone else's images without thinking. And when they learn how to protect themselves and what to do when online violence happens, they will feel more empowered to take positive action, such as reporting, speaking up, or asking for support.

For whom is the curriculum designed for

This curriculum is designed for **the CYBERSAFE MOOC targeted at teachers** who want to address online violence, including online sexual harassment and online safety, in the classroom, to educate them and build their competence on the topic and how to address it during workshops with young people (13-16 years old).

The curriculum could also be used by **trainers** to deliver training **to teachers** on how to recognize, prevent and respond to online violence against girls and how to raise awareness about the issue.

The curriculum could also be useful for **other professionals working with young people**, for example by youth (social) workers, police officers, professionals from hotlines, helplines, (victim) support organisations or sport teachers. Whenever the terms 'teacher' and 'classroom' are applied, keep in mind that we also refer to other professionals working with children and/or other settings where young people can be informed about online violence.

The curriculum is available in the following languages: English, Estonian, Greek, and Slovenian.

About the project

This document is written by International Child Development Initiatives (the Netherlands). The other project partners, the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia – lead partner), NEXUS (UK), the University of Tartu (Estonia), the Women's Support and Information Centre (Estonia) and the Union of Women Associations of Heraklion Prefecture (Greece) all contributed to the content of this document.

Other activities that take place within the CYBERSAFE MOOC project include: conducting a representative school survey in four EU countries among headmasters about online violence; the development of an e-learning course (The CYBERSAFE MOOC) based on this curriculum; as well as activities to promote cross-border and cross-institutional cooperation and exchange of knowledge.

How to use this curriculum?

The curriculum is divided in three main chapters.

Chapter 2: Understanding and recognizing online violence against girls
This chapter explains what online violence is, what the four main types are, what the main causes are and how signs of online violence can be recognized by teachers and young people themselves.

Chapter 3: Preventing online violence against girls
In this chapter it is explained what young people can do to protect themselves and others from online sexual violence and how to teach about this. Further, possible preventative measures that teachers and schools can take are addressed, as well as advice on how to create a safe setting to deliver awareness raising workshops about online violence.

Chapter 4: Responding to online violence against girls
The third chapter explains what young people can do in response to online violence, when they experience it themselves or when they witness it, in order to end the situation. Furthermore, it addresses the role of teachers in responding to incidents, disclosures, and reports.

Every chapter follows a similar structure, starting with an overview of the specific learning outcomes and objectives of the chapter, followed by theory. Important cross-cutting themes and key messages are highlighted in textboxes. Each chapter ends with a section with exercises.

The exercises are divided in:

a) exercises for teachers: to be used during a training of trainers/teachers
b) exercises for students: to be used by teachers in an awareness raising workshop with young people

The exercises for students complement the educational material of the CYBERSAFE Toolkit, which contains the Online Tool. The exercises in this Curriculum however can be done offline, while for the Online Tool access to Internet is a requirement.

Learning goals and objectives

Main objectives:

- To increase awareness of online violence against girls amongst teachers
- To increase teachers' capacity to recognize, prevent and respond to online violence against girls
- To increase teachers' capacity to promote safe and responsible online behaviour, as well as healthy online relationships and online gender equality amongst young people (13-16 years old).

After using this curriculum, teachers:

- understand the phenomenon of online violence against girls, including main types, emotional impact and other possible consequences for all actors involved.
- can recognise (signs of) online violence against girls amongst their students
- know how to prevent online violence against girls through raising awareness and teaching safe, responsible online behaviour in a sensitive manner.
- know how to respond in an adequate, supportive and positive way if their students experience or witness online violence.
- know how to create a safe setting to deliver an awareness raising workshop to address the issue of online violence against girls other practical exercises, which teaches young people what they can do to prevent and respond to online violence if they experience or witness it.

2. Understanding and recognizing online violence against girls

This chapter explains what online violence is and why we focus on online violence *against girls* in this project. This information is intended to help teachers understand the phenomenon of online violence, in what forms it manifests, why it happens and what the most important signs are. Recent developments, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and newly emerging trends in online violence, will briefly be addressed.

Increased knowledge and understanding about the different types of online violence against girls will make teachers more aware and will enable them to **recognize (early) signs** in their school. Understanding of the main actors, causes and consequences will lead to an adequate and sensitive response to disclosures and reports of online violence against girls. Moreover, the information in this chapter provides teachers with the knowledge about the issue of online violence that is needed to provide a CYBERSAFE workshop about online violence against girls to young people (13-16 years old). This information is useful when teaching young people about the topic and when facilitating discussions.

Learning objectives of this chapter

Main objectives:

- To increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of online violence against girls amongst teachers
- To increase teachers' capacity to recognize (early) signs of online violence against girls
- To increase teachers' capacity to transfer this knowledge to young people

After using this curriculum, teachers:

- ➢ understand the phenomenon of online violence against girls, including main types, main actors, causes, and recent developments.
- ➢ can better recognise signs of online violence against girls amongst their students
- ➢ have obtained the knowledge needed to teach young people about the phenomenon of online violence and how to recognize the signs.

2.1 Online violence against girls

The digital age

Over the last decades, the increasing reach of the internet, the rapid spread of mobile technology, and the widespread use of social media have led to the emergence of online violence against women and girls as a growing global problem. Access to the internet has become a necessity for economic well-being and is increasingly viewed as a fundamental human right. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that the digital public space is a safe, accessible and empowering place for everyone.[1]

[1] EIGE 2017, Cyber violence against Women and Girls: https://eige.europa.eu/publications/cyber-violence-against-women-and-girls?lang=lt

Across Europe, digital technology plays a central role in the social lives of young people. It enables them to connect to their peers, to learn, to explore and to express themselves. A big part of their social life takes place online. This provides many positive opportunities but can also cause harm. 'Missteps' can be recorded instantly, spread rapidly and viewed by a wide audience. Content can circulate online indefinitely.

Defining 'online violence'

Although there is still a lack of a consistent, common definition when it comes to (online) violence and it is not always clear which type of offences are considered to be online violence, we will use the following definition in this curriculum:

Online violence, or 'cyber violence'**,** is a new and emerging form of violence. It is an umbrella term for all forms of violence or harassment that happen with the use of digital devices. Online violence exists in many different forms, ranging from online sexual harassment, stalking and bullying, to hate speech, online trolling, identity theft and hacking. In this curriculum we will focus on four main types of online (sexual) violence. They will be described in paragraph 2.2.

The role of gender

In this project we put the spotlight on **online violence against girls**. We address those forms of online violence that are gender-based, which means that the act of violence happens because of the gender of the victim. Gender-based violence is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality.[2]

Both boys (and men) and girls (and women)[3] may be victims of gender-based violence, but the vast majority of these forms of violence are committed to girls. Girls are more likely than boys to be victims of severe forms of online violence, in particular forms that have a sexual element, and the impact on their lives can be very traumatic. Online violence may limit girls' participation in online spaces and their freedom of expression.

Although girls are disproportionately affected by these forms of online violence with a sexual element, boys can also be victimized. Moreover, both girls and boys can play a role in online violence against girls, as a (potential) victim, perpetrator or bystander.

Victim, perpetrator, bystander

Whilst adults may use the terms victim, perpetrator and bystander, it is important to realize that young people **may not relate to these terms**. Therefore, we try to avoid these terms as much as possible in this curriculum. As a teacher or workshop facilitator, consider the language you use whilst discussing these ideas during your workshop.

---

[2] *Click-off! Let's stop online violence against women and girls. Manual for professionals working with young people*. Ljubljana: Faculty of Social Sciences.(2019), pp. 10. Available at: http://odklikni.enakostspolov.si/o-projektu/

[3] Often, the term 'online violence against women and girls (VAWG)' is used to describe gender-based online violence that targets females. In this project we have chosen to focus only on girls/young people, since the aim of the project is to teach this particular target group about online violence. Therefore we do not use the term 'women', although all information about online violence against girls also applies to adult women.

The main focus in this project is on forms of **online sexual violence** that can involve both **girls and boys, 13 to 16 years** of age, the age group that heavily communicates and builds relationships.

The scope of the problem

Since there is no common definition of online violence against girls and incidents are often not reported, the actual rate of incidence is unknown. However, the following estimates give an idea about the scope of the problem:

- Research by the World Health Organization shows that **1 in 3 women** have experienced a form of violence in her lifetime.[4]
- The EU estimates that **1 in 10 women** (11%) have experienced a form of online violence from the age of 15 onwards. For young women, the prevalence is even higher, with **20%** of the 18-29 year old women. [5]
- In a UNICEF Poll, conducted in 30 countries, **1 in 3 young people** indicated they have been a victim of online bullying.[6]
- A study in the UK found that **51% of UK young people aged 13-17 years** have seen people sharing nude or nearly nude images of someone they know in the last year.[7]
- A survey from Plan International among 14.000 girls (15-25) across 22 countries revealed that **58% of the girls** had experienced online sexual harassment, mostly on Facebook and Instagram. For 19% of them, this led to stopping or significantly reducing their use of the platform.[8]
- Young people belonging to the LGBTI community are at particular risk of online violence, with **15% of LGTBI young people aged 15–17** having experienced some form of online harassment in the previous 12 months.[9]

It is important to realize that online violence against girls is a significant as well as a growing concern. More and more young people worldwide are getting access to the Internet and social media, through smartphones and other digital devices, which also leads to more young people being confronted with online violence.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns imposed in many European countries have pushed children's lives further online and increased their exposure to risks of online (sexual) violence. Children all around the world have shown an increased use of technology in both leisure and educational activities. Additionally, the amount of time spent online has increased due to COVID.[10] A European study in 11 countries showed that 44% of children reported much more cyberbullying during the spring 2020 lockdown than before[11].

---

[4] WHO 2017, "Factsheet: Violence against women", available at: https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women

[5] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 2014, "Violence against women: an EU-wide survey", available at: http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/violence-against-women-eu-wide-survey-main-results-report

[6] UNICEF 2019, press release 3 September 2019: https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-poll-more-third-young-people-30-countries-report-being-victim-online-bullying

[7] Project deSHAME 2017, "Young people's experiences of online sexual harassment", available at: https://www.childnet.com/ufiles/Project_deSHAME_Dec_2017_Report.pdf

[8] Plan International 2020, "Free to be online?": https://plan-international.org/publications/freetobeonline

[9] FRA 2019, "A long way to go for LGTBI equality", available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-lgbti-equality_en.pdf

[10] Council of Europe, online statement 25 November 2020: https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/stop-cyberviolence-against-women-and-girls

[11] https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/science-update/kidicoti-kids-digital-lives-covid-19-times

According to a recent survey conducted in the UK, almost 1 in 2 (46%) women and non-binary people reported experiencing online abuse since the beginning of the pandemic, while 1 in 3 (29%) of those who had experienced online abuse prior to the pandemic reported it being worse during the pandemic.[12] Similarly, Europol recently reported an increase in offenders attempting to contact young people via social media since the start of the pandemic[13].

Furthermore, during the pandemic being online has become increasingly important: a lifeline for those isolated at home and an important tool as young people struggle to keep up with their education and stay connected to the wider world.[14] Research suggests that women and girls tend to restrict their online access and participation after experiencing online violence[15.] This has become even more damaging for this group during the pandemic. By restricting their access to online services to protect themselves from online violence women and girls also compromised their access to work, education, social connections, health services, shopping, culture, entertainment and many more areas that are essential to participate in society.

2.2 The main types of online violence against girls

Girls are at risk, more than boys, to become a victim of online violence with a sexual element, which can also be referred to as 'online sexual violence'. This encompasses **all unwanted sexual conduct on any digital platform.**

In this project, we will focus on four main types of online sexual violence.[16] These types can be considered as broader categories under which many specific types of offences can be grouped. In the textbox, a short overview of the four main types of online sexual violence is provided. Below the box, each type is explained in more detail.

It is important for both teachers and young people to know and understand these four main types, as this will lead to better prevention, early detection of signs and a more adequate response to disclosures, reports or cases in school. Having a profound understanding of the four main types is also vital for teachers in order to facilitate a CYBERSAFE workshop about online violence, as each of the four CYBERSAFE workshop plans address and explain one of these main types of online sexual violence in more detail.

[12] https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/online-abuse-during-covid-almost-half-of-women-have-experienced-online-abuse-during-pandemic/
[13] https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/covid-19-sparks-upward-trend-in-cybercrime
[14] https://plan-international.org/publications/freetobeonline
[15] Plan international 2020 research.
[16] Project DeShame clearly defines (main types of) online sexual violence (or 'online sexual harassment'): https://www.childnet.com/our-projects/project-deshame/defining-online-sexual-harassment
In the CYBERSAFE Toolkit we follow these definitions.

The four main types of online sexual violence

1. **Non-consensual sharing of sexual images (and videos)**
   A person's sexual images or videos being taken or shared without their consent.
   Example: '**revenge porn'**, where sexual images/videos initially being taken consensually are shared on without consent[17].

2. **Exploitation, coercion and threats**
   A person receiving sexual threats, being coerced to participate in sexual behaviour (online), or blackmailed with sexual content.
   Example: '**sextortion**', where the threat of publishing sexual content is used to blackmail or coerce someone.

3. **Sexualised bullying**
   A person being targeted by and systematically excluded from a group with the use of sexual content that humiliates, upsets or discriminates against them.
   Example: '**doxing**', where personal information, such as contact details, is posted online accompanied with something of a sexual nature, for example 'she is easy'.

4. **Unwanted sexualisation**
   A person receiving unwelcome sexual request, comments and content.
   Example: when a girl receives unsolicited '**dickpics'** (images of a penis).

TYPE 1: Non-consensual sharing of sexual images

This means that someone's sexual images (or videos) are taken or being shared without their consent. This includes a range of behaviours, such as:

- Sexual images taken consensually, but shared without consent (for example in order to take 'revenge')
- Sexual images taken without consent ('creep shots' or 'up-skirting')
- Non-consensual sexual acts (e.g. rape) recorded digitally and shared online

A typical situation is: *a girl or boy shares an intimate image or video with someone consensually, as part of sexual exploration in a relationship ('sexting'). Then this person consequently shares it non-consensually with others, either via messaging apps or social media.*

Images can also be obtained by hacking into someone's computer, social media accounts or phone. Young people can also be victimised by someone sharing a nude image that is attributed to them, but in fact is not their own image.

Both girls and boys can be a victim (or perpetrator) of this type of online violence. However, it seems to happen more often to girls and when it happens, girls seem to be judged more harshly than boys.

[17] It should be noted that the term '**revenge porn'**, although widely used, is in fact a flawed term, as it wrongly implies that the victim is to blame in some way. Moreover, the term 'porn' implies consent and does not denote that this type of behaviour is in fact sexual abuse.

TYPE 2: Exploitation, coercion and threats[18]

We speak of online **exploitation, coercion and threats** when someone receives sexual threats online, is being coerced to participate in sexual (online) behaviour or is blackmailed with sexual content online.

Someone can be tricked, manipulated or forced into doing sexual things that they do not want to do, in exchange for money, presents, status, affection or other things, or by making them feel guilty, ashamed or unsafe.

This type of online violence can include a range of behaviours, such as:

- Harassing or pressuring someone online to share sexual images or to engage in sexual behaviour (online or offline)
- Using the threat of publishing sexual content to coerce or blackmail someone (‘**sextortion**’)
- Online threats of a sexual nature (e.g.rape threats)
- Inciting others online to commit sexual violence
- Inciting someone to participate in sexual behaviour and then sharing the evidence of it

Online exploitation, coercion and threats are often part of a process of (sexual) violence in the real world and can lead to severe physical, emotional and social harm.

A typical situation is: *a girl gets to know a boy through an online chat programme. It starts off fun, he gives her compliments, and she starts to trust him (this is the ‘grooming’ process). Later, she shares sexual images of herself. Then he starts demanding her to perform sexual acts in front of the webcam. He threatens to publish her nude images online if she does not cooperate.*

Both girls and boys can be a victim (or perpetrator) of this type of online violence, but girls are at higher risk. They are usually blackmailed for sexually explicit content or sexual favours. However, boys are at higher risk to be seduced online to perform sexual acts on webcam and to be subsequently blackmailed with the recorded evidence for money. In both cases, the perpetrator can also be an adult.

Grooming

Grooming is when someone builds a relationship with a young person (online or offline) and tricks or pressures them into doing something sexual. The grooming process can take a long or a short time. When sexual images are shared, they may be used by the groomer to extort and exploit the young person. The perpetrator, who can be a peer or an adult, will make the victim feel like it is their fault, that it is normal, or that they deserve this. Grooming is a form of exploitation and is illegal.

[18] This paragraph is based on:
Project deSHAME (2017); NSPCC Website, “Child sexual exploitation”, available at: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/child-sexual-exploitation/ ; Europol (2017) “*Online sexual coercion and extortion as a form of crime affecting children”*, available at: file:///C:/Users/sarah/Downloads/online_sexual_coercion_and_extortion_as_a_form_of_crime_affecting_children.pdf

TYPE 3: Sexualised bullying

We speak of online **sexualised bullying** when someone is being targeted, and systematically excluded, from a group through the use of sexual content that humiliates, upsets or discriminates against them.

This type of online violence can include a range of behaviours, such as:

- Gossip, rumours or lies about sexual behaviour of a person posted online
- Offensive or discriminatory sexual language and name calling online
- Impersonating someone and damaging their reputation by sharing sexual content or sexually harassing others (e.g. through fake profiles)
- Personal information, such as contact details, shared non-consensually online to encourage sexual harassment ('doxing')
- Being bullied because of actual or perceived gender and/or sexual orientation
- Body shaming
- 'Outing' someone where the individual's sexuality or gender identity is publicly announced online without their consent

Online sexualised bullying often overlaps with bullying in the offline world. Perceived anonymity on the Internet may lower inhibitions and subsequently lead to meaner comments and harsher bullying techniques.

