



# ROADMAP FOR POLICIES DIRECTED AT PREVENTING BULLYING IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ALBANIA

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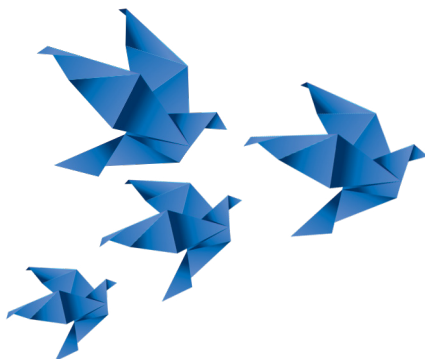
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# Roadmap for Policies Directed at Preventing Bullying in the Education System in Albania

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**Horizontal Facility for Western Balkans and Turkey**

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## List of abbreviations

CDC	Competences for Democratic Culture
CoE	Council of Europe
CPD	Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination
ECRI	European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance
EU	European Union
HF	Horizontal Facility
MoESY	Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth
RED	Regional Educational Directorates
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
TOT	Training of Trainers
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



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## *Executive Summary*

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— Safe and inclusive school environment is essential. School bullying negatively affects the mental and physical health and the academic performance of children. This Roadmap serves as a guideline for ensuring sustainability for the positive outcomes of the European Union/ Council of Europe project “Fighting Bullying and Extremism in the Education System in Albania” and provides recommendations for further policy steps to reduce the risk of bullying in Albanian schools.

— About 19.4% of Albanian school students have been subject to bullying on a more or less regular basis. At the same time, only around 23% of teachers have received a training on how to deal with bullying, and about 45% of students have said their teachers did not interfere if bullying happened (2017). To reduce this harmful phenomenon, the Law on Child Rights and Child Protection in Article 18 states that Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and Regional Education Departments should take measures to set up efficient mechanisms to prevent, address and report to the responsible authorities cases of violence, including violence between children in school (bullying). The 2014-2020 National Strategy on Pre-University Education addresses issues of violence and bullying in school via two objectives: (i) building an inclusive philosophy in schools; and (ii) creating friendly schools.

— The EU/ Council of Europe project enabled 21 pilot schools to introduce anti-bullying policies and trained school teams to recognize, prevent and fight bullying. Supported by the project mentors, the schools developed their own policies and action



plans, and implemented a number of anti-bullying activities.

■ The Roadmap recommends a range of measures to institutionalize mechanisms for bullying prevention at the level of national policy (e.g. teacher training, curriculum, actions to be added to the future National Strategy beyond 2020). At the same time, it recommends that the actions supported by the European Union/ Council of Europe project should be made sustainable (including financial sustainability) and disseminated to other schools in Albania.

# Introduction

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■ This Roadmap is intended to inform and guide policy-makers in the education sector in Albania on how to improve policies for bullying prevention and to promote safe and inclusive school environment by upscaling experiences from 21 pilot schools to the policy level. Essentially, the main goal of the Roadmap is to suggest how to institutionalize mechanisms for creating safe and inclusive school environment at the level of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, teacher education and the whole school approach.

■ The roadmap document:

- > presents in-depth analysis on existing legislation, education policy documents, and overall situation in Albanian schools regarding bullying and inclusive school environment,
- > identifies potential gaps in current policy, and
- > based on the experience of pilot schools, proposes a strategic, prioritized approach to address these issues.

■ Bullying in schools is a persistent hurtful and socially and psychologically harmful practice, affecting many students. As highlighted in a recent EU study, 'School bullying can affect the mental and physical health as well as the academic performance of children and young people and may lead to early school leaving. In many cases, bullying leads victims to suicide or attempted suicide, anxiety, depression and self-harm.'<sup>i</sup>

■ Often, bullying has to do with discriminatory attitudes towards

students from groups perceived as 'different', minorities, Roma, or migrants. These attitudes link bullying to violent extremism. According to UNESCO, 'Violent extremist views can be exhibited along a range of issues, including politics, religion and gender relations,' which is manifested through denying different views, overestimating the exclusivity of personal thinking, refusing difference, negating diversity and showing readiness to impose one's opinion through violent action.<sup>ii</sup>

■ Since 2017, Council of Europe has been implementing in Albania the project "Fighting Bullying and Extremism In The Education System In Albania", which produced a number of recommendations on national-level and school level measures to prevent bullying and extremism in Albanian schools (see below section 2.2). The present Roadmap suggests ways of upscaling some of these recommendations as permanent policy measures.

