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Framework sexuality and policy: The Flag system “Nothing wrong?!”,

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Summary

After the emergence of a substantial number of cases of sexual abuse connected to the Catholic Church in Belgium governments and society realized, more than ever, that there is a need for a cross-sectoral approach to protect the sexual integrity of children and to promote talking with children and young people about sex and unacceptable sexual behavior.

This was only possible because there was already a great sensitivity for this problem. The first Flemish instruments to observe the implementation of the CRC date from 1997 with the office of the children’s rights commissioner and the child impact report. In Belgium the CRC entered into force in January 1992.

Also in the actual policy and action plans on youth and children’s rights violence against children and child abuse are high prioritized. A Flemish platform on child abuse is installed to concert between the concerned federal and regional actors.

In the youth field organizations asked for a practical instrument on sexual abusive behavior (SAB) that they could use in their (mostly voluntary) work with young people. So, a youth support organization, subsidized by the Flemish government, developed with youth organizations and movements an instrument adapted for the needs of the youth sector: the Flag system “Nothing/ Something wrong?!” [In Dutch: “(N)iets mis mee?!”]. They made use of the expertise of Sensoa, the Flemish expertise centre for sexual health, and Movisie (NL). The meaning of the flags go as follows. Green flag: acceptable and positive sexual behavior. Yellow flag: occasional light SAB. Red flag: troubling SAB. Black flag: severe SAB. Criteria are: Consent (mutual), voluntarily, equality, age or development, context and self-respect. Advised reactions are the following. Green: accept, explain or ignore. Yellow: accept, limit, explain, give alternatives. Red: accept, forbid, explain, control. Black: forbid, explain and prevent in the future (take measures).

Nevertheless, a lot of work needs to be done. That is what we learn from the concluding observations we received in 2010 from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and from a broad study that was carried out by the Flemish Children’s Rights Commissioner.

Four ministers, competent for respectively education, welfare, sports and youth started a cross-sectoral approach. They signed a declaration with their respective sector including engagements from both sides to protect the sexual integrity of minors. They asked Sensoa to develop a “Framework Sexuality and policy” adapted for the respective

sectors working with minors: youth welfare, child day-care, sport, education and youth work. The framework helps organizations to implement a policy on sexuality with a focus on quality, prevention and reaction.

Very recently a Flag game “Oké?! Game about sexual abusive behavior” was developed by the youth organization Jong & Van Zin, in cooperation with Sensoa and Movisie, for adolescents between 12 and 16 year. Purpose is to talk about sexual abusive behavior with adolescents and make them more assertive.

So the main purpose of the Flemish policy on sexuality is to get sexuality out of the taboo sphere.

Let's talk about sex (Salt-N-Pepa).

Useful links:

Flag game:

http://www.jeugdseksualiteit.be/m_begeleiders/index.php?page=spelen_toon&id=24

Sensoa:

<http://www.sensoa.be/sensoa-flemish-expertise-centre-sexual-health>

Framework Sexuality and policy:

<http://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/raamwerk-seksualiteit-en-beleid-kwaliteit-preventie-en-reactie-in-jouw-organisatie-versie-voor-de-jeugdsector>

<http://www.seksuelevorming.be/materiaal/flag-system>