A typical situation is: *a boy posts an altered image of a girl on social media, adding the comment 'if you want sex, call me' and her telephone number. The girl receives several phone calls from strangers. Many classmates like and share the image, and some make degrading comments, calling her a 'slut' or a 'whore'. At school they start to bully the girl as well.*

Both girls and boys can be a victim (or perpetrator) of this type of online violence. However, it seems to happen more often to girls and when it happens, girls seem to be judged more harshly than boys

TYPE 4: Unwanted sexualisation

Unwanted sexualisation online means that a person receives unwelcome sexual requests, comments and content on the Internet. This type of online violence can include a range of behaviours, such as:

- Sexualised online comments (e.g. on photos)
- Sexualised viral campaigns that pressurise people to participate
- Sending someone sexual content (images, emoji's, messages) without them consenting
- Unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favours
- 'Jokes' of a sexual nature
- Rating peers on attractiveness or (alleged) sexual activity
- Altering images of a person to make them sexual

A typical situation is: *a girl posts a (normal) image of herself on social media. Other people anonymously post sexual and offensive comments on the image. It also happens that images are 'doctored' to make them more sexual and shared online.*

Social media accounts of young people are often accessible to everyone, making it very easy for others to view, comment on and share the images they posted. This can easily be

done in an anonymous way, which may lower inhibitions and subsequently lead to meaner and more degrading comments.

Both girls and boys can be a victim (or perpetrator) of this type of online violence. However, it seems to happen more often to girls and when it happens, girls seem to be judged more harshly than boys. It also has a more lasting effect on the reputation of girls than boys.

General facts about the four main types

Both girls and boys can be a victim of all four types of online violence, but girls are more likely to be targeted and incidents often result in more negative consequences for girls (e.g. girls are often judged and blamed more harshly than boys for becoming a victim).

Victims usually know the person who commits the online violence, although it is also possible that they are targeted by an unknown, anonymous perpetrator. This can be a peer, but also an adult.

It is important to acknowledge these four main types of online sexual violence, are often overlapping or experienced simultaneously. Experiences online can also **overlap with offline experiences** of sexual harassment, sexual abuse, bullying, relationship abuse and stalking and should be viewed as **a** continuum, and as an expression of the same phenomenon. For example, online sexual harassment or stalking, can be part of a process of (sexual) violence in real-life. And online bullying is usually related to incidents that originate in the school setting. The online aspect can reflect offline victimisation, amplified through digital means, or it may be a precursor for abuse that will be pursued in real-life.

Newly emerging trends

While the four main types of online violence that are described above cover most of the different manifestations of online sexual violence, the digital world and online possibilities are continuously evolving. Recently, newly emerging trends of online violence with a sexual element can be observed, including:

Cyber-dating abuse (CDA): a particular form of harassment in romantic online relationships. CDA includes: a) direct aggression, such as threats, insults and sharing negative information or spreading rumours about the (ex-)partner with the aim to harm them; and b) controlling behaviour, such as interfering in someone's personal digital life, monitoring their interpersonal relationships and everyday activities. CDA may also manifest in the form of harassment, stalking, control or abuse by a partner to another through digital means[19].

Online dating app violence: a form of online abuse that appears in interactions through dating applications. Dating apps can be used as a mean to abuse someone, pressure them for communication or sex, sending unwanted messages with obvious sexual content or sharing partner's sexually explicit pictures or videos. Online dating app violence can also lead to offline sexual harassment or abuse, when the perpetrator threats

[19] https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0253180

or forces the victim for face-to-face contact and offline sex. The risk of receiving sexual violence via online dating apps is higher for women and minorities[20, 21, 22.]

Zoombombing is a new kind of online offensive behaviour, which has started to grow since the extended use of online meeting platforms, such us Zoom, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It refers to the sharing of disturbing content, like violent, graphic, racist or abusive, pornographic images, videos or texts, and/or sexist remarks during an online meeting, with the aim to disturb the meeting or harass some particular group, population or a person. Although it is an almost unpreventable phenomenon, there are some ways to safeguard the meeting, such as by not sharing the meeting link on social media, setting a meeting password or locking the option to share screens for participants.[23.]

Manipulation

To understand and recognize online violence, it is important for both teachers and young people to understand the concept of manipulation and how it works. Manipulation occurs in many forms of online violence, particularly when it comes to exploitation, coercion and threats. Manipulation is the exercise of harmful influence over others. The manipulator seeks to create an imbalance of power, and take advantage of another person to get power, control, benefits, and/or privileges at the expense of the other.

It happens often that victims of online violence do not see themselves as victims. They may not realise they are being exploited or coerced, as the perpetrator may manipulate them into thinking that the way they are treated is normal or that they are in a romantic relationship. If the victim has engaged in performing sexual acts, this may cause them to believe they were in control, that they chose to do these things, and they **may blame themselves**.

These are some things a manipulative perpetrator might say:

- 'If you really loved me, you would share your nude pics with me'
- 'Don't wear that outfit: everyone will think you're a slut'
- 'If you don't do what I want, I'll tell your parents you've been drinking'
- 'If you tell the police, you'll be taken away from your family'
- 'Everyone's doing it, it's normal'
- 'If you block me, I will share your video with all your friends and family'

Victims may feel pressured or controlled, scared, guilty or insecure. They often feel responsible for the manipulator, and they may constantly feel like they are doing something wrong. Their insecurities or weak spots are being used against them and a manipulator often openly humiliates, ridicules or judges them.

It is important for a teacher, as well as for a peer, to always assure the victim that regardless of his/her actions, it was not his/her choice, and they are **not to blame** for the violence the experience.

---

[20] https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ab.21968
[21] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2451958821000038
[22] https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-11/ti612_mobile_dating_applications_and_sexual_and_violent_offending.pdf
[23] https://nvncares.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/How-to-Prevent-%E2%80%98Zoombombing%E2%80%99-in-a-Few-Easy-Steps-The-New-York-Times.pdf

2.3 Causes of online violence against girls

Understanding the root causes of online violence against girls is important for both teachers and young people, as this may lead to a less blaming and a more understanding, supportive, constructive attitude towards everyone involved in cases of online violence. It will also lead to better prevention, better detection of early signs of online violence and to a more adequate, sensitive response when cases occur.

Why does it happen?

Young people engage in online violence against girls for many reasons, including:

- **Peer pressure:** it makes them popular and gets them approval and respect from their friends. Sometimes they are scared to become a victim themselves, if they do not participate.
- **Revenge**: to shame or to get back at someone, for example an ex-girlfriend, often resulting from feeling hurt or insecure.
- **Anonymity:** Internet allows people to hide their identity. People do things online they would not do or say offline, because they think they are anonymous.
- **Developmental stage**: during puberty young people explore sexuality, boundaries and often take risks more easily without thinking about the consequences.
- **Normalization**: it is often not recognized as online violence or unacceptable behaviour. Young people are often not taught what healthy relationships look like.
- **Unawareness of the impact**: they often participate because they think it is fun or a joke, not aware of the emotional impact their abusive behaviour may have on others. The emotional impact is usually not visible through digital communication.
- **A lack of knowledge on help seeking possibilities**: this may cause the continuation or aggravation of situations of online violence.
- **Previous abuse:** (young) people who experienced domestic, sexual or physical violence are more likely to commit violence themselves, also online.

Adults also engage in online violence against girls (and boys). Adults may have a sexual preference for minors and turn to the online world to get in contact with them. But other underlying causes can also be at play, including:

- **Power:** in the safe haven of someone's living room it is easy to get a feeling of power and invincibility online, which he/she may not experience in the real world.
- **Lack of consequences**: considering that online violence is often hard to trace, perpetrators may be convinced that their behaviour will not have any (legal) consequences.
- **Gender stereotypes**: deeply rooted patriarchal patterns of unequal power distribution between men and women in society and ideas of subjugation of women and girls are both causally related to (online) violence against girls and women.
- **Sexualisation, pornification and objectification** of girls and women: (social) media and advertising in our societies are full of images of women and girls who are extremely sexualised. All this perpetuates and normalizes the subordinate position of women and legitimizes (online sexual) violence against them.

These underlying causes can also apply to young people who engage in online violence.

2.4 Recognizing signs

Teachers need to be aware of possible signs of online sexual violence online in order to be able to recognize harmful situation. Early detection of online violence is important in order to keep young people safe online and to end situations of online violence as soon as possible, in order to prevent further harm. There are various possible signs, both at the level of the victim and at the level of the (young) perpetrator.

Signs at the level of the victim

Internet use-related signs of online violence

- Spending increasing amounts of time on smartphone or laptop.
- Becoming increasingly secretive, particularly around the use of digital devices
- Shutting the door or hiding the screen when someone enters the room or passes by.
- Becoming more possessive of cell phone and concerned if someone else picks it up or wants to look at it.
- Agitated behaviour when answering the phone and needing to take calls in private.
- Being distant, upset or angry after using the Internet.
- Having lots of new phone numbers, texts or social media contacts.

Emotional signs of online violence

- *Becomes a loner* – Young people who experience online violence often take every opportunity to keep to themselves. They refrain from being in groups and take steps to isolate themselves. For typically outgoing students, this will be an obvious change.
- *Mood swings* - You may witness a victim have emotional outbursts and mood swings. A situation may go from very calm to contentious quite quickly. This can occur both in a group setting and on an individual level.
- *Increased stress* - A student struggling to manage stress could be experiencing online violence. You may notice this during normally stressful times or in situations where the student would normally not be stressed.
- *Displays aggressive behaviour* - Lashing out aggressively is common among young people who experience online violence. This is especially true among students who are not usually aggressive. They may show aggression against peers or even educators during any situation.
- *Displays symptoms of depression* - One of the severe effects of online violence is depression. Among youth, depression may manifest as constant sadness, restlessness, a lack of enthusiasm, chronic fatigue and other symptoms. If teachers witness a student with symptoms of depression, they should talk to the young person and, if he/she agrees, contact a counsellor and/or the parents. Untreated depression can have very negative effects on a student.

Behavioural signs of online violence

Violence online can have a tremendous impact on how young people relate to their peers socially. Victims are often attacked by someone they know well. Students may stop trusting their usual social group and withdraw. Here are a few specific examples.

- *Stops participating in social activities* - A student who is on a team or in an after-school club may stop participating because of online violence. Teachers who notice a previously involved student suddenly lose interest in extracurricular activities may want to explore what's wrong and move from there.

- *Stops eating or sleeping* - This may be harder for teachers to notice, but students struggling with online violence often sleep and eat less. This will be evident during lunchtime or if a student falls asleep during class.

- *Hurts self* - Self-harming is not uncommon for victims of online violence. While a teacher may not quickly notice this, they may notice a student wearing different clothing or trying to hide signs of self-harm. Friends of the student may also provide clues to potential self-harming.

- *Changes in friends* - Students who suffer from online violence may switch their group of friends completely. This could be a sign that the perpetrator is someone close to them or that their feelings of self-worth have changed.

Academic signs of online violence

Teachers are in the best position to identify the reasons behind a student falling behind academically. Young people who are experiencing online violence can take steps backward in the classroom just like in other aspects of their life. Here are a few academic-related clues that violence online may be taking place.

- *Does not attend school* - Teachers may see students miss school more frequently. If a student begins missing significant time, contact the young person or a parent to better understand the reason. This is a good time to get clues on whether something else is afoot.

- *Work ethic drops* - Maybe a student stops turning in homework or submits incomplete assignments. Young people experiencing online violence may stop contributing to class regularly. This is especially true of often-successful students who are struggling with a violent situation online.

- *Skips class* - Cutting class is never acceptable, but some students may try to avoid interacting in class by skipping it altogether. This may be to avoid the online perpetrator or just to act out.

- *Loses interest in school* – Online violence can turn a once-star student into someone less excited about school. If students who are regularly involved in the classroom begin to care less, they may be suffering from online violence.

- *Grades drop* - The overall grades of young people who experience online violence often drop. This may include performing poorly on tests, missing assignments and struggling in group projects. A sudden drop in grades may be a cry for help.

Signs at the level of the perpetrator

As in all crimes, there is a perpetrator or a group of perpetrators in online violence as well, but with the difference that the online perpetrators are often able to maintain anonymity, and much of the violent online activity occurs outside of school and outside the public eye, making it harder to spot it. Teachers need to be aware of the following signs of behaviour from a possible perpetrator:

Social signs in school

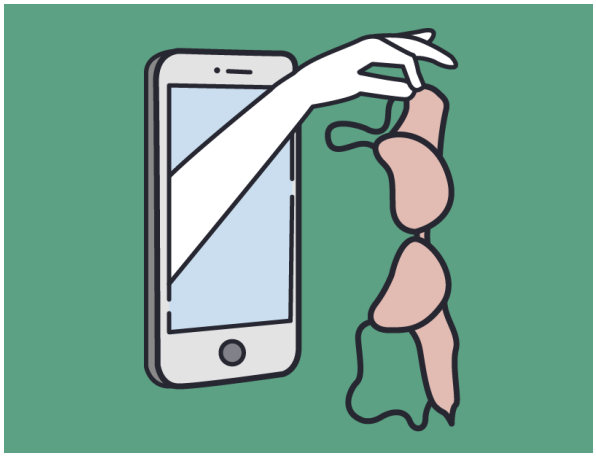
- Demonstrates violent tendencies
- Behavioural issues and/or disciplinary actions at school (or elsewhere)
- Announcing threats or plans for hurting others
- Frequent physical fighting
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- A history of violent or aggressive behaviour
- Young age at first violent incident
- A demonstration of increased insensitivity or callousness toward his/her classmates or friends

Personal/ Family history

- An increasing withdrawal or isolation from family and their usual circle of friends
- Having witnessed violence at home
- Early childhood abuse or neglect
- History of vandalism or property damage
- Being callous or lacking empathy for others
- Having a major mental illness
- Family or parent condones use of violence
- Having prior been a victim or a perpetrator

Keep in mind that:

- **One sign** doesn't mean that a young person is experiencing or perpetrating online violence, but the presence of several suggests that you begin asking questions.
- Some of these signs can emerge at **other times of stress** such as during a divorce, death of family member, problems at school or a traumatic event.
- **Anyone can be an offender**. Offenders come from all classes, ages, cultures, ethnic and religious backgrounds. They can be homo- or heterosexual, men or women, old or young (including other, even younger, minors).



Tips for talking to a young person when you are concerned about online violence

If you observe (multiple) signs of online violence or if you are concerned about online violence, talk to the young person(s) involved. Keep in mind a few guidelines to create a **non-threatening environment** where he/she may be more likely to open up to you.

- **Pick your time and place carefully.** Choose a space where the boy or girl is comfortable or ask them where they'd like to talk. Avoid talking in front of someone who may be causing the harm.
- **Be aware of your tone.** If you start the conversation in a serious tone, you may scare the boy/girl, and they may be more likely to give you the answers they think you want to hear—rather than the truth. Try to make the conversation more casual. A non-threatening tone will help put them at ease and ultimately provide you with more accurate information.
- **Talk to the boy or girl directly.** Ask questions that use their own vocabulary. For example, ask: "*Has something happened on Instagram/ TikTok?"; "Is an image of you being shared, against your will?"; "Are you scared of someone?"* or "*I heard you talking about an older friend and that he gives you expensive gifts, do you want to share something about this with me?"* Avoid questions such as: "*did you experience any online violence / coercion / etc.?*" Be specific and use terms young people are familiar with, avoid professional terms. Be aware that the girl or boy may not know that what he/she experiences is considered online violence.
- **Listen and follow up.** Allow the boy or girl to talk freely. Wait for them to pause, and then follow up on points that made you feel concerned.
- **Avoid judgment and blame.** Avoid placing blame by using "I" questions and statements. Rather than beginning your conversation by saying, "*You said something that made me worry…"* consider starting your conversation with the word "I." For example: "*I am concerned because I heard your classmate say that there is an intimate image of you shared in the WhatsApp group of the class."*
- **Reassure.** Make sure that the boy/girl knows that they are not in trouble. Let them know you are simply asking questions because you are concerned about them.
- **Be patient.** Remember that this conversation may be very frightening for the boy or girl. Many perpetrators make threats about what will happen if someone finds out about the online violence. They may threaten to share their intimate images or other personal information with their friends or family, or they may threaten with physical violence.

Keep in mind that many of the signs of online violence may also be a sign of other types of violence, problems at home or school or other traumatic or stressful events.

→ *Chapter 4 about responding to online violence addresses how teachers can respond to disclosures and reports and what steps should be taken.*

2.5 Legislation

According to the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** (CRC), which is signed by almost every country in the world,[24] member states must protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Article 34 states that the state shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography; and according to article 36 the child has the right to protection from all forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare. The **Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography**[25], lays out extra protections for children in this regard.

In 2021 **General Comment No. 25** was included on children's rights in relation to the digital environment. The 4 principles of the Convention have been adapted to include children and the digital environment.[26]

1. **Non-discrimination:** ensure that all children have equal and effective access to the digital environment in ways that are meaningful for them.
2. **Best interests of the child:** all actions regarding the provision, regulation, design, management and use of the digital environment are to be in the best interests of every child is a primary consideration. This includes all children's rights, their rights to seek, receive and impart information, to be protected from harm and to have their views given due weight, and ensure transparency in the assessment of the best interests of the child and the criteria that have been applied.
3. **Right to life, survival and development:** all appropriate measures to be taken to protect children from risks to their right to life, survival and development. Risks relating to content, contact, conduct and contract encompass, among other things, violent and sexual content, cyberaggression and harassment, gambling, exploitation and abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse, and the promotion of or incitement to suicide or life-threatening activities, including by criminals or armed groups designated as terrorist or violent extremist. Training and advice on the appropriate use of digital devices should be given to parents, caregivers, educators and other relevant actors, taking into account the research on the effects of digital technologies on children's development.
4. **Respect for the views of the child:** consult with children and crucial that their voices are heard in situations that affect them. Consult with children on relevant legislative, administrative and other measures and to ensure that their views are considered seriously, and that children's participation does not result in undue monitoring or data collection that violates their right to privacy, freedom of thought and opinion.