### **The Roadmap document includes:**

- 1.** Background section I: Analysis of international recommendations and standards such as Council of Europe documents on democratic school and Competences for Democratic Culture;
- 2.** Background Section II: Analysis of Albanian policy documents on bullying prevention and the actual situation regarding bullying and inclusive school policies (based on the national survey);
- 3.** Background Section III: Discussion of interventions to prevent bullying and to promote inclusive school culture, from the 21 pilot schools; and
- 4.** Roadmap: Recommendations for policies needed to institutionalize mechanisms for creating safe and inclusive school environment at the level of national and municipal authorities.

# Background Section I

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## 1.1 Current situation, legal framework, policies and practices in Albania

### 1.1.1 Bullying in schools in Albania

— According to the national survey conducted within this joint EU/CoE action “Fighting Bullying and Extremism in the Education System” project about 19.4% of Albanian school students have been subject to bullying or involved in it at least 2 or 3 times a month.<sup>iii</sup> Among those, about 45% experience psychological bullying, 37% were victims of verbal bullying and 33% experienced physical bullying.<sup>iv</sup> Bullying manifests itself in many forms – including verbal, physical, psychological, social, and cyberbullying.

— Awareness and preparedness of teachers is a key factor, and so is their readiness to intervene whenever a bullying episode occurs. According to the study, 45.5% of students think that their teachers do not interfere in situations of bullying. Only around 23% of teachers have received a training on how to deal with bullying.<sup>v</sup> Schools in Albania currently lack anti-bullying policies.<sup>vi</sup>

### 1.1.2 National policy framework<sup>vii</sup>

— The term ‘bullying’ has gained legal recognition in Albania with the **Law on Child Rights and Child Protection**, which defines bullying as violence between children. Article 18 states: “Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and Regional Education Departments take measures to set up efficient mechanisms to prevent, address

inside school and report to the responsible authorities cases of violence, including violence between children in school (bullying).<sup>viii</sup> "Bullying is considered by the law as one type of violence: "the violence occurring between children in school".

— The institution of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (CPD) is in charge of monitoring the implementation of the **Law on Protection from Discrimination**. Based on the results of this monitoring, in 2013, the CPD recommended Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MoESY) to take measures on reduction of bullying in schools and to introduce human rights education in school curriculum. For that purpose, CPD signed a memorandum of cooperation with MoESY to develop information materials on human rights and anti-discrimination for schools and issued a recommendation for school principals on the measures to combat discrimination and homophobia.

— The **Law on Pre-University Education** also provides for protection from discrimination. The Law prohibits discrimination in school on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnicity, language, political, religious or philosophical beliefs, economic, education or social situation, age, residence, disability, and any other reason mentioned by legislation (Article 5) and emphasizes that students should be protected from any form of violence, damage or discrimination (Article 6).

— The **2014-2020 National Strategy on Pre-University Education** is the main document defining education policy in Albania. The Strategy addresses issues of violence in school via two objectives: (i) building an inclusive philosophy in schools; and (ii) creating friendly schools.

— The **National Plan to Stop Violence in Schools and Communities** is another policy document with a potential to contribute to the reduction of bullying in the future.

— **National initiatives** "Schools as Community Centres", "Stop

Violence in School”, “Security Officers in Schools” and “Teacher Professional Networks” all have potential links to the issue of preventing and reducing bullying in schools, and any new anti-bullying policies have to be integrated with these initiatives. Suggestions for concrete ways of integrating these initiatives with anti-bullying policies are mentioned in the national-level recommendations in this Roadmap.

## ***Background Section II***

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### **Analysis of international best practices for bullying prevention and Council of Europe recommendations for Albania**

— This section offers a summary of international best practices to prevent bullying and to promote inclusive school culture, and Council of Europe recommendations for Albania in this context.

