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# MANUAL FOR TEACHERS AND EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS ON THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS IN PREVENTION AND IDENTIFICATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE





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# Table of Contents

List of abbreviations .....	5
Introduction.....	6
The working group for the development of the manual .....	6
About the Istanbul Convention and article 14 .....	7
<b>MODULE 1: Understanding gender equality .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Key concepts .....	8
Gender and sex.....	8
Sexual orientation and gender identity.....	8
Gender equality .....	9
Gender equity .....	9
Gender stereotypes.....	10
Intersectionality.....	11
<b>MODULE 2: Understanding violence against women and domestic violence .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Violence Against Women .....	12
Domestic violence .....	13
Gender based violence against women .....	14
Forms of violence.....	15
Psychological violence (Article 33).....	15
Stalking (Article 34).....	16
Physical violence (Article 35).....	17
Sexual violence, including rape (Article 36).....	17
Forced marriages (Article 37) .....	17
Female genital mutilation (Article 38).....	18
Harassment and sexual harassment (Article 40) .....	18
Violence committed in the name of so-called honour (Article 42).....	19
Online and technology-facilitated violence .....	20

<b>MODULE 3: The whole education approach.....</b>	<b>21</b>
Learning resources and materials.....	21
Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE).....	22
Participation, community engagement and working with local offices .....	22
<b>MODULE 4: Information to support lesson plans .....</b>	<b>24</b>
Promoting equality and non-stereotyped gender roles.....	24
Encouraging critical thinking.....	25
Classroom activities and discussions .....	26
Promoting respect and non-violent conflict resolution .....	31
Addressing violence against women and domestic violence in the classroom.....	34
<b>MODULE 5: Identification and response disclosures .....</b>	<b>37</b>
Recognising signs of VAW and DV .....	37
Access to support .....	37
Support systems and resources for affected students .....	38
Support systems and resources for affected adults.....	39
Roles and responsibilities.....	39
Role of school administration .....	39
Role of child protection/safeguarding lead .....	40
All staff: Confidentiality and sensitivity in handling disclosures.....	40
Collaboration with parents, guardians, and external support services.....	40
Immediate actions in case of disclosure.....	40
Bibliography.....	43

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## List of abbreviations

■	<b>AGE</b>	Agency for Gender Equality
■	<b>CoE</b>	Council of Europe
■	<b>CSE</b>	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
■	<b>DV</b>	Domestic Violence
■	<b>Istanbul Convention</b>	Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence.
■	<b>KWN</b>	Kosovo Women’s Network
■	<b>LBT/LGBTI</b>	An umbrella term used to encompass lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women/Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex
■	<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
■	<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
■	<b>GREVIO</b>	Group of Experts on Action Against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence
■	<b>MESTI</b>	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
■	<b>NCII</b>	Non-consensual intimate image
■	<b>OSCE</b>	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
■	<b>SOPs</b>	Standard Operating Procedures
■	<b>VAW</b>	Violence Against Women
■	<b>UN</b>	United Nations
■	<b>UNCPRD</b>	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
■	<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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# Introduction

The manual for teachers and education staff on violence against women and domestic violence (hereinafter the Manual) is designed to assist teachers, educators and school staff in understanding and responding to violence against women and domestic violence in educational settings in accordance with duties under Article 14 of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter referred to as the ‘Istanbul Convention’).

*The objectives of the Manual are to:*

1. Increase awareness and understanding of violence against women and domestic violence.
2. Promote gender equality and challenge stereotypical gender roles.
3. Provide practical tools and guidance for teachers, support and administrative staff to recognise signs of violence and know how to respond effectively.

The Manual is based on the principles of the Istanbul Convention, and the recommendations of the Group of Experts on Action Against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO).<sup>1</sup> As such, the Manual explains the Istanbul Convention and its relevant articles, separately, through a practical and analytical approach, illustrated with concrete examples related to the issues it addresses. These examples, presented in the first two modules, have a guiding and explanatory character for teachers themselves and are not intended to be used directly with children. In modules three and four, instructions are given on how teachers can apply the principles of the Istanbul Convention in the educational process by promoting gender equality and respect for human dignity, positively influencing the formation of new generations.

## The working group for the development of the manual

The Working Group on developing the Manual for teachers and education staff on violence against women and domestic violence was established on 11/03/2024 by the decision of the Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation of the Republic of Kosovo. This Manual is the result of three meetings, and collegial discussions held between June and December 2024.