Similar to Europe, there are specific laws in the UK where it is **illegal to create, possess or distribute sexual images of minors** (under 18). Young people who engage in it, can end up being prosecuted.

---

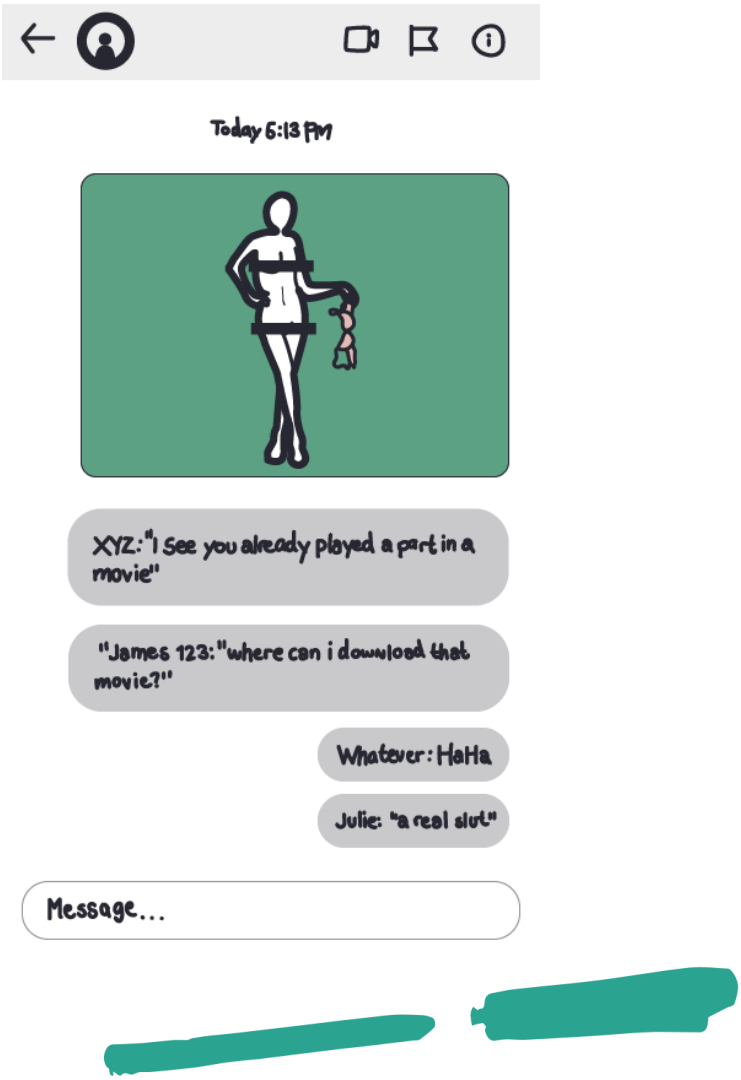
[24] United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx The CRC is signed by all member states except for the United States.

[25] United Nations Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/opsccrc.aspx

[26] The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: General Comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2fPPRiCAqhKb7yhsqIkirKQZLK2M58RF%2f5F0vEG%2bcAAx34gC78FwvnmZXGFUl9nJBDpKR1dfKekJxW2w9nNryRsgArkTJgKelqeZwK9WXzMkZRZd37nLN1bFc2t

Although laws are all named differently in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland they are all very similar and state *"that taking, making, permitting to take, distributing, showing, possessing with intent to distribute, and advertising indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of children will now also be applicable where the photographs concerned are of children of 16 or 17 years of age."*[27]

Northern Ireland has also created the, 'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence in Northern Ireland 2016 Strategy, which included the definition of sexual abuse and violence, "*any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual/online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful, or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability)."*[28]



[27] Information found on the website of the Internet Watch Foundation, the UK hotline to report online child sexual abuse: www.iwf.org.uk
[28] Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland Strategy 2016, available at: https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doj/stopping-domestic-sexual-violence-ni.pdf

2.6 Exercises

In this section exercises for teachers and for young people are provided about online violence against girls and **how to recognize it**. The exercises for teachers can be used during a training on this topic and on how to teach about it. The exercises for young people can be used by teachers in a classroom or other setting during a workshop for young people on violence against girls. This can be one of the CYBERSAFE workshops, but also another type of workshop or lesson about this topic. No Internet or digital device is required for these exercises.

A. Exercises for teachers

Exercise A1: Quiz - test your knowledge of online violence

Time: 15-20 min.
Setting: group
Materials: Kahoot (optional)
Target group: teachers
Goal: A short quiz to test participants understanding of Chapter 2, including what online violence is and what the four main types are.

We advise to do the quiz using an interactive online platform, such as Kahoot, in order to engage participants. If that is not possible, the quiz can also be delivered by a trainer who reads the questions out loud, and participants write down their answers or show hands. To make it more fun, the group can then be divided in two teams, who battle against each other. If discussion arises in the group, allow some time for participants to react and voice their ideas.

The correct answers are in bold.

1. Why is it important to address online violence against girls?
    a. It is a growing global problem
    b. We have to ensure that digital public space is safe, accessible & empowering place for everyone
    c. Online violence may have a long-lasting harmful impact on young people
    d. All of the above

2. Please select the most correct definition of online violence:
    a. Online bullying that is happening on social media
    b. It is an umbrella term for all forms if violence/harassment that happen with the use of digital devices
    c. It is a form mistreatment that takes place online and incudes sharing someone's personal content without their consent
    d. It is sexual harassment that happens with the use of digital devices

3. Is the gender of the victim of online sexual violence important?
    a. No, both boys and girls have an equal chance to become a victim of online violence
    b. Yes, because the majority of online violence is committed to girls
    c. Yes, online violence only happens to girls
    d. Yes, boys have a higher chance of becoming a victim of online violence

4. Is it true that online violence happens individually and is usually not related to offline behavior?
    a. Yes, what happens online stays online. Young people are often too scared to commit the same abuse in person

b. No, online violence often goes hand in hand with offline experiences

5. Please select behaviors that relate to 'unwanted sexualization' from the list below:
   a. "Jokes" of sexual nature
   b. Using the threat of publishing sexual content to coerce or blackmail someone ('sextortion')
   c. Sexual images taken without consent ('creep shots' or 'up-skirting')
   d. Altering images of a person to make them sexual
   e. All of the above

6. An adult 'seduces' a minor online by showing interest and giving compliments, and eventually manipulates the minor into doing something sexual. This process is called:
   a. Sextortion
   b. Grooming
   c. Coercion
   d. Non-consensual sharing

7. A girl sends a sexually explicit images of herself to several boys in her class. A week later, she finds out that these images are posted on social media. Can this be considered 'Non-consensual sharing of images'?
   a. No, because initially it was the girl's own choice to share these images with those boys
   b. Yes, because someone posted the images on social media, without the girl's consent

8. We know that sexting is risky and can lead to online violence. However, we do not advice young people to stop sexting. Why not?
   a. We should! That's crucial part of sexual education: children should be taught to not to share their intimate photos
   b. Because sexting can play a fun and important part in the social, emotional & sexual development of young people
   c. Because the risks are not that big and sexting usually stays between two people.

9. Please select causes of online violence against girls from the list below:
   a. History of abuse in a family (cases of domestic violence)
   b. Anonymity granted by internet that allows to hide person's identity
   c. Bad grades at school
   d. Revenge after a breakup

10. Is it true that online violence can lead to suicide among young people?
    a. Yes, it causes very serious emotional distress that indeed can lead to self-inflicted harm or suicide
    b. No, it's not as damaging as "real" violence that is happening offline

Exercise A2: Quiz - Matching the main types

Time: 15-20 min.
Setting: group
Materials: Kahoot (optional)
Target group: teachers
Goal: A short quiz to test participants understanding of the four main types of online violence by asking them to match cases with the corresponding type.

We advise to do the quiz using an interactive online platform, such as Kahoot, in order to engage participants. If that is not possible, the quiz can also be delivered by a trainer who reads the questions out loud, and participants write down their answers or show hands. To make it more fun, the group can then be divided in two teams, who battle against each other. If discussion arises in the group, allow some time for participants to react and voice their ideas.

The correct answers are in bold.

1. A girl dates a boy from school, who constantly asking for nudes. She does not want to share intimate photos. Then the boy manages to take a quick photo of her while she is changing. He then shares it with his classmates.
    a. **This is non-consensual sharing of sexual images. The boy took and shared the photo without consent of the girl**
    b. This situation is an example of the second type: exploitation, coercion & threats. The boy was pressuring her to share nudes.
    c. The boy's behavior is not right but calling this online violence would be exaggerated.
    d. There is nothing violent about the boy's behavior, because the boy and girl where in a relationship when this happened!

2. A group of girlfriends had a big argument. Then some of them started spreading gossips about one of the girls. On their school Facebook group, they started saying she had sex with many boys.
    a. Come on, gossips are just gossips. It is not nice, but this is normal behavior among girls.
    b. **This is a form of sexualized bullying. These girls were spreading lies online, which were of sexual nature.**
    c. This is a case of unwanted sexualization, because the girl was sexualized against her will.

3. A girl was dating a boy from school. After their breakup the girl started sharing his intimate selfies with her girlfriends and they joked about the size of his penis.
    a. **This is non-consensual sharing of sexual images. The boy shared these images confidentially and not for this purpose.**
    b. It was not smart of the boy to share these selfies in the first place. It is his own fault that this happened, we should not blame the girls for his stupid actions.
    c. **This is a form of sexualized bullying, because the girls make sexual, degrading jokes about the boy.**

4. On a girl's sleep-over party one girl shared that she might be into girls. On the next day the entire school knows about it and posts about her, calling her a "dyke", are being spread on social media.
    a. **This is a form of sexualized bullying. The girl was 'outed' online against her will and humiliated about her sexual preference.**

b. This is unwanted sexualization. She never wanted to the whole school to know her sexual preference, she just shared this information with her friends!
c. Although this incident may have harmed the girl, it cannot be considered online sexual violence, because there is not sexual image involved.

5. A girl breaks up with her boyfriend. He tells her that if she leaves, he will share their sex video with her parents and everyone at school
    a. This is stupid, the boy will never share this tape. The legal consequences for him are too serious. He is just trying to keep their relationship together!
    b. This is non-consensual sharing of sexual images, because the girl does not consent to sharing the video.
    c. This is a case of exploitation, coercion and threats. The boy is blackmailing her with a private video.
    d. The boy is still in love with her. It is not right, but it is normal that people try to stay in a relationship if they love someone. We should have more understanding for the boy.

6. A girl posts a cute photo with flowers online. Someone has edited photo and turned the flowers into penises and then started spreading it.
    a. This is sexualized bullying, because the image leads to the girl being bullied.
    b. This is unwanted sexualization, because the girl is sexualized online against her will.
    c. This is non-consensual sharing of sexual images, since the image was altered without the girl's consent.

7. Out of the blue, a girl starts to receive lots of messages with 'dickpics' from strangers. It turns out that someone has created a fake profile with her photo and Facebook name on a dating website.
    a. This is just a stupid joke. Nobody is harassing her in person. She can always block those strangers.
    b. This is sexualized bullying. Someone has impersonated her and shared her contact details online without consent to encourage sexual harassment.
    c. This is unwanted sexualization. She never intended to register on this dating website herself, nor did she ask for these images.

8. A girl suddenly started to gain weight after the 4th grade due to health issues. After an argument, her classmate started to spread ugly pictures of her saying that nobody will ever want to have sex with her.
    a. This is a normal form of bullying, but there is no sexual element, so it cannot be considered a form of online sexual violence.
    b. This is sexualized bullying that includes body shaming
    c. This is non-consensual sharing of sexual images, because the images were spread against the girl's will.

Exercise A3: Recognizing signs

Time: 30 min.
Setting: small group/individually
Materials: printed cases (optional)
Target group: teachers
Goal: participants will practice with identifying signs of online sexual violence and how to talk to a boy or girl when they observe these signs.

This exercise can be done in small groups. Each group picks a case. One person reads the case out lout and the group discusses the question (1) below and then does the role play exercise (2). After all groups have finished, experiences are discussed plenary.

1. **What signs could be recognized in the cases below?**
2. If the signs are alarming, you need to talk to the girl or boy. **Show in a short role play how you would talk to the child and what questions you would ask them**. (One person in the group plays the girl/boy, the other person the teacher. The rest of the group watches and provides feedback.)

The case of Emma
Emma is a 14-year-old girl. She has been dating Hans for a few months. He is 2 years older than her and goes to the same school. Both have always been academically and socially successful and active. Suddenly Emma, drastically changes her appearance. She cuts of her thick long blond hair, colours it dark and instead of her usual dresses she starts wearing oversized boyish clothes. She starts to avoid her usual friends, has not been seen together with Hans and keeps mostly to herself. In class she is silent, quick to tears, and avoids all contact with teachers and classmates. One of her classmates tells you that she erased all her social media accounts, on which she was normally very active.

The case of Lisa
Lisa is an active 16-year-old, who is really into sports, both indoor and outdoor. She has participated in group trainings for different athletics, including swimming for the last four years and been quite successful in different competitions. In the last couple of months, she has skipped the swimming trainings. Her sports teacher also noticed that even for indoor activities Lisa is wearing always long-sleeved tops. When asked about it, the girl just replied that she gets cold easy, even though it is spring. Furthermore, the trainer notices that she is always the last one to join the training and last one leaving the dressing room afterwards, too. She also seems to have lost weight and one of her friends has told the sports teacher that she suspects that Lisa goes to the toilet to vomit after lunchbreaks.

The case of Tom
Tom is a 15-year-old student in the tenth grade and has limited ability to engage in social interactions with peers and school staff. Tom is verbally aggressive, ignores the comments of teachers and seems to be unaware of how his actions or remarks are perceived by peers. Tom's verbal aggression and his bullying behaviour persists or even escalates. A teacher has talked with Tom's mom, and the mother had the same concerns with Tom. One of his classmates shows you messages that Tom has posted in the WhatsApp group of the class. They are very negative, aggressive and degrading towards girls.

The case of Ravi
Ravi is a boy (16) who has always been very quiet and on his own at school. He comes from a poor family and his parents are divorced. Since a few weeks his behaviour has changed. He starts to mingle with a group of boys from a higher class after school. His is wearing

'cooler' clothes and he suddenly has an expensive phone. During the school break, you hear him talking about his new friend and after school an expensive car is waiting for him in front of the school.

This exercise can also be done individually. Then the cases need to be printed and shared with the participants. They underline the early signs (question 1) and write down their answers to question 2, which then will be discussed plenary.

Exercise A3: Recognizing signs

Time: 30 min.
Setting: small group/individually
Materials: printed cases (optional)
Target group: teachers
Goal: this exercise allows participants to discuss and practice with understanding the signs of online violence and how to approach young people when signs are observed

In each group someone reads out one of the following statements and participants try to imagine them in a real-life classroom, with young people that may show similar behavioural signs. After reading the statement, think or discuss about possible solutions, ways to reach the child, or possible strategies to follow up.

A. Carla has always been an A-student at school, for as long as you have known her. Suddenly, you realise that her essays and projects have all been delayed, and her excuses are very childish, which is not like her. **How do you approach her?**

B. Johnny and Barbara used to best friends for years, inseparable in and out of the classroom. Suddenly, Barbara asks you to let her sit at another desk, far away from Johnny. **Which approach will you use and to which student will you go to first? Why?**

C. Becky's parents call you one day to ask about her progress in school and to share with you the changes they have noticed in her behaviour, wanting your input about her school life. You have seen her talking intensely to some girls, but she stopped immediately when you or another teacher passed by. What is your first thought about this guilty behaviour? How will you proceed?

B. Exercises for young people

Exercise B1: Recognizing early signs

Time: 15 min.
Setting: two groups
Materials: sticky notes, pens, flipchart/whiteboard
Target group: young people
Goal: students will practice with understanding and identifying signs of online sexual violence.

Group 1 has to write signs of real-life violence on sticky notes and Group 2 has to write signs of online violence on sticky notes. They get 10 minutes to come up with as many different signs as they can think of. When both groups are finished, they place their notes on the flipchart or whiteboard. Make three columns with the titles '***real life violence'***, '***online violence'*** and ***'both'***.

Exercise B2: Manipulation

Time: 20 min.
Setting: small groups
Materials: none
Target group: young people
Goal: students will learn to understand what manipulation is and how to recognize by discussing the concept in small groups. The aim of this exercise is to help young people put into their own words what they think manipulation is. This is important because victims do not often realise, they are being manipulated or exploited.

Ask each group to discuss the following three questions:

1. Put in your own words what you think **manipulation** means.
2. Discuss the **warning signs** of manipulation – how would someone know if they are being manipulated?
3. What would you do if you or your friend are in a manipulative relationship?

When all groups are finished, conclusions of each group are shared plenary.