#### **2.1 Policy responses to bullying: international practice and recommendations of Council of Europe bodies on Albania**

— International bodies such as Council of Europe have paid much attention to the efforts needed for creating a democratic and friendly environment in schools for the benefit of the whole society. Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (CDC) puts a special emphasis on the whole-school approach, which includes the following key concepts of school governance and school culture:

- > leadership style nurtured by respect for human rights, democratic principles, equal treatment, participatory decision making and responsible accountability;
- > participation of all stakeholders in the review of the whole-school environment and its capacity to promote democratic citizenship and respect for human rights;

- > inclusive and participative decision-making structures and procedures, including powers for teachers, students and parents in setting agendas and participating in policy decisions;
- > school policies reflecting the values and principles of democratic citizenship and human rights;
- > functioning rules at school that guarantee equal treatment and equal access for all students, teachers and other members of staff regardless of their ethnicity, cultural identity, lifestyle or beliefs;
- > student participation.<sup>ix</sup>

■ Several types of national and school-level policies and pedagogical approaches have been recognised by experts internationally as effective to counter bullying and are known to reduce factors that lead to it.

■ Some (but not all) of these policies and actions are listed below:

- **Whole-school approach** for addressing bullying as a systemic problem:<sup>x</sup> Effective whole-school approach involves all school staff and students and includes a number of important policies and actions associated with a decrease in bullying. Effective actions include parent training/meetings, specialised teacher training, playground and gym supervision, awareness raising, such as videos about the consequences of bullying, disciplinary methods that are not punitive or zero tolerance approaches, cooperative group work between professionals, appropriate classroom management and rules. All of these have to be underpinned by a whole-school anti-bullying policy.<sup>ix</sup>



■ Several whole-school approaches have proven both effective and transferrable to other national context.

- Combining **universal measures targeting all students** for prevention and **indicated measures targeting those involved for addressing bullying cases**. An example of this approach is the KiVa model (Finland). KiVa anti-bullying programme developed by the University of Turku combines *universal* and *indicated* measures: universal measures target all students and have prevention of bullying as their main goal. Indicated measures target children who have become perpetrators and victims of a bullying case and challenge several other students from the same class to support the victim. The effectiveness of KiVa programme has been recognised internationally through a number of studies.<sup>xii</sup> KiVa programme is used across several countries in Europe and is considered for implementing in the US. However, critics point out that ‘from a child welfare and protection perspective, it is however problematic that a system response centrally relies on other children and young people’s responses and involvement.’<sup>xiii</sup>
- A form of whole-school approach that has earned much international attention is the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, which involves components at four levels: school level, classroom level, individual level, and community level.<sup>xiv</sup> This approach includes a number of general measures for the whole school and gives special attention to students who were involved in bullying or were victims of bullying.
- **Curricular approach to social and emotional education:** Social and emotional learning/education (SEL) is based on curriculum and pedagogical approaches that emphasise ‘awareness of emotions, caring, empathy and concern for others, positive relationships, making responsible

decisions, impulse control, resolving conflict constructively and valuing the thoughts, feelings and voices of students.<sup>xv</sup> To implement this approach, curriculum is revised to introduce SEL either as a module or as a series of elements introduced in other subject context (e.g. social science/ social studies context).

■ International organisations such as Council of Europe and UNESCO pay much attention to promoting policies and practices that prevent bullying. Over a number of years, the Council of Europe bodies have developed a number of recommendations on reducing bullying in Albania.

■ The reports of the Council of Europe monitoring bodies: European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (2015) and the Framework Convention for the Protection of the National Minorities (2011) recommend Albania to take specific measures against discrimination in schools and to adopt awareness-raising measures on tolerance and anti-discrimination issues aimed at teacher training and informing the public.