*Based on the decision of the Minister, the members of the Working Group were:*

- Azize Sekiraqa Heta, Gender Equality Officer, MESTI - Chair
- Merita Jonuzi, Human Rights Coordinator, MESTI - Member
- Shqipe Gashi, Senior Officer for Curricula and Textbooks, MESTI - Member
- Florentina Beqiraj, Gender Equality Officer, Ministry of Justice - Member
- Nexhmedin Sejdiu, Director, Elementary school “Pjetër Bogdani” Prishtina – Member
- Betim Sherifi, Teacher, Elementary school “Elena Gjika” Prishtina – Member
- Adelina Berisha, Programme Manager, Kosovo Women’s Network - Member

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<sup>1</sup> GREVIO - Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, a body of independent experts responsible for monitoring the implementation by the parties of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).

This Manual was developed by the Council of Europe local consultant, Luljeta Plakolli-Kasumi and Council of Europe international consultant Eleri Butler. This document has been produced with the financial support of the project “**Aligning laws and policies with the Istanbul Convention (2023-2026)**”, implemented by the Council of Europe. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of any of the parties.

## About the Istanbul Convention and article 14

The Council of Europe’s Istanbul Convention, adopted in 2011 and incorporated into Kosovo’s Constitution in 2020 (Council of Europe, 2020), is an international framework ensuring women’s rights to live free from violence, focusing on prevention, protection, prosecution and coordinated policies. In 2022, Kosovo’s adherence to these standards was assessed by the Council of Europe following GREVIO’s methodology (Council of Europe, 2022).

The Istanbul Convention defines **violence against women** as all forms of gender-based violence causing physical, sexual, psychological, or economic harm, including threats, coercion or deprivation of liberty, whether in public or private (Article 3(a)). **Domestic Violence**, affecting both sexes, but disproportionately impacting women (Council of Europe, n.d., The Convention in Brief), includes physical, sexual, psychological, or economic violence within a family or domestic setting, or between former or current partners, regardless of legal or biological ties (Art.3(b)).

The term “**gender**” refers to socially constructed roles behaviours, activities and attributes that society considers appropriate for women and men (Art.3(c)).<sup>2</sup> “**Gender-based violence against women**” indicates violence directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately (Art. 3(d)).<sup>3</sup> Article 14 of the Istanbul Convention emphasises education as a tool for preventing violence and promoting gender equality. To implement Article 14 effectively, it is urgently recommended that schools in Kosovo integrate teaching materials on equality between women and men, non-stereotyped gender roles, respect, non-violent conflict resolution and the right to personal integrity, at all education levels.<sup>4</sup> This entails:

- Training educators on gender equality and violence prevention.
- Fostering a culture of gender equality and non-violence.
- Engaging the broader community in promoting gender equality and preventing violence (Council of Europe, 2022, 35).

Effectively addressing basic principles such as equality, non-discrimination and protection from vulnerability makes schools supportive in preventing violence against women and domestic violence and in promoting gender equality in line with the Istanbul Convention.

<sup>2</sup> This is consistent with the Law on Prevention and Protection from Domestic Violence, Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence (Art.3 par. 1.7) and the Law on Gender Equality (Art. 3, par. 1.8) in Kosovo in which ‘gender’ is referred to as ‘socially constructed roles assigned to women and men, which is an acquired identity that is learned, changed over time, and varies widely within and across cultures’

<sup>3</sup> The Kosovo Law on Prevention and Protection from DV, VAW and GBV contains the identical definition. Art. 3 par. 1.4 in addition provides “... Gender-Based Violence Against Women includes the causes and the result of the unequal power relationship between women and men as a result of a social problems rather than individual one.”

<sup>4</sup> This is provided in Art. 17 of the Law on Prevention and Protection from DV, VAW and GBV.

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# MODULE 1:

## Understanding gender equality

### Key concepts

This Module provides practical examples of the essential concepts for understanding and advancing gender equality. The content of this Module is dedicated to all school personnel, but it should be noted that not all examples are suitable for direct use in teaching with children, due to the sensitivity of the topics covered. As noted in the introduction to the material, these examples serve to assist teachers and staff in understanding situations of violence, as well as in developing the skills to respond appropriately, through handling cases, reporting and referring them to the relevant authorities.

### Gender and sex

The Istanbul Convention definition of **‘gender’** (above) distinguishes this from **biological sex**<sup>5</sup>, which is defined by physical characteristics (Council of Europe, 2016, Gender Equality Glossary, 25)). Different societies have specific ideas about ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ traits, often associating masculinity with dominance and control, and femininity with subservience (Greig, 2016, 49). These roles reinforce power dynamics that can disadvantage women and girls. Teachers and educational staff have to understand these dynamics to effectively challenge harmful norms within schools.

### Sexual orientation and gender identity

**‘Sexual orientation’** describes whom a person is romantically or sexually attracted to, while **‘gender identity’**<sup>6</sup> refers to an individual’s internal sense of gender, which may not align with their biological sex (Moleiro & Pinto, 2015). An individual’s sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.). Article 4(3) of the Istanbul Convention prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, acknowledging the vulnerabilities of lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LBT) individuals.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Which under Art. 3 par. 1.7 of the Law on Gender Equality is defined as “the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women”.