The information below may be useful for the teacher to guide the discussion:

1. Define manipulation

Manipulation is the exercise of harmful influence over others. The manipulator seeks to create an imbalance of power, and take advantage of another person to get power, control, benefits, and/or privileges at the expense of the other. Manipulation occurs in many forms of online violence, particularly when it comes to exploitation, coercion and threats. It happens often that victims of online violence do not see themselves as victims. They may not realise they are being exploited or coerced, as the perpetrator may manipulate them into thinking that the way they are treated is normal or that they are in a romantic relationship. If the victim has engaged in performing sexual acts, this may cause them to believe they were in control, that they chose to do these things, and they **may blame themselves**.

2. Warning signs of manipulation

Example of warning signs:

- Feeling pressured or controlled
- Questioning yourself
- Feeling afraid of the other person
- Feeling coerced into something you don't want to do
- Feel guilty
- Often feel responsible for the other person
- The other person twists what you are saying
- They make you feel as if you have done something wrong
- They know your weaknesses and how to exploit them
- Make fun of your weaknesses to humiliate you – cruel sense of humour
- They use your insecurities against you
- They convince you to give up something important to you, to make you more dependent on them
- Openly judging, ridiculing, and dismissing you

3. What would you do if you or your friend are in a manipulative relationship?

Suggestions:

- Ask for help
- Listen
- Believe
- Provide support
- Try to end contact with the exploiter
- Find out more information on support services in your area
- May need to create a safety plan
- Collect evidence, for example screenshot messages
- Find out who you can report it to
- Ask them to please talk to someone they trust
- Tell them it is not their fault

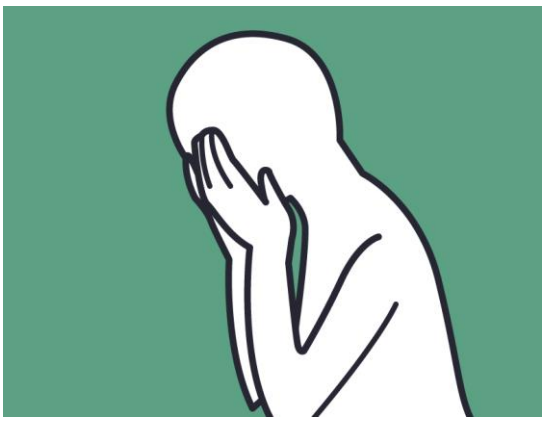
In chapter 3 we will address what young people can do to respond to online violence in more detail.

Exercise B3: What do you share online?

Time: 5-10 min.
Setting: individually
Materials: none
Target group: young people
Goal: students will learn to understand how easily an image on social media can reach thousands of people

Explain the following story:
Mary has 476 followers on Instagram. Her classmate Jonathan hacks into her phone and posts a modified picture of her where it seems like she is naked. The pic goes viral. Every second person who see it, shares it. In two hours over 56 000 people have seen the pic.

Now ask your students to calculate this for their own social media account. How many friends/followers do they have? Now assume that on average all their friends/followers have roughly the same number of friends/followers. If every second person would re-share your image and every second person of their friends re-share it – **how many people would see the image?**



3. Preventing online violence against girls

This chapter addresses the importance of preventing online violence and elaborates on the long-lasting impact online violence can have on everyone involved. It discusses practical steps that both young people and teachers can take to **protect themselves and others from online harm and to minimize risks**.

Increased awareness can lead to changes in behaviour. Once young people understand what online violence against girls is, the harm it may cause to the victim, and the legal consequences the perpetrator may face, they are less likely to share their own or someone else's images without thinking. Once young people know what simple steps, they can take to prevent others from seeing, using or commenting on their online content without their consent, many cases of online violence will be prevented.

Prevention is approached in this chapter from different perspectives, those of the (potential) victim, perpetrator and by-stander. Advice is given on what young people can do to protect themselves against online violence, but also why and how they should protect others from online harm, and why they have a responsibility towards other to step up, speak out and support a classmate who is a target of online violence.

The textboxes in this chapter contain practical advice that can be used when communicating preventative messages and measures to young people in class. They correspond to the advice that is given in the CYBERSAFE Online Tool.

Learning objectives of this chapter

Main objective:
To provide teachers with knowledge, tips and practical tools to prevent online violence against girls in school and to address the issue amongst young people in a classroom or other setting, in order to promote safe and responsible online behaviour.

After using this curriculum, teachers:

- understand causes, emotional impact and other possible consequences of online violence against girls for all actors involved in online violence
- know how to recognize, reflect on, address and challenge patterns of victim blaming, and stereotypical assumptions about gender roles.
- know how to teach young people how to protect themselves and others online
- know how to create a safe setting, which is a prerequisite for delivering an effective awareness raising (prevention) workshop about the issue of online sexual violence

3.1 Understanding the consequences of online violence against girls

Understanding the consequences online violence against girls may have for victim, perpetrator and bystander is important for both teachers and young people. For young people, understanding the devastating impact online violence can have on the victim, as well as the possible legal consequences for the perpetrator or (participating) bystander – which they are often unaware of -- may **prevent them from participating** in harmful behaviour and encourage them to take steps to **protect themselves and others** and/or to **support a victim** when they have the chance. Teachers will be more motivated to raise awareness and prevent online violence, detect early signs and respond quickly and sensitively to disclosures, reports or cases when they have a more profound understanding of the possible consequences.

The impact on young people's wellbeing

Victims of online violence often experience public humiliation, bullying, shaming, blaming and stigma. This can have significant emotional impact, both in the short and long term, including:

- Diminished self-esteem
- Fear, anxiety, distress
- Feelings of guilt and shame
- Anti-social behaviour
- trauma (and re-traumatisation), mental health problems, depression
- Self-inflicted harm or suicide

The **viral character of distribution** amplifies the effects of online violence. What was once a private affair can now be instantly distributed to millions of others via the Internet. The image or video can stay on the internet forever, which may lead to **re-victimisation**: the threat of the abusive content being re-shared online after the initial incident.

Although the way online violence is experienced differs per person, it is important to acknowledge that online violence is **just as damaging as offline violence**. Although there is usually no physical harm, online violence reaches a wider audience, often goes unpunished and the evidence stays online forever. Furthermore, it is harder to get away or hide from violence that happens online. It is not time and place limited (to the school environment, for example), but it may follow the victim everywhere, to the home, to bed, all day and night.

Online violence can also lead to girls and boys reducing or stopping their use of Internet or social media. **Driving young people out of online spaces disempowers them**, especially since access to the digital world is increasingly important to participate in society, via access to different public services, education, career opportunities, political participation, etc. (Self) exclusion damages young people's ability to be seen and heard.[29]

It is further important to realize that online violence can also have a harmful emotional impact on **people who witness it**, and even on people who actively engage in it or on perpetrators themselves.

Young people who have been a victim of online violence have a **higher chance to be victimized again** or **to become a perpetrator themselves**. Therefore, it is even more important to find ways to break the cycle by preventing online violence from taking place and to prevent situations of online violence from continuing and aggravating.

[29] Plan International 2020: https://plan-international.org/publications/freetobeonline

Legal consequences

Some acts of online violence break the law and can have legal consequences for everyone involved. Across Europe, it is **illegal to create, possess or distribute sexual images of minors** (under 18). Young people who engage in it, can end up being prosecuted. In some countries it can even lead to being registered as a sexual offender. However, in reality, this does not always happen. There is a growing recognition that children who are victims should not be criminalised for self-generated nude images and young people should not end up with a lifelong criminal record for committing in the circumstances, more minor online sex offences. In most EU countries, young people are only cautioned if they are both under 18 and voluntarily shared nude images. Police and prosecutors should have in place and follow specific guidelines on how to respond to cases of online violence that involve minors, but this is not the case in many EU-countries yet.

Nonetheless, it is important to teach young people that there **are always legal risks** when it comes to sharing sexual content. Especially when it concerns **non-consensual sharing, extortion, coercion or (online) stalking**, prosecution and a subsequent criminal conviction cannot be ruled out.

Practical advice and preventative messages and measures related to the emotional impact and possible legal consequences of online violence that can be communicated to young people include:

Think before you share your image - *why you need to protect yourself*

Before you share or post content about yourself, consider the following things:

- It may be seen by people that you don't want to see it.
- It may **stay online forever**.
- This can have a significant and lifelong **emotional impact**.
- Online content that damages your reputation may **in the future** have negative consequences, for example when you try to find a job.

So take steps to protect your online privacy *(refer to paragraph 3.2)* and use the Internet in a safe and responsible way.

*Realize that becoming a victim of online violence **can happen to everyone,** even if you take steps to prevent it. If it happens, know that you are not to blame!*

Think before you act - *why you should not cause online harm to others*

Although bullying or passing on someone's image may seem funny and innocent, sharing someone's intimate image or video, exploiting or coercing someone, bullying or sexualizing someone online can have very negative consequences, both for that person and for yourself.

- This person can feel scared, guilty, humiliated and hopeless. The event can be **traumatizing,** and the victim can suffer mental health issues, such as hyper-vigilance, memory loss, difficulty with trust and relationships and depression. It can even lead to self-harm and suicide.

- The image, video or comments **may stay online forever,** and the victim could experience bullying or harassment for a long time. He or she could even have difficulties with finding a job in the future.

- Making sexual or **degrading comments** can hurt and humiliate people and damage their **reputation**. This can also have a long-lasting impact.

- Online violence causes lifelong harm. This matters, **even if you do not know the person**. No one deserves this!

• Also think of the **consequences for yourself**: sharing nude images of a minor, exploiting or coercing someone, hacking into someone's laptop, and ruining someone's reputation, can all be illegal. You can end up with a criminal record.

• Participating in online violence, for example by 'simply' **passing on an intimate image** that your friends are sharing in a group, may seem innocent. However, this makes you a perpetrator and can have serious legal consequences for you as well.

If a friend experiences exploitation, coercion or threats

If your friend or classmate experiences online violence in the form of exploitation, coercion or threats, it is important that you have and show your understanding. Keep in mind that:

•Victims may not see themselves as victims (for example when they have initially consented to participating in sexual acts), they might feel like it is their own fault. But exploiters often make victims do things they do not want to. **It was not their own choice, and they are not to blame**.
• It is often difficult for victims to leave their exploiter, because they might l**ove** them or be **frightened** of them.
• Threats and blackmail can be very scary, and keep the victim in the exploitative relationship, because they **fear** the consequences.
• Sometimes exploiters encourage their victims to take **alcohol or drugs**, or to participate in criminal activity.

The role of the teacher

For teachers it is important to always explicitly address the emotional impact and the legal consequences that online violence may have on everyone involved when teaching about the issue. Young people are often unaware of the harm a sometimes seemingly simple action may have on others, which is partly due to the fact that in online interaction you cannot directly see or notice the other persons reaction. Also, they may not know that actions that seem small, such as passing on a nude image, may adverse and in some cases even have life-long consequences for them.

Explaining emotional and legal consequences, especially by using (real life) case stories, gives your students a chance to understand and empathize with a victim. The content of the CYBERSAFE Online Tool as well as the exercises at the end of this chapter provide such case stories.

3.2 What young people can do to prevent online violence

There are several things young people can do to protect themselves and their peers from online violence. This includes taking steps to protect their own and others online privacy. Young people are often unaware of the options they have, or unaware of the importance of using them. As a teacher you can play an important role in raising awareness about steps they can take to use the Internet in a safe and responsible way, in explaining how and why they should protect themselves and others from online harm and in setting a good example.

Protecting your online privacy

The images, videos and/or personal information young people share online, through social media or other channels, may be used, shared or commented on by others, without their permission or without them even knowing. The material can be used to shame, bully,

threaten, coerce or sexualise them. There are several things young people can do to protect their online privacy:

- Protecting their devices, social media accounts and apps with passwords, anti-virus protection and privacy settings, so that the content cannot be accessed, used or seen by other people.
- Being aware of the risks of sharing images, videos and/or personal information. It can stay online forever, may be seen and shared by people you don't know and even if it is not harmful now, it can be used to by others in a harmful way in the future.
- Avoiding contact with 'strangers' online (people they do not know in real life), because you never know who this person is and what his or her intentions are and use available online tools to block, mute or report these people.

Practical advice related to protecting online privacy that can be communicated to young people include:

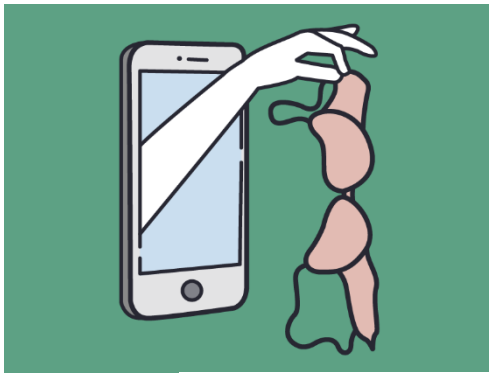
Protecting your privacy online

• Never forget to log out of your laptop, email or other accounts, especially if you leave your laptop, PC or phone unattended.
• Install anti-virus protection and firewalls
• Keep your passwords secure, choose them carefully and do not share them with anyone or write them down.
• Always use a PIN code or lock your phone in another way. Do not let others use or browse your phone.
• Be careful what you share online. It may stay online forever and can be used to harm you later. Any personal information can be altered or used by someone to impersonate you.
• Use privacy settings on social media to make sure you cannot be found easily, that strangers cannot befriend you, contact you or access your accounts and that your profile is set on 'private', so that people you are not connected to cannot see your online activity, personal details or friends.
• If you participated in sexting, delete all images or videos from your devices, to avoid others from seeing or sharing them.
• Use the settings of your smartphone to make sure the images that you make are not automatically saved to a cloud.

Remember: If you wouldn't want your grandma to see it, then don't post it!

Protecting yourself against the four main types of online violence

Different measures are required to prevent different types of online violence. The textbox below gives an overview of more specific steps that young people can take to protect themselves to the four main types of online violence.



1. Non-consensual sharing of intimate images/videos: protect yourself

Think carefully before you share your nude image!
Sexting can be fun, but always realize that it is also **risky.** Once you sent an image, you have no control over it. There is always a risk that the person you share it with does something with the image that you don't want. So always think carefully: *do I really want to do this?*
• Never share your image if you are not sure about it or feel pressure.
• Realize that sharing a sexual image of a minor, even if it is your own image, can be **illegal.**

How can I protect myself?
• Do it only with a person you **trust.**
• Agree with the other person not to spread the images or to delete them after the conversation.
• Make sure you are not on the image in a way that others could recognize you.

2. Exploitation, coercion and threats: protect yourself

• If someone gives you gifts and attention, it is their own choice. I**t does not mean you are obligated to give something in return**.

• Never befriend, accept messages or share (intimate) images online from/with **people that you do not know in real life**.

• Think carefully before you share your nude image with someone. Realize that you give another person control over your image, so there is always a risk that they do something with it that you do not want. A person that humiliates you, threatens you or puts pressure on you **can never be trusted**.

• Be aware of **early signs of grooming** *(refer to paragraph 2.2)*
Grooming is when someone (peer or adult) builds a relationship with a you (online or offline) and then tricks or pressures you into doing something sexual. This is a form of exploitation and is illegal!
End all contact with this person, as soon as you start to feel uncomfortable, and ask someone for help or advice, before the situation becomes worse.

3. Sexualised bullying: protect yourself

• Adjust your privacy settings on social media: for example, make sure strangers cannot see or comment on your posts *(also refer to textbox 'Protecting your privacy online', page 36).*

• **Think carefully before you share your image or video**
Once you sent an image, you have no control over it. There is always a risk that the person you share it with does something with the image that you don't want. So always think carefully: *do I really want to do this?*
• Never share your image if you are not sure about it or feel pressure.
• Realize that sharing a sexual image of a minor, even if it is your own image, can be **illegal.**

• Take action on early signals of sexualised bullying in order to prevent bullying from becoming worse, for example by **blocking and reporting** people who make unfriendly or sexual comments on your image or video or make sexual advances without your consent or send you sexual content you do not want to see.

4. Unwanted sexualisation: protect yourself

• Adjust your privacy settings on social media: for example, make sure strangers cannot see or comment on your posts.
• Never befriend, accept messages or share (intimate) images online from or with people that you do not know in real life.

• **Think carefully before you share your image or video**
Once you sent an image, you have no control over it. There is always a risk that the person you share it with does something with the image that you don't want. So always think carefully: *do I really want to do this?*
• Never share your image if you are not sure about it or feel pressure.
• Realize that sharing a sexual image of a minor, even if it is your own image, can be **illegal.**

Protecting your peers

It is not only important that young people learn how to protect themselves online. Knowing what to do to protect others from online harm is just as important. There are several things young people can do to prevent their peers from becoming a victim of online violence:

- **Respecting other people's privacy**: it is important that they are always thinking carefully before they share information, and image or a video of another person about the possible consequences for this person.
- **Protecting others, even if they do not protect themselves**: explain to young people that sometimes a person may share information, images or videos of themselves that are intimate, strange or that can be used to shame or bully them. It is important to be sensitive in reacting to or commenting on another person's content. They can for example try to notify the sender of the risks of sharing intimate content privately, in a conversation or via a private message, because they may not be aware of this. Emphasize that this should never be done in public, in a judgemental or in a humiliating way.
- **Speaking up and saying no to online violence**: this includes never participating in online violence, for example by passing on an intimate image of someone. Young people should learn that saying no and speaking up to online violence is their responsibility, even when classmates or others do participate or when they put pressure on them.

Practical advice and preventative messages related to protecting other people's online privacy that can be communicated to young people include:

Banter or hurtful?
Online jokes can easily go too far, especially because you cannot directly see the reaction of the other person. If someone gets hurt, feels humiliated or insulted, it is not fun anymore.

When someone shares a nude image with you:

• Always keep it to yourself! This image is **private**, it is meant to be seen only by you.