■ In May 2018, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovi during her visit to Albania made clear referencetothe need to continue addressing bullying among peers in schools. The Commissioner also encouraged the authorities to continue addressing bullying and raising the capacity and training of education professionals to prevent violence.<sup>xvi</sup>

■ European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) recommends that the authorities *'fulfil the legal duty to combat discrimination in schools and to raise awareness of the right to equal treatment, diversity, discrimination and bullying at school. Special attention should be given to teacher training.'*<sup>xvii</sup>

## 2.2 Recommendations developed under Horizontal Facility joint European Union/Council of Europe (EU/CoE) action in Albania

— The Horizontal Facility joint European Union/Council of Europe action (hereinafter referred to as HF joint EU/CoE action) “Fighting Bullying and Extremism in the Education System in Albania” produced a number of recommendations on national-level and school level measures to prevent bullying and radical extremism in Albanian schools. A policy brief commissioned by Council of Europe (2017) recommends a clear policy framework for addressing bullying and extremism in schools needs to be established at the level of Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, requiring and supporting schools to develop and implement anti-bullying policies. Such policies should also include measures to address the risks of extremist views and narratives spreading among students.

— National-level measures recommended in the policy brief<sup>fxvii</sup> include:

- A national training and capacity-building programme for schools to prevent bullying and discriminatory behaviour. Such a programme should support a whole-school approach with emphasis on developing school staff skills and competences through training and mentoring, including a strong element of feedback and group learning;
- Improvement of national curriculum in order to establish the extent to which it addresses the need for social and emotional learning/education (SEL) and for critical thinking education, necessary to prevent bullying and extremism;

- Raising the awareness of teachers, students and community to the manifestations of bullying and extremism, such as hate speech, and providing them with a repertory of approaches/ curriculum resources to counter extremism both in the school and in the community.

■ School-level measures recommended in the policy brief include:

- Adopting school anti-bullying policies including clearly defined rules, definitions and guidelines on identifying bullying behaviours and on measures to be taken for preventing bullying and for addressing cases of bullying if they occur;
- Introducing a strong set of universal (whole-school) measures targeting all students (prevention) and an equally strong set of indicated measures targeting students involved in bullying;
- School policies that enhance democratic school culture;
- Measures to ensure that the school is a safe for all students (classrooms, sports facilities, etc.);
- Establishing a community-wide strategy to prevent and reduce bullying;
- Always addressing cases of extremism and hate speech.

■ The Durres International Conference on Bullying and Extremism in Schools organized by the HF joint EU/CoE action in June 2017 concluded with the following recommendations on fighting bullying and extremism in Albanian schools:

### ***Policy level:***

- > Monitor and ensure the implementation of laws & conventions already in place (not only Ministry of Education responsibility) but on the wider political and social level.
- > Draft bylaws for implementation of laws & conventions.
- > Develop and implement clear strategies for fighting bullying and extremism.
- > Learn from pilot school experience and streamline into policy and practice.
- > Design guidelines and manuals for school staff (teachers, school directors, and support staff) to help them identify and tackle bullying whilst building confidence in delivering, reporting and understanding of bullying and extremism.
- > Provide teacher training on the topic (pre-service & in-service) and keep this refreshed and updated.
- > Support psycho-social and social work services at school and community level (this may require budget increase so they can provide their service to all schools).
- > Include “topics of bullying and extremism” in curricula (civic education).
- > Repeat the national survey regularly to ensure that the education stakeholders are fully informed of need and are regularly evaluating our delivery of services to combat bullying and extremism.

### ***School level (prevention, intervention and monitoring)***

> Self-assessment of schools is necessary to assess where schools are in terms of identifying their needs and addressing issues such as bullying and extremism and how schools and other organisations including communities and policy makers could support each other collectively.

■ In the 1.5 years that have passed since the Durrës conference, some improvements have been achieved due to the activities of Council of Europe and pilot schools. This Roadmap makes further recommendations based on lessons learned from those efforts.