<sup>6</sup> The Law on Gender Equality defines ‘gender identity’ as a “protected characteristic (sic) that covers the gender-related identity, appearance or other gender-related characteristics of a person (whether by way of medical intervention or not), with or without regard to the person’s designated sex at birth” (Art. 3, par. 1.9).

<sup>7</sup> The same prohibition is provided by Art.4 of the Law on Gender Equality (Art. 4).

## Gender equality

**Gender equality** refers to more than equal rights, and encompasses equal visibility, empowerment and participation for men and women in all areas of life. Gender equality values individual differences and promotes balanced power dynamics, recognising diversity across class, religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation (Council of Europe, Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029, 2024, 5-10).

It is important to emphasise that in Albanian, ‘gender equality’ has a dual meaning: it encompasses both equality (the right to equal outcomes for women and men) as well as the process of achieving that equality - commonly referred to in English as ‘gender equity’ (see below).

- A practical example of gender equality is offering all students the same academic opportunities and resources, regardless of sex. This could mean ensuring that both boys and girls have equal access to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) courses, sports programs, and extracurricular activities. It also involves providing the same encouragement and support to pursue any field of study or career path, helping to break down gender barriers and ensuring that all students can achieve their full potential (UNDP, 2022).

## Gender equity

Although ‘gender equality’ and ‘**gender equity**’ in English are often used interchangeably, it is important to distinguish between them. In contrast, gender equality means equal outcomes for women and men; gender equity is the process of achieving gender equality (16 days of activism (2023)). Although not explicitly mentioned, the Istanbul Convention promotes ‘gender equity’ through its call for eliminating discrimination and advancing equality (Article 4(2)).

In Albanian, there is no direct equivalent for ‘gender equity’. As a result, the term ‘gender equality’ (in Albanian) is frequently used to imply both equal outcomes and the creation of equal opportunities. This dual aspect of equality is also reflected in the Kosovo Law on Gender Equality, which-while not explicitly referencing ‘gender equity’- sets forth provisions on equal treatment, equal opportunities and both general and special measures.

- A practical example of gender equality is providing the same number of scholarships to both male and female students, ensuring equal access to education. In contrast, gender equity considers the specific needs and circumstances of male and female students. For instance, if female students are underrepresented in a particular field, a gender equity approach might offer additional support, such as mentorship programs or extra scholarships for women in that field, to create a level playing field and address existing disparities (TëVë).

While “equality” ensures equal rights, “equity” has sometimes been misused to reinforce stereotypes and traditional gender roles, implying that women should be treated “fairly” based on existing stereotypes. This can maintain unequal gender relations and strengthen harmful stereotypes (European Institute for Gender Equality, n.d., Glossary). In contexts where a direct equivalent for ‘gender equity’ does not exist in the local language - such as in Albanian - this concept is often conveyed through ‘gender equality’ with the understanding that it includes both the equal outcomes, and the processes required to achieve them. However, caution is needed to ensure that referring to ‘equality’ does not inadvertently reinforce outdated stereotypes, but rather promotes equal opportunities as intended.

- For example, if a workplace offers longer maternity leave only for women<sup>8</sup>, it may seem fair (equity), but it reinforces the stereotype that childcare is primarily a woman’s responsibility. This practice may be enshrined in law, or it may be the policy of a workplace. Either way, this can perpetuate the idea that men should not or cannot take on caregiving roles, thereby maintaining unequal gender dynamics. A more balanced approach would encourage shared parental leave, promoting equality in both caregiving and professional responsibilities (Banjska et al., 2019, 47-48). For example, the European ‘Work-Life Balance Directive’ guarantees paternity leave and parental leave to workers who are parents and aims to address women’s under-representation in the labour market, help balance their work and family lives and encourage a better distribution of caring responsibilities between women and men (Kern V. & Lecerf M., 2023).

## Gender stereotypes

Article 12(1) of the Istanbul Convention calls on states to eliminate prejudices and customs that are based on the idea of women’s inferiority or that reinforce stereotyped roles. Gender stereotypes<sup>9</sup>, which impose strict expectations on how individuals should behave, hinder gender equality (Council of Europe, n.d., Combating Gender Stereotypes and Sexism). “**Gender Stereotypes**” are preconceived social and cultural patterns or ideas whereby women and men are assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex” (Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy, 2024, 23). Such stereotypes restrict personal expression and reinforce outdated norms, limiting progress toward a more inclusive society.

<sup>8</sup>Art. 49 of the Labour Law No. 03/L-212, year 2010, provides employed women with a 12-month maternity leave. Art. 50 provides that the rights defined under Article 49 of this Law may be exercised by the father of the child, too, in cases of the mother getting sick, abandoning the child by the mother, and/or death of the mother.