• Realize that sharing a nude image without the permission of the person in it can have very negative consequences, both for that person and for yourself.

• Say No! If a nude image from someone else is shared in a message or app, without the consent of the person in the image, keep in mind: **Don't like it, don't share it**

• **Speak out** against the people in your group who share the image. Make clear that it is wrong, illegal and that you do not want to get involved. This might inspire others to do the same.

• Young people, and especially boys, may feel **pressure** from their peers to share nude images of girls. This may seem innocent or perhaps even fun at first. Be aware that this is online violence and that it has serious consequences. Say no!

The role of the teacher

Online violence often happens because young people are not aware of (what they can do to minimize) risks and of the consequences of online violence for themselves and for others. As a teacher your most important responsibility in prevention is to have profound knowledge about how young people can protect themselves and others from online harm and to transfer this knowledge. Address the practical preventative measures that young people can take and **repeat them now and then**. You can also put this in practice in class, for example by giving a demonstration in how to set the privacy settings on a certain social media platform.

Safe and responsible behaviour can also be encouraged if you set a good example yourself, for example by:

- Being **mindful and polite** in what you post online or in WhatsApp groups what can also be seen by your students.
- Not befriending your students on social media from your private account, to set and show professional **boundaries.**
- If you have a school or class WhatsApp group, Facebook page or other shared social media group: set **ground rules** and discuss it when these are not respected.

Make sure that you include and engage all students. Both girls and boys can play a role in online violence against girls, and everyone can potentially become a victim, perpetrator, or bystander. Therefore, each student needs to feel responsible and needs to be aware of the role they can all play in preventing online violence.

Other practical things teachers and schools can do to prevent online violence and/or to prevent situations from continuing or aggravating include:

- recognizing and immediately responding to signs of online violence *(refer to chapter 4 to learn more about responding)*.
- have child safeguarding policies and child protection protocols in place, that also address online sexual violence.
- actively promoting, signposting and frequently addressing reporting and help seeking possibilities, including national hotlines, helplines and victim support organisations.

3.3 Understanding young people's online behaviour

In order to raise awareness of online violence in school and to promote safe, responsible online behaviour in an effective way, teachers need to have a profound understanding of and be able to relate to young people's online behaviour, including crosscutting themes as **online sexual experimenting through 'sexting'** and **stereotyping (including 'victim blaming')**. Failing to understand, recognize, address and challenge these underlying, often hidden, themes may lead to alienating, shaming or excluding young people and preventative messages are likely not to be received by them.

Sexting

Sexting

The term 'sexting' is often used in relation to online sexual violence. Sexting is the **sharing of a sexual text, image or video**. Images and videos are usually self-generated.

When occurring between two (young) people who trust each other, sexting is in itself not violent, bad or problematic. Young people experiment with relationships, love and sex, both offline and online. On social media and apps, they make friends, flirt, date and sometimes exchange sexual messages. It is important to recognize that this sexual exploration is usually **part of the normal social, emotional and sexual development** of young people and that online contact can contribute to their development in a positive way.

However, **sexting is also risky** and young people need to be made aware of these risks and consequences. In some countries, it is illegal to produce or possess sexual images of minors, also for teenagers themselves. Further **many cases of online violence start with the innocent sharing** of an intimate self-generated image or video, which is initially consensual. In other words, sexting can lead to non-consensual sharing, bullying or unwanted sexualisation of content and eventually also to even more severe situations, such as threats, grooming and exploitation. Self-generated images or videos can even end up on illegal websites or platforms where online perpetrators exchange child sexual abuse material. The content that was shared with innocent intent may stay online forever. The leaking of the intimate image to the wider public can happen even by accident, if it is saved on a device that is not protected by a password or when a phone or other device is lost, for example.

Example: a girl sends a nude image to a boy she trusts, and with whom she is been texting and flirting for some days. They both enjoy exchanging messages and photos and do this voluntarily. The boy then shares the image on without her permission. To some of his friends. He does this without thinking about the consequences. The girl can subsequently be bullied, or even blackmailed with the threat of someone 'leaking' her nude images to her friends or family. And the boy runs the risk of being prosecuted.

Educational programmes and campaigns often focus solely on discouraging sexting, the initial sharing of intimate material. However, this may alienate young people, since for many of them sexting is a normal part of their online life. Moreover, it places the **blame on the victim** rather than putting the spotlight on the unacceptable behaviour of the person(s) who breached their trust and shared their image without permission.

Sexting vs. Online sexual violence

Sexting (sharing sexually explicit messages/images) in itself is not a bad thing, if both people do it consensually. It can be **fun and exciting**, many teenagers do it.

Sexting turns into online violence when someone shares a intimate image or video or passes it on **without the consent** of the person in it or when someone uses it to **coerce, threaten, exploit, bully or shame** someone else.

Teachers should make their students aware of the potential risks of sexting and of what they can do to protect themselves and others. However, acknowledging the 'fun', experimenting side of online contact and addressing this when talking about online violence is vital in order not to alienate young people. Moreover, addressing the risks of

sexting should always be accompanied by explaining that if young people participate in sexting and this eventually results in online violence, this does not mean that they have done something wrong or should be blamed.

Online safety vs. online participation

Teaching about online violence can easily lead to the idea that it is safer to turn away from the digital world all together. As a teacher, it is important to **find the right balance**. You should not scare young people off from all online contacts or from using technology all together, because online participation is very important for their development and a vital part of participating in society. Not using the Internet and/or social media disempowers young people and denies them a voice. Moreover, it sends the wrong message to perpetrators of online violence and may encourage their behaviour. It is the teacher's job to teach youth how to participate online in a safe and responsible way, preventing themselves and others from online harm.

Victim blaming, slut shaming and stereotypes

Victim Blaming

Victim blaming means that victims are **held accountable for the harm they experience** by their peers. This may stem from unconscious stereotypical assumptions and from the desire to fit in and be accepted. For example, they blame the girl who sent her nude or posted a sexy image, rather than directing their blame at the person who shared it non-consensually or the person who bullies or makes sexualised comments.

When it comes to (online) sexual violence, young people, as well as adults, **often blame the victim.** Addressing, discussing and making your students aware of victim blaming and stereotypes may lead to different attitudes and behaviour.

A typical comment is: 'the girl was stupid enough to share her nude image with her boyfriend, it's her own fault that the image is all over the Internet now.'

Victims often **blame themselves** too. Girl victims are more likely than boys to face a negative backlash from both male and female peers if their image is shared. Victim blaming can make a victim **re-experience** the harassment and cause further harm and distress. It also leads to victims being afraid to report or feeling not entitled to support.

A form of victim blaming is **'slut shaming'.** This can be defined as the act of **attacking or stigmatising a woman or girl for engaging in behaviour judged to be promiscuous or sexually provocative**. It is a form of victim blaming and often happens in cases of sexualised bullying, but also in other types of online violence.

Slut shaming is underpinned by sexist attitudes and **stereotypical views of gender roles**, deeply rooted in structural relationships of inequality between women and men. For example, boys are usually admired and praised when they are sexually active and have multiple partners, whereas girls are judged and bullied for the same behaviour. Both boys and girls seem to judge girls harsher when they experience online sexual violence.

Other examples of slut-shaming' or sexual double standards are:

- 'If a girl puts her photo online, she can expect to be judged'
- 'She deserved that, she is so easy'
- 'She took that picture, it's her own fault'

- ‘That girl should have been smarter’
- ‘She looks so hot, I give her 10 points’

Victim blaming can be encountered in or apply to all types of online violence against girls. Both teacher and students may hold unconscious biases or make stereotypical assumptions, particularly regarding girls. It is important for teachers to reflect on their own ideas and to question these. When teaching young people about online violence, it is crucial to recognize and address expressions of victim blaming and stereotypical assumptions directly when they come up, and to support students in questioning their views. This will also contribute to maintaining a safe setting during a workshop and a more open climate in school, in which young people are not scared to talk about experiences or to report incidents, and to a more sensitive response of both teachers and peers to disclosures, reports or incidents of online violence in school.

It is important to note here that the **role of bystanders can be crucial** in cases of online violence. Victim blaming or slut shaming by bystanders, often accompanied by exclusion, stigmatisation or public ‘lynching’ experienced by the victim, can sometimes have a more devastating impact than the initial act of online violence. On the contrary, a supportive, empathic bystander can diminish the negative impact of the event, empower the victim, and help them find a solution.

Addressing, discussing and making young people aware of victim blaming and stereotypes may lead to different attitudes and behaviour. Practical advice and preventative messages related to victim blaming that can be communicated to young people include:

Never blame the victim!
Sexting in itself is not a bad thing, if both people do it consensually. It can be fun and exciting, many teenagers do it.

If someone is **coerced or exploited**, it is not their fault, regardless of their previous actions. Victims may not see themselves as victims (for example when they participated in sexual acts) and might feel like it is their own fault. But exploiters often make victims do things they do not want to. It was not their own choice, and they are not to blame.

If someone experiences **sexualised bullying or unwanted sexualisation**, do not blame them or tell them they did something to provoke this It is always wrong to bully or shame someone or to steal or share someone's personal (online) information.

Girls often face **double sexual standards**. They are often judged in a harsher way than boys. This is not fair. It is your responsibility to change that and challenge ideas of inequality.

The behaviour of the people who try to shame or hurt another person is **unacceptable**.

Do not blame the victim for the harassment they experience. The emotional impact can be serious. Saying it is their fault could make them feel even worse.

During workshops about online violence and prevention, young people could get the idea that experiencing online violence happens because they failed to take (enough) preventative measures. In other words, awareness raising about prevention may unintentionally lead to victim blaming. To avoid this, frequently emphasize that a victim is never to blame:

It was not your fault

Protecting yourself online is important, but if things go wrong, it is never your own fault. Whether you have taken preventative measures or not. You are never to blame for becoming a victim of online violence.

3.3 How **teachers can create a safe setting for a workshop**

Online sexual violence is a very sensitive topic. Many young people have experience with this issue. They may have been a victim, but they also could have been a perpetrator. Or they may have witnessed sexual abuse as a `bystander', for example when they have seen it happening online or in real life to a brother, sister or a friend. In all cases, the young people involved may feel uncomfortable, traumatized, scared and/or ashamed. This makes is difficult to discuss the topic, or related topics, such as body parts, sexuality and boundaries, as it may trigger a strong reaction.

Be sensitive to youth's needs and address clearly from the beginning of the workshop what they can do if their participation raises concerns about their (online or offline) experiences or if they are distressed as a result of taking part. Make clear they can speak to you, a workshop assistant or the designated staff member for safeguarding at any point during or after the workshop, if they feel uncomfortable. Signpost them to other reporting options, such as anonymous child helplines, and organisations that offer support and advice about internet safety.

A facilitator also needs to explain here how he/she will deal with possible disclosures and the possible limits to keeping information confidential *(read more about this in Chapter 4)*.

Tips for creating a safe environment

In order to deliver a CYBERSAFE or other awareness raising workshop it is vital to create a safe space, in which young people feel comfortable to speak about their feelings and ideas in a supported way. A teacher can do the following things to create a safe environment for a group, in which discussions can flow freely:

- **Set ground rules.**
  Agree with the students on a set of ground rules that clearly states the expectations from behaviour and discussions. (See below for a more detailed description on how to do this.)

- **Make sure participation is voluntarily.**
  Students should only participate in the workshop voluntarily. In addition, they need to know that if at any point they would prefer not to participate, it is okay to take a break from the workshop. Some young people may have personal experiences of the issues being discussed that provoke an emotional reaction. Ensure there is a space and adequate supervision to allow children to take a break and that they receive (follow-up) support, if needed.

- **Take a non-judgmental approach**
  Although some opinions can and should be challenged, it is important not to shame or judge young people who share something during the workshop. Acknowledge their views as valid and support them in expressing their thoughts and conclusions. Also, do not allow your students to judge or shame each other. Address it adequately when it happens.

- **'No real names' policy**
  If a student wants to share a personal story about themselves or someone else in a group setting, it is better/safer for them that they talk in the third person and speak about 'my friend Sally', or simply 'a friend' or 'someone I know', instead of using people's real names. If young people do feel they need to share a personal story, or make a disclosure, this is a good sign. However, the workshop setting is not a safe space to do that. Thank and encourage them to share, but signpost them to a time and place they can do so with an appropriate member of staff.

- **Create a safe physical space**
  Consider an alternative seating arrangement that encourages discussion and involvement, for example a circle. You can also display posters in the room that signposts to child helplines and/or other relevant support organisations for (young) people who experienced (online) sexual abuse.

- **Make a question box**
  Young people may feel uncomfortable asking a question in front of the group. Invite them to note them down and add to a question box during or after the workshop. If they want an individual reply, ask them to add their name. Explain that you will respond to anonymously submitted questions in a general way (without mentioning names or details) during the next workshop or next appropriate moment with the whole group.

- **Don't actively encourage disclosures**
  Don't ask directly about intimate (online) experiences. So avoid questions *like 'did you ever share a nude image of yourself?* or *'have you been a victim of online violence?'*. Especially not in a group setting (but it is also not advisable to do this in an individual setting). If a child discloses something about their own experiences, you can talk/ask about in more detail. But do not actively try to make them disclose. It is better to ask general question, such as '*what do you think about sharing nude images on social media*?', '*What do you think that a child who experiences abuse could do best?*".

Setting ground rules

Ground rules ensure an environment in which everyone feels safe and respected. They are most effective when children feel ownership and responsibility over them. Therefore, it is important that they discuss and agree on the rules themselves. The following examples of ground rules could be used. Encourage them to engage with these and to make additions as they see fit before going forward.

Example 1:

- ✓ *one person talks at a time, listen to each other*
- ✓ *participation is voluntary*
- ✓ *it is okay to disagree*
- ✓ *it is important to be respectful (no making fun or putting others down)*
- ✓ *it is important to keep what is said in the workshop confidential*
- ✓ *there are no wrong answers, all opinions are welcome*
- ✓ *turn off cell phones*

Example 2:

- ✓ **Respect** – 'We show respect for each other, the facilitator and the topics we discuss today. We respond without judgement'
- ✓ **Confidentiality**– 'We respect each other's privacy, both during and after this workshop'
- ✓ **Listening**– 'We listen to each other and the facilitator. All opinions are valid'
- ✓ **Participation** – 'We make the most out of this workshop and take part in the activities as much as we can'
- ✓ **Ask Questions** – 'We ask questions if we are unsure about anything'
- ✓ **Support after a sensitive topic** – 'We ask for a break or support if we feel overwhelmed or triggered'
- ✓ **Child Protection** – 'If we want support, we know to whom we can talk in school'

Address victim blaming and sterotypical assumptions

As explained before, victims are often held accountable for the harm they experience by their peers, and this often stems from (unconscious) stereotypical assumptions about gender roles and norms. Girl victims are more likely to face a negative backlash from their peers – both boys and girls. For teachers it is important to recognize and address victim blaming when it happens, for example during a group discussion or a workshop.

Support children in questioning their views. Ask for example:
"Do you really think it is fair to blame him/her for the harm they experience?"
"Would you say the same when the victim was a boy/girl?"
"How would you feel if you experienced this, and someone said this to you?"

Other tips for creating a safe setting during a workshop

- Engage everyone, to avoid only getting the opinions of the vocal minority
- Plan for large amounts of disclosure/discussion towards the end of the workshop
- Make them feel heard: re-state what they say to make sure you understand them correctly, report back to them
- Avoid direct personal questions about sensitive topics
  Example: "Did you ever participate in sexting?" > "Why would young people participate in sexting?"
- Hand out cards at the end and invite participants to write down any thoughts or ideas they didn't want to share out loud
- Ensure you are familiar with your organisation's safeguarding and child protection policies, so you know how to take the appropriate action in case of disclosures or alarming signs.
- Make sure you are well acquainted with other reporting options young people have, such as national or local (anonymous) helplines, police or support organisations.
- Repeat options for support and reporting. Before and after the activities, point out to all children where they can go to for further advice and support. In the days and weeks after the activities, give regular reminders of the help and support that is available to them. Display for example a poster that signposts to reporting options and support organisations.

3.5 Exercises

In this section exercises are provided for teachers and for young people about online violence against girls and how to recognize it. The exercises for teachers can be used during a training on this topic and on how to teach about it. The exercises for young people can be used in a classroom or other setting during a workshop for young people on violence against girls. This can be one of the CYBERSAFE workshops, but also another type of workshop or lesson about this topic. No Internet or digital device is required for these exercises.

A. Exercises for teachers

Exercise A1: Quiz - test your knowledge of prevention of online violence

Time: 15-20 min.
Setting: group
Materials: Kahoot (optional)
Target group: teachers
Goal: A short quiz to test participants understanding of Chapter 3, including what young people and teachers can do to prevent online violence and what sexting and victim blaming is.

We advise to do the quiz using an interactive online platform, such as Kahoot, in order to engage participants. If that is not possible, the quiz can also be delivered by a trainer who reads the questions out loud, and participants write down their answers or show hands. To make it more fun, the group can then be divided in two teams, who battle against each other. If discussion arises in the group, allow some time for participants to react and voice their ideas.

The correct answers are in bold.

1. Is it true that the key to online violence prevention is awareness?

    a. **Yes, when young people know what online violence against girls is, what harm it causes and what they can do to protect themselves, their behavior changes.**
    b. No, awareness is important, but not enough to prevent it. Adults should supervise and/or restrict young people's online behavior more, in order to prevent online violence.