# ***Background Section III***

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## **3.1 Examples of policies and good practices introduced by pilot schools**

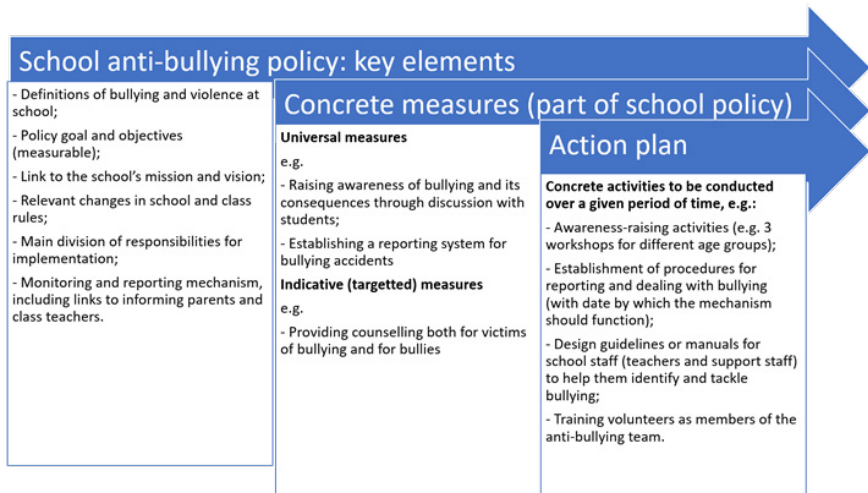
### ***3.1.1. School policies to prevent bullying***

— Within the project “Fighting Bullying And Extremism In The Education System In Albania”, 21 pilot schools have developed and launched anti-bullying policies and practices.

— The schools’ anti-bullying teams have developed their policies in a participatory way, in cooperation with experts selected by the HF joint EU/CoE action. The school teams conducted the development and implementation of new policies and practices on voluntary basis, with support from the HF joint EU/CoE action and with consent (and sometimes support) from regional education directorates.

— Figure 1 below outlines the minimum essential elements of a good school policy for the prevention of bullying and extremism, with examples of concrete measures to be included in school Action Plan for Bullying Prevention.

**Figure 1. Outline of a school policy and action plan.**



■ The new school policies in a number of cases combine both *universal measures* (targeting the whole school and community) and *indicated measures* (measures engaging children involved in episodes of bullying).

■ The **universal** measures outlined in a number of school policies include (but are not limited to):

**1. Measures engaging students and parents together with school staff in the development of classroom rules** and other steps towards prevention of bullying, e.g.:

- > Involve students and parents in establishing classroom rules against bullying and steps to be undertaken in case it happens;
- > Discuss, create and communicate expectations for students, parents, school staff, supporting staff, dormitory supervisors, and school bus drivers.



## **2. Measures establishing a system of shared responsibility, reporting and following up on incidents, e.g.:**

- > **Establish the school's anti-bullying team** (from teachers, involving where possible school principal, representative(s) of parents, and member(s) of non-teaching staff);
- > Create and communicate a clear system of recording bullying incidents (a register to keep track of bullying cases, a unified format to report each case, a database of all cases including follow-up by responsible members of anti-bullying team), ensuring all info is also saved in online format;
- > Make sure that there is a functioning team/committee with the participation of all school stakeholders, (teacher, student, parent, psychologist, director). Make proper use of Ethics and Disciplinary Commission to establish procedures how to address cases of bullying. Make sure roles are assigned and known by all members of the Committee/team.
- > Design guidelines or manuals for school staff (teachers and support staff) to help them identify and tackle bullying. Such guidelines should be designed by the anti-bullying team based on discussions, not by school administration or principal single-handedly.

## **3. Measures ensuring that school environment is free of violence, by monitoring and supervising:**

- > Regular monitoring of school classrooms, corridors and grounds by teachers who act as school supervisors of the day;
- > Establishing security officers in schools and liaising them with the school anti-bullying team;

- > Monitoring the so-called hotspots (places with higher risk of bullying) in school (e.g. sports teachers are committed to monitoring the gym and school yard) and outside (transportation in and out of school);
- > Defining in which places and environments (e.g. online activities) and during which periods (e.g. during internships, schools excursions, extracurricular activities) bullying risk is higher, and hence attention and supervision is needed.