<sup>9</sup>Art. 3 par. 1.22 of the Law on Gender Equality provides for a similar definition of ‘gender stereotypes’.

- A practical example of stereotyping is assuming that boys should not cry, and girls are more emotional. This stereotype reinforces the idea that boys must always be tough and hide their feelings, while girls are expected to be more emotionally expressive. Schools can counter stereotypes of gender roles by teaching that all emotions are valid for everyone and encouraging boys and girls to express their feelings openly and without shame (Greig, 2016)

## Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2019) emphasises that all forms of oppression are interconnected (Taylor, 2019). While not named explicitly, Article 4(3) of the Istanbul Convention recognises that women face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on race, religion, or other statuses. It stresses that protections against violence must be non-discriminatory and inclusive.<sup>10</sup>

- A practical example of intersectional discrimination in Kosovo could involve a girl from minority communities facing multiple layers of discrimination. She might encounter prejudice not only because of her sex but also due to her ethnic background. For instance, she could experience barriers to accessing education because of discriminatory gender norms that prioritise boys' education in her community, combined with ethnic discrimination that limits her opportunities in the broader society (Banjska et al., 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Art. 4 par. 1.10 of the Kosovo Law on the Protection from Discrimination provides that "multiple discrimination occurs when discrimination is based on any combination of the grounds covered by this law. Multiple discrimination and multiple grounds shall be construed accordingly."

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## MODULE 2:

### Understanding violence against women and domestic violence

This Module provides practical examples of the essential concepts for understanding and preventing violence against women and domestic violence. It is designed to be relevant and applicable to all school staff, reinforcing the collective responsibility in preventing violence against women and domestic violence.

#### Violence against women

The Istanbul Convention's definition of **violence against women** includes, but is not limited to, acts such as physical, sexual, psychological and economic harm, and actual violence as well as threats of such violence. This includes domestic and sexual violence including rape, sexual harassment, violence committed in the name of 'honour', female genital mutilation, forced marriage, stalking, forced abortion and forced sterilisation and trafficking for sexual exploitation (*see more under **Forms of Violence***).<sup>11</sup> The definition of '**women**'<sup>12</sup> in the Istanbul Convention provides that it includes girls under the age of 18 (Article 3(f)).

**Important note:** The names used in the examples throughout this manual are intended for illustrative purposes only and do not refer to any specific individuals. If these names are the same as those of students in your classroom, please modify them to prevent confusion or discomfort. These examples are intended to assist teachers in understanding forms of violence against women and implementing the Istanbul Convention in a professional and sensitive manner, and are not intended to be used directly with children. Instead, these examples serve as a teaching tool for teachers themselves, to better understand the concepts and to develop skills in identifying, responding to and referring cases of violence in the school context.

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<sup>11</sup> The same definition of VAW is provided in Art. 3 par. 1.2 of the Law on Prevention and Protection from DV, VAW and GBV.

<sup>12</sup> Art. 3 par. 1.2 of the Law on Gender Equality defines 'woman' as "any person that considers itself as such, regardless of age or marital status".

- Example: Ms. Hana is a fifth-grade teacher who notices that one of her students, Nora, often talks about how her mother seems sad and scared lately. Nora mentions that her mother avoids going out alone because she's afraid of someone. Ms. Hana gently asks Nora more about what has been happening. Nora explains that her mother is being harassed by a neighbour who makes threatening comments whenever he sees her. This harassment has been going on for months, and although Nora's mother has tried to avoid the neighbour, the situation has made her feel unsafe both inside and outside their home. Nora's mother is experiencing violence against women in the form of harassment by a neighbour. This is an example of violence against women because it is a gender-based act of violence occurring in a public context (outside the home) that targets her mother.<sup>13</sup>

## Domestic violence

The Istanbul Convention's definition of '**domestic violence**'<sup>14</sup>, which includes physical, sexual, psychological, or economic violence, recognises that all individuals – women and men, girls and boys, and gender-nonconforming people - can be victims of domestic violence. Coercive controlling behaviour is when a pattern of acts of violence - assault, threats, humiliation, isolation, monitoring or intimidation - is used to harm, punish or frighten someone, and deny them their freedom or liberty.

- **Example 1:** Ms. Drita is a math teacher. One day, she notices that one of her students, Arta, has become increasingly withdrawn and seems anxious during class. Arta has also been absent from school more frequently, and when she does attend, she appears tired and unfocused. Concerned, Ms. Drita decides to speak privately with Arta to check her wellbeing. During their conversation, Arta hesitantly shares that her father has been verbally abusing her mother at home. This abuse often involves shouting, threats, smashing things, and locking her in the house when he goes out. Although Arta has never seen him hit her mother or physically harm herself, the constant threat and the emotional turmoil have deeply affected her. In this scenario, Arta's mother is a victim of domestic violence as the verbal abuse, threats, destroying possessions and isolation fall within the definition of domestic violence under the Istanbul Convention. Additionally, even though Arta has not been physically harmed, the psychological impact of witnessing this violence is also recognised as a form of domestic violence.