2. Please select from the list below what characterizes the emotional impact of online violence on young people's wellbeing:

    a. **Diminished self-esteem and possible self-inflicted harm or suicide**
    b. Increased time spent online
    c. **Feelings of guilt and shame**
    d. **Fear, anxiety, distress**
    e. All the above

3. What is re-victimization in the context of online violence?

    a. It is the process during which a person becomes a target of bullying and abuse for multiple times
    b. This is basically the threat of the abusive content being re-shared online after the initial incident

c. **Both definitions are correct**

4. Is it true that online violence can be also harmful for bystanders?

    a. No, being a bystander is the safest position
    b. Yes, online violence can also have a harmful emotional impact on people who witness it

5. Which of the statements below concerning legal consequences of online violence are correct?

    a. Since there is no clear definition for 'online violence' people who engage in it may not face any legal consequences in many countries.
    b. Across Europe, it is illegal to create, possess or distribute sexual images of minors (under 18).
    c. In most EU countries, young people are only cautioned if they are both under 18 and voluntarily shared nude images through sexting.
    d. All of the above

6. If you witness someone online becoming a target of online violence, what should you do?

    a. Nothing, this person's online privacy should be respected, so it is their own responsibility to handle it
    b. It's important to support the victim and speak up against the violence

7. Holding a person accountable for their sexual images leaked online is:

    a. Called victim blaming and is not acceptable
    b. Highlighting person's responsibility for committed actions
    c. A good way to teach young people not to participate in sexting

8. The most effective approach to raise awareness among young people about online violence is:

    a. To ensure they understand how dangerous internet can be and encourage to limit online interactions.
    b. **To create understanding about the online violence, risks and teach them safe, responsible online behavior**
    c. To explain all the legal consequences and introduce strict rules
    d. All of the above

Exercise A2: Group discussion about victim blaming and gender stereotypes

Time: 30 min.
Setting: group
Materials: Kahoot (optional), pens, paper
Goal: statements and an exercise to make participants aware of what victim blaming is and to challenge gender stereotypes and (unconscious) biases).

We advise to organize this group discussion by using an interactive online platform, such as Kahoot, in order to engage participants. People can vote 'agree' or 'disagree' on each statement. If that is not possible, the quiz can also be delivered by a trainer who writes down the statements (on a whiteboard) and participants vote by showing hands. Try to

encourage discussion after each statement, allow time for participants to react and voice their ideas and give some extra input if necessary.

Here are the statements:

1. **If a girl (13) wears sexy, revealing clothes, she can expect attention from men.**

Input for the discussion: the statement implies that if a girl attracts (possibly unwanted) attention, she is to blame. Is this fair? Should a minor be blamed, or should adult men who flirt with an underage girl be blamed?

2. **If a girl shares a nude image with her boyfriend, she could have known that the image ends up on the Internet.**

Input for discussion: it often happens that people blame the girl who sent her nude or posted a sexy image online, rather than directing their blame at the person who shared it non-consensually or the person who bullies or makes sexualised comments about the image. Is this fair? Would you feel the same if a boy shared his nude? Do we have the same standards for boys and girls?

3. **If a boy (15) has sex with his female teacher (21), this is not sexual abuse, because the boy was willing to have sex**

Input for the discussion: it is often thought that boys who actively participate in sex were doing that voluntarily. This does not have to be the case. Victims of sexual abuse can have physical signs, such as having an erection or orgasm, that are actually caused by fear. Or they can feel physical pleasure, while they are not willing to participate. Moreover, in this case. The boy is a minor and the teacher an adult, so according to the law this is child sexual abuse, and it does not matter is the child is participating voluntarily. Also, a teacher is in a position of authority, which creates an unequal power balance, making it more difficult for a child to refuse. Would your opinion be different if the victim was a girl?

4. **Online Violence is an issue that only concerns girls and women.**

While girls/women are targeted more often, both boys and girls can experience online violence, in particular boys that belong to the LGTB community. Also, increased knowledge and understanding about the different types of online violence can help anyone in society, not only women & girls, but also potential boy/male victims, potential perpetrators, potential bystanders, teachers, professionals, health workers. Everyone can play their role and take their responsibility in preventing online violence, protecting their own and others' online privacy, recognizing early signs and responding when things go wrong. We need both boys and girls, men and women to come forward and demand the end to online violence.

Exercise A3: Create a prevention plan

Time: 20 min.
Setting: group
Materials: printed tables
Target group: teachers
Goal: Participants will discuss and practice with how to prevent online violence in their school

Ask participants to think about what a teacher/professional can do to prevent online violence in school, and what their students could do. Ask them to fill in the table below.

How can we prevent online violence?

Teachers:	Students:
•	•

Examples

Teachers:	Students:
• Always explicitly address the emotional impact and the legal consequences that online violence may have on everyone involved • Have a child protection policy in place • Signpost to relevant reporting options and helplines in your classroom • Teach about what online violence is and what young people can do to prevent it • Etc.	• Before you share or post content about yourself, consider that it may be seen by people that you don't want to see it • Install anti-virus protection and firewalls • Keep your passwords secure, choose them carefully and do not share them with anyone or write them down. • Always use a PIN code or lock your phone in another way. Do not let others use or browse your phone. • Never forget to log out of your laptop, email or other accounts, especially if you leave your laptop, PC or phone unattended. • Use privacy settings on social media to make sure strangers cannot befriend you or access your accounts. • If you participated in sexting, delete all images or videos from your devices, to avoid others from seeing or sharing them. • Say no and speak out against people who share others' sexual images without consent. • Etc.

Exercise A4: Practice with delivering a CYBERSAFE Workshop

Time: 1-2 hours
Setting: group
Materials: printed CYBERSAFE Guide for Facilitators
Target group: teachers
Goal: Participants will practice with delivering an awareness raising workshop

Use the workshop plans in the CYBERSAFE Guide and divide the participants in small groups. One person in each group can deliver a part of a workshop, for example the introduction of the theme or an exercise, to the rest of the group and then the rest of the group pretends to be the students. Participants can take turns in delivering a part of the workshop. To make things more challenging, one of the 'students' can pretend to make a personal disclosure, or make a degrading/victim blaming comment to someone else.

At the end, the 'students' provide feedback to the teacher on how the information was explained, but also on attitude, non-judgemental approach, sense of safety in the group, handling of personal disclosures or degrading comments etc.

B. Exercises for young people

Exercise B1: Consequences of online violence

Time: 20 min.
Setting: small groups
Materials: none
Target group: young people
Goal: students will be more aware of the emotional and legal consequences of online violence.

Case
Heidi's boyfriend Peter makes pictures of her in her underwear. He says she is pretty, and he just wants to have something to look at when they are not together. Heidi feels uncomfortable, but she trusts him. They have been dating already for almost 4 months. They are both 15. Heidi has never had any intimate relationships before. She feels that Peter truly cares about her. Her parents have met him and approve of the relationship, although they do not know that Heidi and Peter are also intimate. One day at school, Heidi's friend tells her that there is a video of her and some boy having sex uploaded to one adult site. Heidi is very confused; she follows the link and realizes that Peter must have filmed them in secret. Only Heidi is recognizable in the video. A friend of Peter thought it was funny and shared the link on social media, so the whole school knows about it now. She is devastated.

Please divide the students into **three groups**. Discussion for **15 minutes**.

- Group 1 will discuss the possible consequences of the situation for Heidi (victim).
- Group 2 will discuss the possible consequences of the situation for Peter (perpetrator)
- Group 3 will discuss the possible consequences of the situation for the friend who shared the link (by-stander).

Each group should take notes and after 15 minutes the results are shared plenary. Discuss if there are any consequences that are the same to all parties. Have the students rank the different consequences, starting with the consequences that they think have the most harmful impact, and also explain why they have put these in that specific order.

Exercise B2: To share or not to share

Time: 30 min.
Setting: pairs, small groups or individually
Materials: printed table
Target group: young people
Goal: students will increase their understanding about how to protect their online privacy.

Students can work in pairs, small groups or individually. Give them 15 minutes to arrange the information examples on the list bellow in the table columns according to which information they think is better to keep for themselves, share with friends online, share publicly online etc.

When everyone is finished, each group shares something about their decisions plenary. Now lead a group discussion with the whole class on different decisions, opinions, doubts etc. Let student think, argue and discuss different points of view on online privacy, and reflect on which circumstances affect their decision to share something online or not. Establish how public they perceive different online spaces are: private groups and chats, social media profiles, school website. At the end, make student aware of the information that is especially sensitive for sharing online.

Keep to yourself	Can share privately with friends online	Can share on your social media profile	Can share on a school website	Depends on circumstances

INFROMATION EXAMPLES:

Name
Age
Birthday
Address
E-mail address
School
Are you single or taken?
What don't you like about school?
Which classmates you dislike?
Type of underwear you like to wear
Location of your birthmarks
Who is your best friend in love with?
Why are your parents getting a divorce?
Photo of you topless
What are your favourite movies?
What sort of music do you like?
What do you hate?
What are you most afraid of?
Video from a party
What you hope for?
What are you angry about?
What makes you feel saddest?
What annoys you?
What you love?

Exercise B3: Discussing Sexting

Time: 20 min.
Setting: group or small groups
Materials: none
Target group: young people
Goal: students will increase their understanding about what sexting is, why people do it and what the risks are, without being blamed, shamed, judged, or scared.

Introduce the topic of 'sexting' by using the information on page 39-40. Sit in a big circle and start a group discussion about sexting with your class. Use the following questions and follow up questions. Let your students know that all ideas are welcome and that they can discuss their views freely. Be aware of comments of students that include judgement,

(victim) blaming and gender stereotyping and address this in a non-judgemental way when they arise.

Questions to ask young people when discussing sexting:

1. When you send nude images or videos: do you call it sexting or do you have a different name for it?
2. Why do young people send nude images or videos?
3. List the risks someone takes when they send a nude image of themselves.
4. List the consequences someone might face when they pass on a nude image of someone else.
5. Why do young people often have a fear of telling someone if things go wrong?

Follow up questions can include:

1. Have you ever received a nude image of someone in a group conversation, for example on WhatsApp?

- *What did you do?*
- *What did you do with the image?*
- *What would you do differently now after this workshop?*

2. Do you know who to ask for help if it happens to you or your friend?

3. What could you do to help raise awareness about online violence?

4. Do you think having more open conversations about sexting / consent will help young people reach out and break the silence?

Exercise B4: Victim blaming

Time: 20 min.
Setting: individually
Materials: none
Target group: young people
Goal: students will increase their understanding about victim blaming and what the impact can be on the victim.

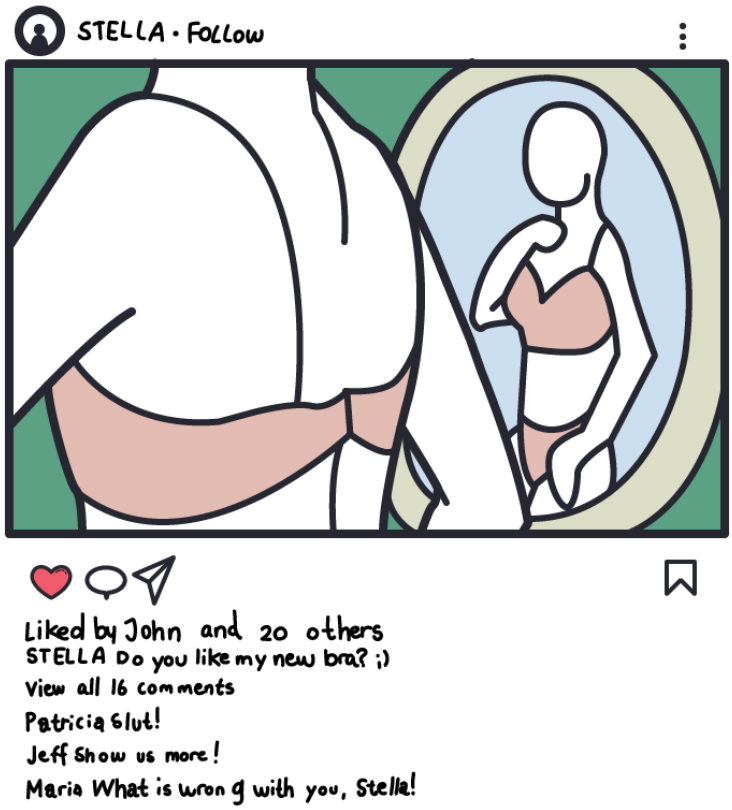
Ask your students to list as many victim blaming sentences that they have heard.

Examples are:
'She asked for it'
'She shouldn't have sent her nude image in the first place'
'That's what you get for flirting with them'
'You had to know what was going to happen if you were sending him those messages.'
'You shouldn't have been drinking.'
'You must have sent mixed messages.'
'What were you wearing in that video?'
'How hard did you try to stop him from taping you?'
'She should have been smarter'
'He should not have participated in webcam sex with a stranger, that was stupid'

Once they have completed their lists, ask the groups to take one of their victim blaming sentences and write down how they would **feel** if that had been said about them, what would they be **thinking** and how would they **behave**.

For example:
Victim blaming sentence 'That's what you get for flirting with them'
Feelings: Self-blame / annoyed / embarrassed
Thoughts: 'It is my fault' / 'Everyone is talking about me' / 'I can't cope'
Behaviour: Isolate self / withdraw from friends & family / self-harm

Aim of the exercise is to get young people to think about the impact their words can have on another person, how victim blaming is re-traumatising for the victim and the impact it can have on someone's mental health.



4. Responding to online violence against girls

This chapter addresses the importance for both young people and teachers to quickly and adequately respond to online violence when it happens in order to end the situation and prevent further harm for the youth involved. It discusses actions that can be taken by young people when they themselves experience online violence or what they can to intervene when they witness it. This knowledge is important for teachers to transfer to their students and to motivate and encourage them to step up and speak out when needed. Furthermore, this chapter addresses how teachers can respond in an adequate, yet sensitive way to disclosures and reports of online violence in their school.

As explained in the previous chapter, increased awareness can lead to changes in behaviour. When young people learn what to do when online violence happens, are provided with specific steps they can take, they will feel more empowered to take positive action when they experience or witness online violence, such as disclosing it to a friend or a teacher, reporting to police or a hotline, intervening and speaking up for a friend, or asking for support. The same goes for teachers, when provided with a clear framework for action, they will feel more equipped and confident to respond to suspicions, disclosures or reports and they will be more likely to do that in a sensitive, respectful and non-judgemental way that is also effective.

The textboxes in this chapter contain practical advice that can be used to communicate practical advice to young people in school on how to respond to (different types of) online violence when it occurs. They correspond to the advice that is given in the CYBERSAFE Online Tool.

Learning objectives of this chapter

Main objective:
To equip teachers with knowledge, skills and practical tools needed for young people and for teachers to respond to online violence against girls in school in a supportive and effective way when cases occur, in order to end violence and prevent further harm.

After using this curriculum, teachers:

- can teach young people how they can respond in a positive, supportive, and effective way when they experience or witness online violence.
- are equipped with the knowledge, skills and tools needed to respond to suspicions, disclosures or reports of online violence in school in an adequate, sensitive and non-judgemental way.

4.1 How can young people respond to online violence?

When a young person experiences online violence (as a victim) or witnesses it (as a bystander, depending on the situation and the type of violence, there are actions he or she can take in order to end the violence. This includes practical steps, such as removing content used against them from the Internet or blocking a person online, as well as asking for support or going to the police. Young people are often unaware of the options they have to try to end or at least improve the situation, which may result in online violence continuing for a long time or taking on more severe forms. Young people can also be unaware of their ability to step up and intervene on behalf of someone else who experiences online violence, or to support this victim. When young people are provided with a framework of concrete actions they can take, they are more likely to respond to online violence in an effective, positive and supportive way when they experience or witness it. As a teacher, you can play an important role in transferring this knowledge and make them aware of their options and responsibility.

What can a victim of online violence do?

If young people experience online sexual violence, there are several things they can do in response, which include:

- **Talking to a trusted person** – the most important advice you can give to your students is to talk to someone they trust and that feels safe when they experience (or witness) online violence. They do not need to go through it alone or to feel ashamed, they are allowed to ask for support. This person is preferably an adult, like a parent, a teacher, a neighbour, a sports coach etc. But it can also be a peer, like a best friend or a classmate. Make your students aware that involving another person can help them to end the situation and find the support they need.
- **Dealing with the abusive content** – if a young person is bullied, threatened, exploited or humiliated because of an intimate image, degrading comments or other (online) content, it is important to remove this content as soon as possible or to ensure people cannot see, access or share that content anymore. Social media platforms have options to flag or report content, and it is usually removed quickly afterwards. If the content is on a website, it is possible to request the website administrators to remove the content. If this does not work, a national helpline or hotline can be contacted. In any case, it is important to make screenshots or save proof of the online violence in another way before the content is removed, to serve as evidence for the police.
- **Stop all forms of communication with the perpetrator(s)** – when a young person experiences online violence, especially in cases that involve exploitation and blackmailing, it is important that all lines of contact with those who hurt or harm them are ended. For example, through blocking people who harass or bully them online. Talking back or trying to fight a bully or someone who makes a sexual or degrading comment is not advisable, as this often encourages that person to continue their behaviour. In particular in cases of coercion or exploitation it is of utmost importance that young people end all communication and that they do not respond to threats of the exploiter, because this will give the exploiter more power and encourages further abuse. The person should be blocked on all devices and from all accounts.
- **Report online violence** – explain to your students that in order to identify and end online violence, reporting it is key. Reporting may also show to perpetrator and others that their behaviour is unacceptable. Depending on the case, the content or person can be reported to the relevant social media platform, online game or website, which may lead to the temporary or permanent suspension of the

perpetrator's account. A report can be made to school, but also – often anonymously – to a national (child) helpline or hotline that deals with online sexual abuse images and that can give advice or support in helping to get the content removed. Since many forms of online violence are a violation of the law, a report can also be made to the police, which may lead to the prosecution of the perpetrator and other people involved.