#### 4. Measures raising awareness of the phenomenon of bullying and its negative consequences:

- > Conducting school activities to inform and raise awareness against bullying (also at community level). Making the activities plan visible in school corridors and in each class. Making anti-bullying policy known to the Parents Board, Student Self-Government, and to school teaching and non-teaching staff.
- > Communicating a reminder of what IS NOT bullying (e.g. constructive and objective feedback on the performance or behavior of someone by a member of the school staff or peers);
- > Organising extra-curricular activities such as film screening or staging a theatre play on the topic of bullying and discussing it with students afterwards.

■ The **indicated (targeted)** measures include (but are not limited to):

1. **Providing counselling both for victims of bullying and for bullies.** This measure should be handled with professionalism and care, preferably involving school psychologist or social pedagogue (if school does not have qualified staff, it is

important that qualified specialist is provided by Regional Education Directorate or other local community institution). Purely administrative/ punitive handling of cases of bullying by school administration is likely to have negative effect.

2. **Ensuring safety for victims** of bullying;
3. **Engaging the bullies and the victims of bullying in extra-curricular activities** (under the supervision of teachers). Again, this measure is likely to be more effective when designed with the assistance of school psychologist or other professional.

### ***3.1.2 Measures proposed in school action plans***

■ Based on these and similar policies developed by the schools, school action plans were created, indicating a number of measures to be implemented by the schools immediately.

■ The proposed measures include a number of awareness raising activities, e.g.:

- > Summarize intervention procedures for adults. Make them aware of the list of possible indirect indicators in case of bullying (child starts to stutter, cries at night, returns home with torn clothes, steals money, turns nervous when receiving a phone message etc);
- > Invite school staff not to ignore cases of bullying;
- > Invite parents to collaborate with school on anti-bullying measures;
- > Organise a campaign of awareness with students and community against bullying.

■ In order for the action plans to be effective, they have to

specify the timing and number of activities, as well as who is responsible and what the planned outcome should be.

— Here are some examples of activities for anti-bullying action plan that can be helpful:

### **Examples of activities for action plan**

- > Conduct three awareness-raising activities about bullying and its consequences for students' different age groups by the end of the school year. Responsible: school anti-bullying team coordinator and three class teachers.
- > Establish of procedures for reporting and dealing with bullying (with date by which the mechanism should function). Responsible: school principal and school anti-bullying team coordinator.
- > Design guidelines or manuals for school staff (teachers and support staff) to help them identify and tackle bullying (by the end of first semester). Responsible: school anti-bullying team.
- > Train volunteers as members of the anti-bullying team. Responsible: teachers from the school anti-bullying team who have undergone training of trainers (TOT) and head of Students' Self-Government.

## *IV Roadmap*

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### **Recommendations for policy framework to prevent bullying and to promote safe and inclusive school environment**

■ As pointed out above, an improved policy framework for preventing bullying and extremism in schools needs to be established at the level of Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, requiring and supporting schools to develop and implement anti-bullying policies and practices.

■ Through such a framework, policies and measures developed by the pilot schools can be made sustainable and disseminated to the whole Albanian school system.

■ The proposed policy framework has three levels:

- > National-level policies (changes to existing or developed strategies, integration of new measures in existing policy initiatives and in annual Ministry instructions to schools);
- > Municipal-level policies (support for schools to develop and implement anti-bullying policies, organized at municipal level);
- > School-level policies.

#### **4.1 National-level policies**

■ In order to institutionalise mechanisms for bullying prevention at the level of national policy, it is important to link

the introduction of new measures to large-scale national policies. Since the inclusion of new sets of measures in the **2014-2020 National Strategy on Pre-University Education** is not likely, it is necessary to divide national-level measures in two stages:

### *i. Priority measures for 2018-2020*

■ In the interim before the development of a new national strategy on pre-university education, it is important to:

- 1.1** Complete the piloting of anti-bullying policies and action plans at school level and document the examples of most effective policies and measures (first attempt at such documentation, in brief form, is taken in Background Section III of this Roadmap).
- 1.2** In order to ensure sustainability, find national or regional sources of funding for continuing the **Council of Europe anti-bullying programme with mentoring** in its current form, enhanced by lessons learned through Year 1. It took pilot schools one year to develop anti-bullying policies and practices, and they still need to learn from this experience and to make improvements. Expecting other schools to implement this programme on their own with only methodological support/ training of trainers and without mentors is unrealistic.
- 1.3** Institutionalise the school-level anti-bullying policies by requiring the presence of anti-bullying policies in every school. This can be done through **including anti-bullying school policies among the top-level priorities in the annual instruction sent by the Ministry to all schools**, similarly to 2018/2019 school year, also in 2019/2020 and 2010/2021 school years.