<sup>13</sup> Art. 248/A of the Criminal Code of Kosovo incriminates violence against women in public life as a punishable criminal act.

<sup>14</sup> The definition of DV in the Law on Prevention and Protection from DV, VAW and GBV is "all acts of physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence that occur within the family relationship, or the household unit, regardless of the blood connection or family relationship, or from the former or the current intimate partner, regardless of the fact that the perpetrator of the violence shares or has shared the same residence with the victim, with the aim of violating the dignity and keeping under constant control and position of dependence, the person against whom violence has been exercised."

● **Example 2:** Teacher Flora, notices that her student, Arben, who has high grades and behaves well at school, is frequently early, doesn't socialise well with other children, and seems reluctant to leave when school ends. Concerned about Arben's well-being, teacher Flora asks him if everything is all right at home. Arben shares that his mother, Lira, has been facing frequent violence from his father. Arben's father often shouts, slaps and kicks her, grabs her by the throat and pushes her around. Arben, who is deeply affected by witnessing this abuse, feels scared and helpless at home and said he also gets hit by his father when he gets angry.

In Arben's case, his mother is a victim of domestic violence, experiencing physical and psychological harm from her husband. Meanwhile, Arben is also considered a victim under the Istanbul Convention because he has witnessed the violence and is suffering emotionally as a result and has also been subject to physical abuse by his father.

Domestic violence, which can involve intimate partner violence or intergenerational violence, is a complex issue often perceived as private. However, it is a serious human rights violation, and everyone has a role to play in challenging such abuse.

Instead of asking why victims do not leave, we should ask why perpetrators are not stopped. Social pressures, inadequate state support and the dangers faced when leaving complicate the victim's ability to escape.. Common tactics of control combined with social expectations, such as the belief that any father figure is better than none, can make leaving more difficult. (aMeron *et al.*, 2022, 683-687; Dinisman & Moroz, 2019, 22-25; 48-51).

## **Gender based violence against women**

The definition of gender-based violence is distinct because it refers to violence that specifically targets women or impacts women disproportionately due to their gender. This violence both stems from and reinforces unequal power dynamics between men and women, which perpetuates women's subordinate position in public and private life, and ultimately contributes to societal acceptance of such violence (Pandea *et al.*, 2019, 17-18).

● **Example:** Besa has become increasingly withdrawn and less confident in class. Besa, who used to be enthusiastic about participating in classroom activities, now hesitates to speak up and often looks upset. Concerned, Ms. Drita, a fourth-grade teacher decides to have a private conversation with Besa to find out what's troubling her.

During the conversation, Besa reveals that some boys in her class have been teasing her repeatedly, making fun of her for being a girl and telling her that she cannot do certain things because "girls are weak." They have even taken her lunch on a few occasions, telling her that girls do not need as much food as boys. Besa feels hurt and ashamed, and this bullying has made her dread coming to school.

In Besa's case, the bullying she is experiencing is a form of gender-based violence because it is rooted in harmful gender stereotypes. The boys are targeting Besa specifically because she is a girl, using her gender as a basis to demean, exclude, and intimidate her. This behaviour not only affects Besa's emotional well-being but also reinforces discriminatory attitudes about gender roles.

## Forms of violence

The Istanbul Convention highlights that violence against women and domestic violence often derives from unequal power dynamics. These dynamics lead to a culture of silence, as victims fear retaliation.

Addressing these power dynamics is essential for creating a safe and supportive educational environment. This involves implementing strict policies against harassment, violence and abuse, providing training for all staff on recognising and preventing abuse and establishing clear reporting and support mechanisms for victims. The Istanbul Convention (Article 41) also reinforces that aiding, abetting, and attempting to commit offences related to such violence (outlined in articles 33-39) should be criminalised.

Violence often extends beyond physical harm, encompassing various non-physical forms such as psychological violence, economic violence, stalking, or violence in the digital dimension. In practice, multiple forms of violence often overlap, particularly domestic violence. These forms can occur within private settings (such as family and intimate relationships) and public spaces, perpetrated by individuals, organisations, institutions, or state entities (Butler & Hrytsenko, 2024). The Istanbul Convention identifies several forms of violence such as:

### Psychological violence (Article 33)

All forms of violence have a psychological aspect, aiming to undermine a person's integrity and dignity. Some types are specifically designed to inflict psychological harm without physical or verbal abuse, such as isolation, withholding crucial information, spreading false information, and engaging in threatening behaviour.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Art. 3 par. 1.8 of the Law on Prevention and Protection from DV, VAW and GBV provides that 'psychological violence' includes constant control, verbal abuse, isolation, humiliation or emotional abuse through insults, blackmail, intimidation, constant tracking and surveillance, withholding of information, misinformation and threatening behaviour, degrading treatment, threats or similar forms of control or psychological pressure, putting a person under reasonable fear of the use of violence against him or persons in a family relationship, the threat of damage to property or being kept under constant emotional distress."