When addressing how your students can respond to online violence, it is also important to stress that **online violence should never be a reason to give up access to the Internet**. Many young people, especially girls, censor their post or leave social media altogether after being sexually harassed online. While it is understandable that someone who has experienced online violence wants to be (partially) offline for a while, getting off the Internet is not a long-term solution, as online access is essential to have a voice in digital space and to fully participate in society. A victim of online violence has done nothing wrong, so they should not be disadvantaged.

Different actions are required in response to different types of online violence. The textbox below gives an overview of more specific steps that young people can take when they experience online violence themselves, and how these can be communicated to them. The steps are categorised according to the four main types of online violence. It is important to realize that **each situation of online violence is unique** and requires specific tailor-made advice and steps to take.

A. Non-consensual sharing of sexual image/video

When your sexual image or video has been shared online, it may seem like the end of the world. But try not to panic, there are several things you can do to minimize the effect of the image.

Don't feel guilty or ashamed. The other person or people had no right to share your intimate image without your permission.

Revenge is not a good idea

Although you are right to be angry, do not try to take revenge. This can make the situation worse, and it may have serious (legal) consequences for you too.

The image can spread rapidly over the Internet, so **act as quickly as possible.** Take the following steps:

Talk to someone you trust

Preferably your parents or another adult, like a teacher at school. But you can also talk to a friend or someone else you trust. Together you can look for the best solution.

Collect evidence

Save (a screenshot of) the image online. When you go to the police, you can use this as evidence.

Removing the image from the Internet

If your image is posted on a website or social media, inform the site administrators as soon as possible. Tell them you are a minor and that the image was posted without your permission.

Report it!

- To a **hotline or helpline** - you can report anonymously. They listen to you and they can give you advice on what to do next. If you are a minor, the image may legally be qualified as 'child sexual abuse material' and the hotline or helpline will help you get the image removed from the Internet.
- To the **police** - sharing a nude image of a minor without consent is a crime, which you can report to the police.

B. Exploitation, Coercion and Threats

If you are being sexually exploited, it can be very difficult and scary to ask for help. But there are lots of places to go to for help and things will feel better when you talk to someone. Nobody asks, or deserves, to be exploited, **it was not your fault**. Be aware that if you do not act, the situation will continue and possibly get worse.

To end the situation, you can take the following steps:

End contact with the exploiter
If you can, remove yourself from the exploitative situation. Block the person on your phone and on social media, to make sure he/she cannot blackmail or threaten you anymore. Do not give in to any demands (financial, sexual favours or other), because it will only encourage the person to continue blackmailing you.

Talk to someone you trust
Preferably your parents or another adult, like a teacher at school. But you can also talk to a friend or someone else. Together you can look for the best solution.

Collect evidence
Save (a screenshot of) the chats or texts you exchanged with the exploiter, in which he/she threatens you or asks for sexual favours online. When you go to the police, you can use this as evidence.

Report it!
• To the **police** – exploitation, threatening and blackmailing, as well as possessing nude images of a minor, are serious crimes. The police is there to help you, you will not get in trouble.
• To a **helpline** or **support organisation** - you can often report anonymously. They listen to you and they can give you advice on what to do next. If there are nude images of you online, they can help you to get them removed from the internet.

C. Sexualised bullying

When you experience sexualised bullying, **do not feel guilty or ashamed.** The other person or people had no right to bully you, shame you, use your image or personal details, hack your device, to impersonate you, to share your personal image etc.

Don't feed the trolls
The bully wants a reaction from you. Do not respond if you are angry or upset. This may only encourage the bully and make him/her feel powerful. This does not mean that you need to be silent. It is very good to show your boundaries and to take an assertive stand for yourself, for example by clearly saying no and demanding the bullies to stop.

Revenge is not a good idea
Although you are right to be angry, do not try to take revenge. This can make the situation worse, and it may have serious (legal) consequences for you too.

The situation may not stop on its own. You need to act! Take the following steps:

Talk to someone you trust
Preferably your parents or another adult, like a teacher at school. But you can also talk to a friend or someone else you trust. Together you can look for the best solution.

Collect evidence
Save (a screenshot of) the posts and images online, in which you are impersonated or humiliated. When you go to the police, you can use this as evidence.

Contact the website
If an image, video, or comment of or about you is posted on a website or social media, inform the site administrators and tell them you are a minor and that the image was posted without your permission. Also inform them that your bullied or, for example that your account is hacked, so

they can block it to prevent further abuse. Ask them to remove all the comments about you or made in your name, that were not written by you.

Report it!
• To the **website or platform** - inform the site administrators and tell them you are a minor and that you feel degraded or harassed by the picture and comments, so they can warn or block the people who participate in the bullying.
• To a **hotline or helpline** - you can report anonymously. They listen to you, and they can give you advice on what to do next.
• To the **police** – sharing a nude image of a minor without consent is a crime, and creating a fake profile is identity theft, which you can report to the police.

D. Unwanted sexualisation
If you receive unwanted sexual advances or comments, **don't blame yourself**. This is a form of online violence. The other person or people had no right to shame or humiliate you.

Talk to someone you trust
Preferably your parents or another adult, like a teacher at school. But you can also talk to a friend or someone else you trust. Together you can look for the best solution to end this situation.

Collect evidence
Save (a screenshot of) the posts and comments online, in which you are shamed or humiliated. When you go to the police, you can use this as evidence.

Report it!
• To the **website or platform** - inform the site administrators and tell them you are a minor and that you feel harassed by the picture and comments, so they can warn or block the people who participate in the harassment.
• To a **hotline or helpline** - you can report anonymously. They listen to you, and they can give you advice on what to do next.
• To the **police** – slander and harming someone's reputation, as well as making sexual comments or advances to a minor, can be illegal.

What can a witness of online violence do?

Besides learning how to respond when experiencing online violence as a victim, it is important that young people learn what actions they can take when they witness online violence or when they know one of their peers is experiencing it. This can be a friend or classmate, but also someone they do not know, but about whom they see comments or images online. As a bystander, they have the choice to participate (and make things worse) or to ignore situations of online violence, or they can take responsibility and attempt to intervene when they witness (potentially) harmful situations, by speaking up and by offering support to the victim. Try to encourage your students to do this, even though it can be intimidating, due to peer pressure and the fear of becoming a target, to become a bystander that actively supports a victim.

Steps that bystanders can take to intervene and support the victim overlap with steps that victims can take, mentioned in the previous part. They can also talk to a trusted adult, try to report the content, comment or person online, to school, anonymous to a helpline or hotline or even go to the police. What is further important when a young person steps up for a victim is:

- **Speaking up** – if a young person who witnesses online violence publicly (online or offline) speaks out against the ones who are perpetrating or bullying, this sends a powerful message to the entire group that online violence cannot be tolerated, and that the victim is not alone. It may inspire others to do the same.

- **Providing support to the victim** – while a bystander speaking out may already feel supportive to a victim of online violence, this person can also offer their support to the victim by asking them if they need help, comforting them, and joining them in taking further steps.

The following textboxes provide messages to young people about how to respond when they witness someone else being a victim of online violence. It is important to note that not all advice is relevant in all situations. Depending on the type of online violence experienced and the specific situation, different actions should be taken.

What to do if you witness online violence?

If someone's nude image is being shared, without this person's consent, or when someone is exploited, bullied or harassed online and you witness it or hear about it: **try to help.** It is your responsibility to do what you can to end the situation.

Here are some things you can do, depending on the situation:

Do not participate in harming someone
Never participate in sharing someone's image. It may seem innocent to pass on or like an image. But the more people participate, the more harm it brings to the victim. Liking, sharing, or passing on humiliating posts or (nude) images of a person under 18 is emotionally damaging for that person. It can also be illegal, and it can have serious legal consequences for you as well. If you witness someone being bullied, never participate. Imagine it was someone you care about. Bullying can have a very big emotional impact. Nobody deserves this.
Be part of the solution, not the problem!

Say no to online violence against girls!
Young people may feel pressure from their peers to participate in online violence. It may seem innocent and funny at first. And perhaps you are afraid that you will be bullied too if you do not participate. Be aware that it may have serious consequences. **Say no!**

Speak up!
Speak out against the bully and other people in your group who participate. Make clear that it is **wrong**, illegal and that you do not want to get involved. This might inspire others to do the same. And it will show the victim that he/she is not alone.

Support the victim
Make sure the person on the receiving end is okay. Let him/her know you are there for them, even if they refuse to talk to you at first. Offer your help, advise him/her to talk to a trusted adult.

Report it, don't ignore it
Encourage and support your friend in making a report to the police or to a helpline or other organisation. Reports can also be made to the social media platforms or websites where the online violence takes place. You can also make a report yourself.

Don't take it all on yourself
You do not have to fix the situation on your own. **Always seek support from an adult you trust,** if you think someone else is unsafe, for example a parent or teacher. Together, you can look for a solution. Many schools have protocols to handle online violence. And make sure you get the support you need yourself.

Exploitation, coercion and threats – supporting a friend
If your friend or classmate experiences online violence in the form of exploitation, coercion or threats, it is important that you show understanding and support. Keep in mind that:

•Victims may not see themselves as victims (for example when they have initially consented to participating in sexual acts), they might feel like it is their own fault. But exploiters often make victims do things they do not want to. **It was not their own choice and they are not to blame**.
• It is often difficult for victims to leave their exploiter because they might l**ove** them or be **frightened** of them.
• Threats and blackmail can be very scary, and keep the victim in the exploitative relationship, because they **fear** the consequences.
• Sometimes exploiters encourage their victims to take **alcohol or drugs**, or to participate in criminal activity.

What can a perpetrator of online violence do?

There might be situations in which the person who perpetrates online violence or the people who participate in the harassment or bullying regret their own actions, for example because they were initially not aware of the consequences their behaviour would have on the victim. It is important to address this during a workshop and to stress that it is always better to come forward and do what is possible to end the situation. Even though there may be consequences, including legal consequences, these will always be less severe if they have come forward and taken actions to reverse the harm they caused.

It is important to provide young people with concrete steps they could take in such a situation. These may include:

- Removing the other person's intimate image or video form the Internet and from your own devices.
- Removing any hurtful or degrading comment you or others made online.
- Telling others who have participated in the harassment or bullying that it is wrong and that you all need to stop.
- Apologizing to the victim.
- Asking for help. It can be difficult to change your behaviour or the outcomes of your behaviour, but having the intention is a good first step and a trusted person, for example a teacher, parent or counsellor, may be able to offer support and guidance.

Why young people often ignore online violence

While we try to encourage young people to take action against online violence and make reports, it is important to understand underlying barriers they may experience to do this Although many young people experience or witness online violence, they often do not report it, or they do not take positive actions such as talking to a parent, a teacher or stepping up for the victim.

Young people may experience **barriers to report** or act, such as: embarrassment, shame and worries about the consequences, being bullied themselves or being blamed. These barriers should also be addressed during the workshop.

Often young people experience **fear of going to the police**, as they think they will get in trouble for breaking the law by sharing their own nude image.

As a teacher, it is important to address these barriers and fears:

- Reinforce that even though the legislation outlines creating sexual images of minors is illegal, if the person who took the image (of him- or herself) is later subject to a crime relating to that image, they will not be prosecuted.

- To diminish fears about the police, outline the investigative process: usually an interview with a specialised officer, followed by evidence gathering by the police. Police have the ability to retrieve images through using technology and find out when and to whom images were sent.
- Advise them to go to the police with a trusted adult or friend.

4.2 How can teachers respond to online violence?

Chapter 2 addressed signs of online violence and how to talk to a young person if you recognize signs. This paragraph explains how teacher can respond to actual disclosures and reports of online violence, which can result from one-on-one conversations with students after addressing observed signs. But they can also come up during or after a workshop about the online violence, or at any other moment. Disclosures or reports can be made by a young person who is targeted by online violence, but also by someone who witnessed it or heard rumours, or even by the person who initiated the violence or participated in it. When this happens, it is important that teachers know how to react in a sensitive and non-judgemental way and what actions to take in order to end the situation, prevent further harm and ensure the victim receives the support he or she needs.

Reacting to disclosures

When a boy or girl decides to tell someone about online sexual abuse (any form), it is called 'making a disclosure'. **The way you respond can make a world of difference for that child.** Each school should have a clear child protection policy or safeguarding procedure in place. It is important for young people to understand that while the workshop provides a space to be open and honest, you have a duty to protect children and that if a disclosure concerns illegal activity or a risk of harm, you may be obligated to inform the school. Address this at the beginning of a workshop and also when a student comes to you to make a disclosure.

Disclosures during a workshop

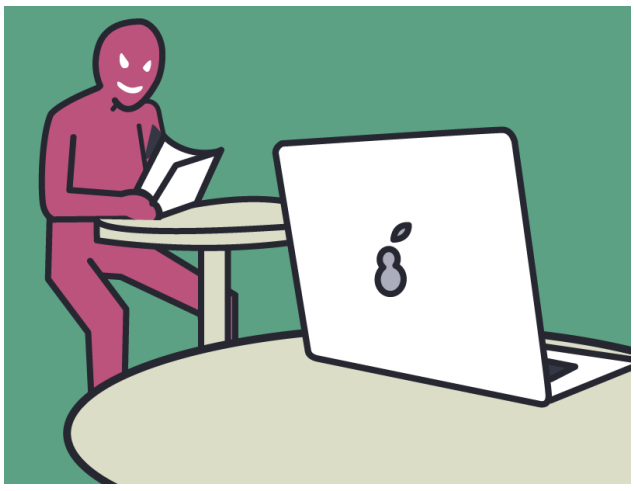
The aim of workshops is not and should not be to encourage personal disclosures during the workshop. The aim is to raise awareness and allow your students to explore and discuss the issue of online violence in a safe setting and a group setting is not suitable to discuss and follow up on sensitive, personal negative experiences. Since reactions of the group cannot be controlled, this may be harmful for the person who discloses, who is already extra vulnerable due to the experience they had.

However, as a result of addressing the issue of online violence, it is possible that one of your students makes a disclosure in the group about a personal experience or something they have witnessed. If this happens:

- Remain calm
- Do not cast any judgement.
- Acknowledge the student for doing the right thing by speaking up and **thank him/her** for sharing.
- Make sure he or she is signposted to a time and place they can share their story with you or an appropriate member of staff and get adequate support.

A useful strategy to prevent young people from disclosing abuse in these settings is '**protective interruption'**. This means interrupting the child or young person before they disclose and at the same time advising they can talk privately with you after the session or in a break.

When you follow up on the disclosure, or when a student discloses to you after the workshop or spontaneously at another moment, the advice in the textbox below provides guidance on how to react in a sensitive and non-judgemental way.



Three guiding principles in reacting to disclosures

When a young person discloses about online sexual violence, it is important to:

Listen:

- Remain calm and re-assuring
- Take the boy or girl to a private place
- Sit at their eye level
- **Listen** carefully to what they are saying
- Let them use their own words (do not use words they have not used)
- Provide plenty of time
- Control any expressions of panic or shock

Believe

- Reassure the boy or girl that you **believe** them
- Recognize how brave they are for speaking up and that it is hard to talk about this
- Reassure them that the harassment or bullying is not their fault
- Avoid intensive questioning (do not ask about details of the abuse)
- Don't use 'why' questions ('what' and 'how' are preferable)

Act

- Understand your responsibilities, be aware of your school's child protection policy and safeguarding procedure.
- Meet health and safety needs
- Let the boy or girl know who you need to inform or from whom you need to seek their advice as to what you need to do next.
- If there is a suspicion of serious illegal behaviour, it is not your role to investigate the disclosure. Reassure the boy or girl that there are people whose job it is to investigate and support them.

The text below will provide further guidance on actions to take after disclosures.

How to follow up on disclosures and reports[30]

When incidents of online sexual harassment occur, the ways in which schools respond to them and support those involved can be **crucial in preventing further escalation, harmful behaviour and victimisation**. While it should be kept in mind that each case of online violence is unique and needs a specific, tailor-made response, the following information and textboxes provide some general guidelines on how teachers can respond to reports of online violence in their school. However, it is important to note that each school should have a child protection policy in place which describes what steps need to be taken in case of (online) violence and that this should be followed at all times.

[30] The content of this paragraph is based on '*Guidance for Schools. Responding to online sexual harassment*' from Childnet International, available at: https://www.childnet.com/ufiles/3_Responding_to_Online_Sexual_Harassment.pdf

How to respond to cases of online violence (for teachers)

When an actual report is made, the following things should be considered or done:

- Make sure you create an **overview** of the incident: what has happened, to whom, who was involved, who has witnessed it, how was the content shared, through which channels etc.
- Ensure that the **victim receives the support** he or she needs, both mentally and in practical terms.
- The victim may not have made the report themselves. If someone else made the report, be aware and handle it sensitively.
- **Avoid victim-blaming**. The victim may have engaged in risky online behaviour that another person has taken advantage of or exploited, but this does not mean they deserve blame. Carefully consider your language when you support the victim and take a non-judgmental approach.
- **Involve the victim** or the person that makes the report in the process and in decision making. Give them as much information and detail on next steps as appropriate for them not to get upset even more or feel insecure or powerless. If you need to inform a supervisor, school management and/or designated child safeguarding lead, ask the boy or girl if they want to be a part of that conversation.
- Do not forget to consider what **support the alleged perpetrator** may require. Keep in mind that their behaviour could be the result of their own experiences with abuse or exposure to abusive content or behaviour. This does not mean disciplinary action cannot be taken – this can and should occur at the same time, if necessary, proportional to the incident.
- Consider if any **other young people need support**. Witnesses or friends of the victim who have find out about the online violence may also be upset and in need of support. If content is shared through social media, it is possible that a very large group of young people has been exposed to it.
- Consider if **other schools** need to be contacted. If young people from outside of the school are believed to be involved, it may be good to inform their schools of any incidents, if possible. They may be currently unaware or may have further information about the situation.
- Only contact **parents or other carers** once you have advice and guidance from the school management and/or external agencies. This can be the parents of the victim, the perpetrator and/or the parents of the other classmates, depending on the situation. Inform the young person about the process you must follow. Realize that parents may be upset or angry and may also need emotional support and guidance in how to follow up, avoid victim blaming and support their child.