This measure should be further strengthened by disseminating the examples of successful school policies through two types of activities:

**1.3.1 Peer learning events** in pilot schools, introducing new school policies to other schools that have not taken part in the project. To facilitate the peer learning process, pilot school teams should prepare short handouts on their new anti-bullying policies and practices based on the *Topic guide in Annex 1*.

**1.3.2 Teacher training module** based on the training during the project summer school. The teacher training module was a successful element of the project and has been subsequently certified as a training module for teachers in Albania. Cascade training (2 team members who were trained during training of trainers (TOT) trained other teachers in their school) proved to be a successful model. The training module should be further disseminated, possibly by those participants of pilot school teams who have undergone TOT, who could in the future deliver this module either through the Institute of Development of Education or through the Teacher Professional Networks. This training should be financially supported at national level.

■ **Integrating anti-bullying measures with National initiatives** “Schools as Community Centres”, “Stop Violence in School”, “Security Officers in Schools” and “Teacher Professional Networks” is part of priority measures at this stage. The four initiatives all have potential links to the issue of preventing and reducing bullying in schools, and institutions responsible for their implementation should be informed about the best practices identified in the Background Section III of this document and should be familiarized with dissemination of materials of the project.

## ***ii. Priority measures for 2021 onwards***

■ The best way to promote system-level policy change is to create a policy framework for it, and to promote its implementation by regulation, dissemination and providing appropriate resources for implementation. In order to achieve a full-scale introduction of anti-bullying policy at national level, the anti-bullying measures should be embedded in future national strategy:

**1.4** The national strategy for pre-university education from 2021 onwards should have a section on Inclusive School which should include specific policy measures to prevent bullying and to ensure a safe and inclusive school environment. This section should be preferably written with the participation of experts of the Council of Europe project.

Best practices from this project (in the form of effective school policies) should be included into this section, focusing on creating friendly and inclusive environment in schools.

## ***iii. Additional measures to be considered***

**1.5** Enhancing the presence of socio-emotional learning (SEL) in the curriculum would be desirable. This could be achieved by inserting a SEL module in lower secondary school curriculum, and possibly embedding it within civic education curriculum, with the assistance of experts and Institute for the Development of Education.

## **4.2 Municipal-level policies**

■ Better coordination between the Ministry, regional education authorities (due to changes that will take place in Regional Education Directorates) and schools is necessary in order to ensure that the implementation of anti-bullying



measures is coordinated with other activities, e.g. within the national initiatives on safety in schools.

**1.6** Regional education directorates can play a crucial role in disseminating good practices from pilot schools to other schools in the same area, e.g. by organizing **peer learning events**, supporting the exchange of experience, and growing their own capacity and expertise to support schools in developing and implementing anti-bullying measures.

**1.7** Accessible and safe spaces for joint recreational activities are important in promoting a bullying-free environment. Local/ regional education units should support the creation of re-creational environment for students in the educational institutions, including accessible spaces for sport and artistic activities.

### 4.3 School-level policies

■ In order for the schools to be able to develop and implement their own anti-bullying policies, it is important that basic administrative structures for implementation should be established.

**1.8** The joint EU/CoE action recommends, as a minimum, the establishment of the following **basic structures and mechanisms** in every school:

- > Structures for dealing with bullying inside the school: anti-bullying team, ethics committee and mechanism for reporting and following up on cases of bullying. The main points listed in Background Section III of this document could serve as a basic guideline for establishing such mechanism in every school.