In private, it can include non-verbal threats, referencing past or deliberate neglect, while in public, it often manifests as social exclusion targeting those who challenge traditional gender roles. This type of exclusion may be carried out by peers or authority figures like teachers and coaches and can involve intimidation or denial of participation in group activities (Pandea *et al.*, 2019, 26).

A perpetrator's words can be used to intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, or cause hurt or upset. This may include insults, ridicule, derogatory language or comments targeting a person's identity, such as their religion, culture, language, or sexual orientation. For women and girls, such abuse often takes a sexualised form and falls under the category of sexual violence or harassment.<sup>16</sup>

● **Example 1:** If someone consistently brings up previous disagreements or mistakes, intending to instil fear or insecurity, they are engaging in psychological abuse. Additionally, deliberately ignoring or neglecting a partner's needs and emotions, such as not acknowledging their achievements or avoiding communication during times of emotional distress, also constitutes psychological violence. This form of abuse is intended to erode the partner's self-esteem and sense of security without resorting to physical or direct verbal confrontation (Beeden, 2023).

**Example 2:** A young person who expresses a non-traditional gender identity may be disliked by their peer group, excluded from social events, or left out of team activities. This form of psychological abuse can also be perpetrated by authority figures, such as teachers or sports coaches, who might intimidate or intentionally exclude the individual from group participation, contributing to their marginalisation and emotional distress (Clearinghouse for sports. 2022).

## Stalking (Article 34)

Article 34 of the Istanbul Convention mandates the criminalisation of stalking, which is defined as repeated threatening behaviour directed at another person that causes them to fear for their safety. It identifies it as a form of violence against women, since stalking often occurs after the end of an abusive relationship, highlighting its gendered nature. However, women are also frequently stalked by men with whom they have never been in a relationship (Council of Europe, 2019, Stalking).

● **Example 1:** A woman ends her relationship with her partner. Despite the breakup, he begins to follow her to work, wait outside her home, and send her constant messages and calls. His behaviour escalates to showing up uninvited at her social gatherings. Although she expresses fear and distress and tells him to stop, he continues.

<sup>16</sup> Art. 3 par. 1.16 in the Law on Prevention and Protection from DV, VAW and GBV provides that vulnerable victims can be "girls and women, children, minors, LGBTQ+, persons with physical and mental disabilities, pregnant women, elderly and the person whose family relationship or dependence on the responsible party makes the person especially susceptible to repeated victimisation, intimidation or retaliation."

- **Example 2:** A high school girl finds herself being targeted by a male peer. Although they have never been close, he begins to follow her on social media, sending her frequent, unwanted messages and leaving comments on her posts. He also shows up at places she frequents like cafes and gyms. His attention starts to feel invasive, especially as he begins to track her online activity, reacting to everything she posts. Despite her requests for him to stop, he continues, and his actions become increasingly unsettling. This type of stalking shows how digital tools can be used to invade someone's privacy, even when the stalker is known but not close to the victim. (Council of Europe, 2019, Stalking).

### Physical violence (Article 35)

Physical violence is used to cause or result in control, pain and/or physical injury. This may include punching, slapping, hitting, kicking or biting, strangling or choking, pulling hair, spitting, restraining, punching walls or breaking possessions, or using objects as weapons.

Young people's intimate relationships may similarly involve physical violence, and for all ages, this may be accompanied by psychological and sexual violence. . Such violence stems from societal prejudices and often remains underreported due to its impact on victim safety and behaviour (Pandea *et al.*, 2019, 24).

### Sexual violence, including rape (Article 36)

Sexual violence fundamentally stems from an abuse of power. It encompasses a range of actions, including non-consensual penetration by any body part or object and other non-consensual sexual acts, including coercion involving a third party . Sexual violence includes rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse and sexual harassment (Forms of Sexual Violence).<sup>17</sup> Rape (both marital and non-marital), attempted rape is included in this category, as are forced sexual activities such as non-consensual voyeurism, public masturbation, forced unsafe sex, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, female genital mutilation, and sterilisation. In the public sphere, verbal gender-based violence frequently involves derogatory comments and jokes that reduce women to sexual objects or perpetuate harmful stereotypes. Sexual violence is not confined to private spaces but also manifests in public contexts, such as in the workplace (Pandea *et al.*, 2019, 26-27).

### Forced marriages (Article 37)

A forced marriage is where one or both people do not (or cannot, if they do not have the capacity) consent to the marriage, and they are pressured or subject to abuse to force the marriage to take place.<sup>18</sup> Family, relatives, or community members may perpetrate this. The pressure or violence used may be physical or psychological, and in some cases, someone at risk of forced marriage may not feel 'forced' but at the same time, cannot say no or fear consequences if the marriage does not go ahead.