When a sexual image or video is shared online

Online sexual violence, regardless of the type, often involves the (threat of) an intimate photo or video shared online. When this happens, it is important to **respond quickly**, as the longer you wait, the longer the content can circulate online, be spread to other

classes or schools and the more difficult it becomes to remove it and contain the incident.

While each situation is different and needs a specific approach, the information below provides possible steps to take when harmful online content is circulating in your school.

Keep in mind that watching and possessing sexual images of minors is illegal, regardless of the intention behind doing it. Teachers should therefore never view illegal images, unless doing so is unavoidable or necessary to the safety of the students involved. Teachers should never copy or share illegal images.

Removing the content from the Internet:

- The quickest and most effective route to removing online content is for the person who originally posted it to take it down or delete it. If this person is known, urgently request him or her to remove the content. Do the same with other persons who shared the content. Also request these persons to remove the content from all their personal devices.
- Contact the social media platform or website where the content is shared. There are usually specific reporting tools or routes available to flag or report content and to request its removal. Online service providers are obliged to remove illegal content and usually remove other harmful content quickly when it is reported.
- To remove illegal images from the internet, you can also contact a national hotline or (child) helpline for online sexual abuse. National hotlines can be found via the website of INHOPE.
- Before removing the image/video, make sure that you make screenshots of the content when it is still online. This can serve as evidence later in the process.

Reporting to the police

In any case where the material was shared **without consent**, obtained by pressure or shared with malice, if there are signs of coercion, blackmail or adult involvement, or if the incident is extreme or violent, or when a high number of young people are involved, a report should be made to the police.

Even if a victim does not want the police to be involved, teachers may still be obliged to report the incident to protect the boy or girl (or other young people) from harm. It is vital the **victim is kept informed** of the reasons behind needing to involve the police.

While **anonymous tips** are always an option, identified reporting increases the likelihood of prosecuting the perpetrator.

If you have concerns over the **young person's safety**, for example in cases of grooming or exploitation, be sure to discuss them explicitly with authorities when you make a report.

While the immediate response to incidents, containment, removal of online content and reporting to the police are the most urgent actions to take after disclosures or reports of online violence, there are some other things to consider as well.

Each incident of online violence can be used as a **starting point to raise awareness**. Often, a group or the entire class is involved in an incident. Some may have participated, others may have tried to defend the victim or stayed silent. Online violence may create a feeling of unsafety for the entire group. Anyone may have an opinion, or an emotional reaction to what happened. Allow students time and opportunity to de-brief and share their reaction. Ensure that those who participated recognize the consequences of their actions and give a strong signal that what has happened is unacceptable. Take the opportunity to raise awareness about what online violence is, what the consequences can be, how it can be prevented and how they can respond if it would happen again, to them or to someone else, for example by delivering a CYBERSAFE workshop.

Furthermore, online sexual harassment can have a lasting impact on those involved. This is amplified by the online nature of the harassment: the victim may be worried the harassment, or the harmful content can reappear at any time. There is also a risk that the alleged perpetrator receives abuse for their apparent actions. Make sure to check regularly with those involved if they need further **support for a longer period of time**.

Moreover, schools need to be aware and **prepared for possible attention of the media**. While this does not always happen, it is wise to prepare a media statement after a serious incident, to coordinate and align internal and external communication that may protect students and staff from unwanted exposure.

4.3 Exercises

In this section exercises for teachers and for young people are provided about online violence against girls and **how to respond when it happens**. The exercises for teachers can be used during a training on this topic and on how to teach about it. The exercises for young people can be used by teachers in a classroom or other setting during a workshop for young people on violence against girls. This can be one of the CYBERSAFE workshops, but also another type of workshop or lesson about this topic. No Internet or digital device is required for these exercises.

A. Exercises for teachers

Exercise A1: Quiz - test your knowledge of responding to online violence

Time: 15-20 min.
Setting: group
Materials: Kahoot (optional)
Target group: teachers
Goal: A short quiz to test participants understanding of Chapter 4, including what young people and teachers can do in response to incidents of online violence.

We advise to do the quiz using an interactive online platform, such as Kahoot, in order to engage participants. If that is not possible, the quiz can also be delivered by a trainer who reads the questions out loud, and participants write down their answers or show hands. To make it more fun, the group can then be divided in two teams, who battle against each other. If discussion arises in the group, allow some time for participants to react and voice their ideas.

The correct answers are in bold.

1. Young people often ignore or look away from online violence, why is that?

    a. **They are often unaware of the options they have to try to end the situation or to step up and intervene if someone else is the victim.**
    b. They often do not care enough if they are not a victim themselves.
    c. **They may be scared to be targeted themselves if they speak out.**

2. Young people who experience online violence can do several things in response. Which one is most important?
    a. Dealing with the abusive content and removing it from the Internet.
    b. **Talking to a trusted person.**
    c. Stopping all lines of communication with the perpetrator(s)
    d. Making a report.

3. When a young person is targeted by online violence, they sometimes want to give up using the Internet all together. Why should you advise against that, as a teacher?
    a. Because then they let the perpetrator or bully win.
    b. **It is not a long-term solution. Access to the Internet is vital to fully participate in society.**
    c. I would not advise against it. Young people should stop using Internet, because only then they avoid all risks of online violence.

4. A young person is a victim of sexual exploitation. The exploiter blackmails her with an intimate photo. What steps should the victim take?

a. Talking to a trusted person, removing the image from the Internet, making a report to the police
b. Talking to a trusted person, end all contact with the exploiter, flagging degrading comments online, reporting the person to social media and the police.
c. Talking to a trusted person, end all contact with the exploiter, collecting evidence of being blackmailed, making a report to the police.

5. What can a perpetrator of online violence do in order to end the situation.
    a. Nothing, the perpetrator is causing the situation, why should we address his/her role when we talk about responding to online violence?
    b. **Sometimes perpetrators or young people who participate in online violence regrets their actions once they see the impact. They can remove the hurtful content or comments, apologize, speak up and/or ask for help to change their behaviour**.
    c. A perpetrator can report oneself to the police and face the consequences, that's it.

6. If a student discloses a negative personal experience <u>during a workshop,</u> what should you do as a teacher?
    a. Remain calm, don't judge, thank the student for sharing, signpost the student to a more appropriate time and place where they can share their story and get support.
    b. Remain calm, listen carefully, do not judge, tell them you believe them, ask questions to understand what happened and who was involved, take adequate action and inform the student what you will do next.
    c. Tell the student that a workshop is not an appropriate moment to share this story and continue the workshop, in order not to lose attention of the rest of the group.

7. When incidents of online sexual violence occur, the way in which teacher and school respond is crucial. Why is this important?
    a. To avoid any negative attention from parents or media towards the school.
    b. It prevents harmful online content from being spread.
    c. An adequate response is important in preventing further escalation, harmful behaviour and victimisation.

8. A boy and a girl have shared nude images with each other. While this was initially consensual, the girl discloses to you that she feels unsafe by her actions. What should you do as a teacher?
    a. I would call the parents and make a report to the police, sharing nude images of minors is illegal after all.
    b. I would have a conversation with both the boy and the girl about the risks of sexting, without being judgemental, and then ask them both to delete the images.
    c. I would make an anonymous report about the images to a national hotline for child sexual abuse images.

Exercise A2: How (not) to respond to disclosures

Time: 30-45 min.
Setting: small groups
Materials: flipchart, markers
Goal: participants will practice with how to talk to a child in distress and how to respond to disclosures of online sexual violence.

Introduce the exercise to the participants: they will read a case study and then answer some individual questions.

Case study:

Maria is a 13-year-old girl who comes from a broken family. Her dad left when she was young, and her mother has a drinking problem. She lives with her uncle and aunt and their 5 other children. She is a good student at school and her grades are usually above average. Although she is social and has some friends in class, she is often on her own.
At some point, the teacher notices that Maria does not look happy. She loses weight, looks tired and seems to have lost her interest in school and friends. When he talks about this with her, at first, she does not want to speak. But a week later, she asks the teacher if she can talk to him again. Slowly she starts to open up. She shares with him that a while ago someone, who seemed to be a nice-looking boy her age, approached her via social media. They started to chat regularly, and he showed a lot of interest in her. She liked him and she was happy that she finally could talk to someone about the stressful situation at home. When he told her he was in love with her, their conversations started to become more romantic and also sexual. She felt a bit uncomfortable, but she did not know how to respond, and she did not want to disappoint him. At some point they shared naked images. However, soon after that the 'boy' revealed that he was in fact a 27-year-old adult man. He tried to convince her that age was not a problem and that they could continue their 'relationship' as before, but she was in shock and tried to end the contact. At that point, the man started blackmailing her. If she would not continue their contact and sending naked images, he would share the first image with her friends and family. She was very scared and decided not to tell anyone and continues to send images. This has been going on for several weeks now. Yesterday, the man told her he wanted to meet her in person. This is when Maria decided to ask for help. She is very scared, ashamed and hopeless.

- **<u>Individual work</u>**

Write down all the emotions and thoughts that Maria may have had:
- When she first started to chat with the 'boy'
- When the boy revealed he was an adult man and started to blackmail her

After five minutes write down everybody's reactions on a flipchart and go through them plenary.

- **<u>Role play</u>**

Divide in groups of 5-7 persons. In each group, one person plays Maria and one person on is the teacher, talking to her about her experiences and what could be done about the situation. Allow for a little bit of time for the role players to prepare for this.
The other people in the group act as observers and should look how the adult begins the conversation and how he/she communicates with Maria non-verbally and verbally. What kinds of statements and questions are used? How does he/she position him/herself towards Maria? Does he/she accept Maria's feelings, or does he/she criticize/neglects/judges/ignores them?

Discuss with the whole group what they saw. Make sure that feedback is not negative or personal. It should just be focused on certain behaviours people saw. Also ask the two role players how they experienced things (from within their role).

Conclude with the below

Important things to keep in mind when talking to a young person in distress: *-Choose a safe, comfortable place to talk (so not in the hallway, or somewhere outside where people are passing by all the time)* *-Choose a position that puts you at equal height (so not from behind a desk or an higher chair)* *-Be aware of non-verbal cues, both from the young person as well as from yourself (and don't force things upon him/her, like having to look you in the eyes for example)* *-Listen, listen, listen (also to the silences) and never judge! Don't try to push the young person to disclose things; let him/her decide on the pace. If needed you can arrange other opportunities to try and talk.*

- **How to follow up?**

The next step is to jointly (in the small groups) make a list of actions that a teacher should take after the disclosure about the case above.

Answer can include telling the girls she is brave and did the right thing when asking for help, advising the girl to end all contact with the abuser, calling a helpline for advice on how to approach the situation, following the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, talking to the girls' parents, making a report to the police (in consultation with the girl), finding professional support and counselling for the girl)

Exercise A3: Sharing professional experiences in a safe setting

Time: 60 min.
Setting: small groups and plenary
Materials: none
Goal: the main goal of this exercise is to allow participants to share their experiences working with young people who have experienced online sexual violence with each other and to learn from each other, ask questions etc. The exercise is also intended to show participants what is necessary to create a safe group setting, in which people feel comfortable to discuss a sensitive issue that may trigger emotions, feelings of discomfort. This will be useful when participants will lead workshops with young people.

Creating a safe setting

Start plenary and explain the exercise and the need to create a safe setting. Set **ground rules** and write these on the whiteboard. Ask if anyone agrees with these rules and if they have suggestions for rules to be added.

Example of ground rules:

- ✓ ***Respect*** *– 'We show respect for each other and the topics we discuss today. We respond without judgement'*
- ✓ ***Confidentiality****– 'We respect each other's privacy, both during and after this workshop'*
- ✓ ***Listening****– 'We listen to each other. All opinions are valid'*

- ✓ ***Ask Questions*** *– 'We ask questions if we are unsure about anything'*
- ✓ ***Support after a sensitive topic*** *– 'We ask for a break or support if we feel overwhelmed or triggered'*

Then divide in small groups. Groups should be a mix of people who have experience with working with children who experienced online violence and people who don't have experience yet. Each group appoints **one leader** (preferably someone with no experience with abused children, since he/she will not have to share anything). The leader will start with a 'Check In' and ask the people in the group: *describe in one word how you feel right now?*

Sharing experiences

Then the sharing of experiences can start. People can share their stories about own experiences of working with young people who experienced abuse, but they can also share stories that they have heard of from others. For each case, the group jointly tries to identify:

- what **form** of online violence this is

- what the signs were

- what has been or could be done in response

The leader makes short notes. The group then jointly selects one case, which will be presented plenary by the leader. Before leaving the small groups, leaders need to ask again in their group: '*describe in one word how you feel right now?'* If someone does not feel well, check if they need support and follow up.

Then everyone comes back plenary. The leaders of each group each present one case. Then the group facilitator thanks everyone for sharing and point out again that if anyone feel overwhelmed, triggered or bad, that they can come to him/her for support.

B. Exercises for young people

Exercise B1: how to make an online report

Time: 20 min.
Setting: small groups
Materials: smartphones or laptops
Target group: young people
Goal: students will learn how to make an online report to a hotline, helpline or to social media about online sexual violence.

Make small groups and ask each group to look up where they can make a report if they would experience or witness online sexual violence. Assign different platforms to them, for example:

- *The national reporting hotline for child sexual abuse material (look at the website of INHOPE to find the one in your country)*
- *A national helpline for children and young people (if available)*
- *Instagram*
- *TikTok*
- *Snap Chat*

- *WhatsApp*
- *Telegram*
- *Other (you can ask your student to come up with more social media platforms)*

Each groups takes about 10 minutes to look up where and how to make a report at the platform and what information is asked. Then this information is shared plenary.

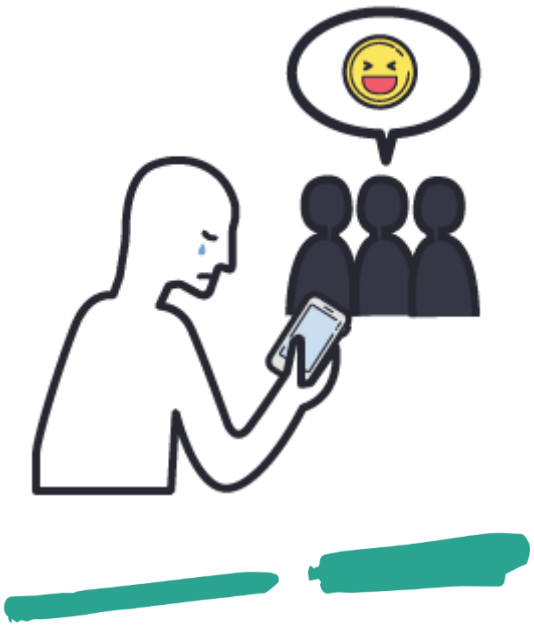
Exercise B2: How to help a classmate?

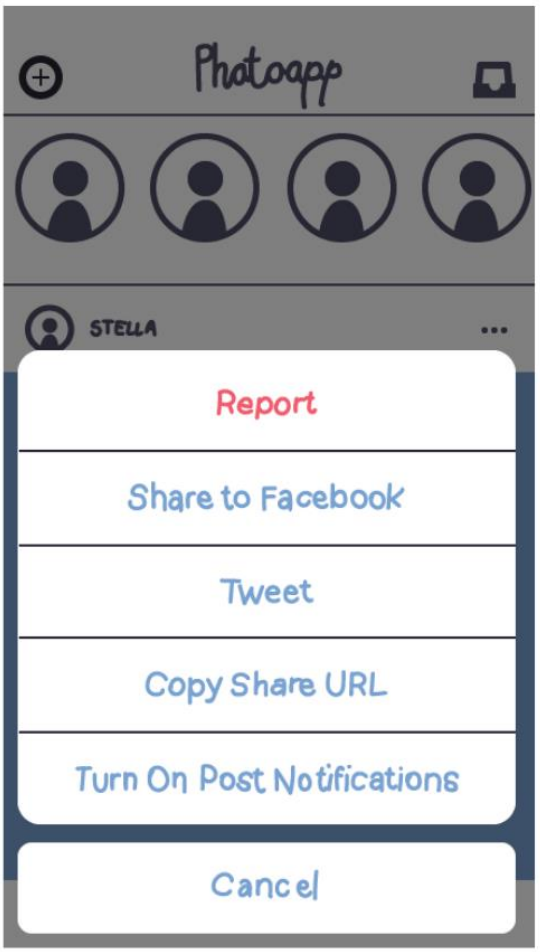
Time: 20 min.
Setting: group
Materials: flipchart
Target group: young people
Goal: students will learn how to step up and support a classmate or someone else when they witness them experiencing online violence.

Take a flipchart and make three columns. Write at the top:

1. *I see people making degrading, sexual comments on a girl's Instagram post*
2. *I know a boy in our class is sexually exploited by someone*
3. *I see a naked picture shared on WhatsApp*

Ask your students to create a list of actions in all three columns that one can take as they witness or know about such a situation, in order to step up and support the victim and end the abusive situation.





CYBERSAFE MOOC

International Child Development Initiatives