- > Assigning anti-bullying team leader, so that all school knows who is the leader responsible for anti-bullying activities and relevant procedures. This does not have to be school principal or vice-principal, but any responsible member of anti-bullying team trusted by the school community;
- > Policy and Action Plan serving to prevent bullying and to improve the climate in the school should be developed and should be implemented in the spirit of teamwork and shared leadership. The process of developing school policy has to be participatory, bringing up the topic of new policy development with parents, student self-government, non-teaching staff and teachers, asking them for recommendations to improve initial policy draft developed by the anti-bullying team.

**1.9** In order to further embed anti-bullying activities in the school's planning and to make them mandatory, the Action Plan for Bullying Prevention could become part of Mid-Term Plan (4 years) that every school in Albania has to develop.

The Ministry would have to issue a guideline to include anti-bullying policies and activities in Mid-Term Plans. School capacity to draft effective action plans and policies has to be improved by training and mentoring, using resources developed during the Council of Europe project.

**1.9.1** Teacher training on prevention of bullying, using the **module** developed during the project, should be conducted in every school. According to the project experts and members of anti-bullying teams, the training has to help teachers and other staff members to develop awareness of what is/ is not bullying and help the school to develop a more unified response, so that all actors in the school are aware of how to react to cases of bullying and what procedures to follow.

**1.9.2** Improve the capacity of school principals to develop school-level policies and to plan for the prevention and elimination of bullying in schools. This can be achieved by including the materials produced by the project in a training programme for school principals.

**1.9.3** Action Plan for Bullying Prevention should involve whole-school approach, when all staff, including teachers, administration, non-teaching staff and security officers are familiar with the action plan and support its implementation.

**1.10** Measures directed at promoting an inclusive and democratic culture in the school should not be limited to anti-bullying policy. Measures promoting inclusive school culture and non-discrimination, as well as measures promoting democratic school culture (based on Council of Europe documents such as manual on Democratic Governance of Schools<sup>xix</sup>) create the necessary background for anti-bullying measures to be successful.

#### **4.4 Monitoring arrangements**

■ Since at the moment anti-bullying policies are not part of any national strategy, it is important to establish a temporary monitoring arrangement until the moment when anti-bullying measures become part of the new national strategy for pre-university education. The Council of Europe project Steering Committee could approach the Ministry to establish a temporary monitoring committee that would produce an annual report on anti-bullying policy promotion.

## **Note on policy support from the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth**

■ Following up on the project “Fighting bullying and extremism in the education system in Albania”, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth by Instruction no. 27, for school year 2018 – 2019, Chapter V “School and extracurricular activities, self-evaluation”, requests the implementation of the project with priority, where among others at point 3/d is requested the engagement of the group of teachers trained in the fight against bullying in sharing their knowledge and experience with other schools.

# Conclusions

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■ The ultimate outcome of successful implementation of anti-bullying policies at national, municipal and school level should be not only a very significant reduction in the number of bullying cases, but also a more inclusive, safe and friendly environment in schools.

■ Schools should be supported to establish and maintain anti-bullying policies, including elements such as measurable goals and objectives, link to the school's mission and vision, relevant changes in school and class rules, proper division of responsibilities for implementation, and monitoring and reporting mechanism, including links to informing parents and class teachers. Policy measures should be both universal (raising awareness of bullying and its consequences) and targeted (addressing concrete bullying cases) and should be based on a whole-school approach.

■ Continuation of the European Union/ Council of Europe anti-bullying programme with mentoring in its current form is essential in order to disseminate relevant policies and good practices to other schools in Albania, while at the same time raising their capacity to develop and implement their own school policies. This will have a lasting positive impact on the schools' overall capacity to develop and implement policies, also in other areas.

■ Support of national authorities is needed to enable schools to benefit from essential pre-requisites of this approach: teacher training on prevention of bullying, measures to raise the capacity of school principals to develop school-level policies, and support

to developing sustainable and effective Action Plans.

■ None of the above is too difficult or requires extensive resources – this is a case when well-designed policy interventions with relatively little investment can achieve positive results in schools, as the pilot schools of the Council of Europe project are beginning to demonstrate.

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