<sup>17</sup> Punishable criminal acts under the Criminal Code of Kosovo: Art.227 – Rape, Art. 184- Assault; Art. 143, par. 1(1.7)- rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilisation, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity; Art. 179- forced sterilisation.

<sup>18</sup> Forced marriage is a punishable criminal act under the Kosovo Criminal Code, Art. 239.

Article 37 of the Istanbul Convention mandates the implementation of laws, which ensure that intentionally forcing an adult or a child into a marriage or luring an adult or a child to another country for forced marriage is a criminal offence.

### **Female genital mutilation (Article 38)**

Many girls and women around the world are threatened by or experience female genital mutilation (FGM).<sup>19</sup> This involves “partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons” (WHO, 2025). FGM has serious psychological, physical, and sexual impacts, can end a girl’s education, and be a precursor to early or child marriage,

The Istanbul Convention mandates challenging attitudes and stereotypes that allow FGM and criminalising it as a harmful practice (Council of Europe, 2019). Teachers could receive training so that they can educate young people and support those at risk or those who have already undergone FGM.

### **Harassment and sexual harassment (Article 40)**

The Istanbul Convention defines ‘**harassment**’ and ‘**sexual harassment**’ as “any form of unwanted *verbal, non-verbal or physical* conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.” (Art. 40).<sup>20</sup>

Verbal examples of sexual harassment may include making sexual comments about a person’s body, asking personal questions about someone’s social or sex life, making sexual comments about a person’s clothing, anatomy or looks, bullying, telling lies, or spreading rumours about a person’s sex life or sexual preferences. Non-verbal examples of sexual harassment may include, among others, looking a person up and down (known as ‘elevator eyes’), stalking, making sexual gestures with the hands or through body movements, and using facial expressions such as winking, throwing kisses or licking lips. Physical harassment includes touching another person’s body, clothing, hair, or body, hugging, kissing, patting, touching or rubbing oneself sexually against another person. (Pandea et al., 2019, 30-31).

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<sup>19</sup> Punishable criminal under Art. 180- female genital mutilation of the Kosovo Criminal Code.

<sup>20</sup> Punishable criminal acts under Art. 182 and 183 of the Kosovo Criminal Code.

### ● Example and food for thought!

Drita, a 16-year-old student at a high school in Kosovo, has recently become the target of unwanted attention from one of her male classmates, Agron. During class, Agron often stares at Drita, making her feel uncomfortable. He also makes comments about her appearance, saying things like, “You should wear that skirt more often” and “You look really cute when you blush. During breaks, Agron follows Drita around the school, sometimes getting close enough to brush against her arm or shoulder. He has also sent her messages on social media, asking her to go out with him, despite Drita’s clear disinterest. Drita feels increasingly anxious at school and has started avoiding certain areas to escape Agron’s attention. She hasn’t told any teachers because she is worried, they might not take her seriously or think she’s overreacting.

- Which of Agron’s behaviours could be classified as harassment or sexual harassment according to the definitions provided by the Istanbul Convention?
- If you were in Drita’s shoes, how would you feel about Agron’s actions, and what might prevent you from reporting them to a teacher or school counsellor?
- What can schools do to ensure that students like Drita feel safe and supported when they experience harassment?

## **Violence committed in the name of so-called honour (Article 42)**

‘Honour’ based violence is motivated by the perception that a person has brought or may bring ‘dishonour’ or ‘shame’ to themselves, their family, or the community. It is not a cultural tradition or religious practice and can occur in any community regardless of faith or background.

The Istanbul Convention explicitly prohibits any justification of such acts based on cultural, religious, traditional or so-called ‘honour’ grounds (Article 42). This means acts of violence, such as killing or injuring a woman due to her actual or perceived deviation from cultural, religious or traditional expectations, cannot be defended on these bases (Council of Europe, 2019, Leaflet). The Istanbul Convention calls for comprehensive support for victims, and teachers need to be prepared to identify potential signs of risk, and signposts to support services and know how to report them to relevant authorities.

● **Example:**

Arta is a woman living in a village in Kosovo with her husband, Besim. They have been married for five years and have two young children. While their family life might look normal from the outside, Arta often feels controlled and unhappy. Besim expects her to focus only on the household and children, even though she runs a small tailoring business from home. Besim plays no role in caring for their children, demands all the money she earns, and she is left with very little to say over her own life. Whenever Arta talks about her interests in learning new skills, Besim discourages her, telling her that doing so will dishonour him as the head of the household, and that her role is only to support the family at home. Sometimes, he makes her feel small by belittling her and not allowing her to make decisions, and he also sometimes beats her when he feels she has disrespected him. Arta loves her children deeply but feels frightened and trapped, she depends on Besim financially, and she does not know where to turn for help. Arta doesn't want to bring shame on her family by seeking help, and fears the social backlash from those who believe a woman should stay with her husband to maintain the family 'honour'. One day, a neighbour notices that Arta seems unhappy and suggests she contact an organisation that supports women. Arta confides in the neighbour, who is a teacher at the local school, and learns that the service provides confidential help, understands about family 'honour', and offers support irrespective of what Arta decides to do. The teacher invites Arta to the school to discuss the children's progress, and Arta takes the opportunity offered, to call the helpline and explore her options.

## **Online and technology-facilitated violence**

While many forms of violence outlined in the Istanbul Convention occur in person, many can also extend to the online sphere. The definition of 'stalking' in the Istanbul Convention encompasses online and technology-facilitated stalking, which includes threats (of a sexual, economic, physical or psychological nature), damage to reputation, monitoring and gathering of private information on the victim, identity theft, solicitation for sex, impersonating the victim and harassing with accomplices to isolate the victim (Council of Europe, 2021, par. 41). Further, psychological violence can manifest as digital harassment, threats or coercion via social media and messaging apps. Sexual harassment is also prevalent online, including unsolicited sexual comments, images and cyberbullying (Council of Europe, 2024, Terminology Guidelines).

GREVIO highlights that violence against women and domestic violence occurring in the digital realm often overlap with physical violence, intensifying the trauma and sometimes even jeopardizing the victim's physical safety. It is crucial to address the digital aspect of abuse, particularly in cases of intimate-partner violence, as digital abuse can either precede or complement physical and sexual violence, stalking and harassment (Council of Europe, 2021, 15).

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## MODULE 3:

### The whole education approach

This Module introduced a whole-education approach, which integrates gender equality, respect and non-violence across the entire educational system, including curricula, policies, teacher training and the broader school environment (Butler & Hrytsenko, 2024, 14-25).

*To apply this approach in Kosovo:*

- **The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI)** integrated these principles into the curriculum, mandate ongoing teacher training and establish policies to enforce it.
- **Schools** could embed these principles across all subjects, provide age-appropriate materials and create safe and supportive learning environments.
- **Teachers and educators** could participate in training, integrate gender equality into their daily and collaborate with parents and the community.

The CoE [‘Checklist for Preventing Violence Against Women Through Formal and Informal Education’](#) offers a practical tool for evaluating and improving these strategies. (Butler & Hrytsenko, 2024).

### Learning resources and materials

Gender-sensitive teaching materials are essential to combat stereotypes, and current resources often reinforce them (Rrjeti i Grave te Kosoves, 2020). MESTI should ensure that teaching resources promote equality and inclusivity (Butler & Hrytsenko, 2024, 17). The Agency for Gender Equality’s Methodological Manual supports this development, while adequate funding and educator training are critical for implementation (Agency for Gender Equality, n.d.).

Teachers must be able to recognise and address gender-based bullying and have clear reporting procedures as per SPOs. Integrating discussions on gender roles and using diverse examples enhances inclusivity.

- How to implement the whole education approach in practice- food for thought! As teachers/educators, you can contribute significantly to creating a more gender-equitable environment in your classroom. When reading a school textbook or developing learning materials and resources as a teacher/educator you could:

Ensure all genders are equally represented in materials. Add diverse supplements if resources are imbalanced. Discuss stereotypes when they appear and encourage students to imagine non-stereotypical scenarios.

Ask questions like “Why do you think this role is often assigned to this gender? Can you think of people who defy these norms?”, and use role-play to challenge norms i.e., having girls lead a science experiment or having boys take on caregiving roles in class activities.

Highlight how gender roles vary around cultures and have changed over time. Introduce examples of women’s and diverse gender contributions, even if textbooks overlook them.

## **Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)**

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), is integral to a ‘whole education approach’, covering age-appropriate topics on sexuality, relationships, respect, consent and bodily autonomy (WHO, 2023)

### **Safeguarding and support**

Schools need to be prepared to address violence, support disclosures, and coordinate with local services. Teachers should document signs of distress, offer a safe space for students and report concerns following protocols (School Information Leaflet on Standard Operating Procedure for Protection from Domestic Violence).

These actions have been further detailed in the SOPs and will be further elaborated in Module 5.

### **Participation, community engagement and working with local offices**

Engaging children, families and the community is vital in preventing violence and fostering equality, for example, through workshops, peer support and participation in awareness events. This can be achieved for instance by planning activities around important international days such as International Women’s Day (March 8), or the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (November 25) and subsequent 16 days of Action to End Gender-Based Violence (November 25 to International Human Rights Day on December 10<sup>th</sup>) (Butler & Hrytsenko, 2024, 22-23).

- **Idea:** The school can take action against gender-based violence by launching a campaign, where parents, local businesses and community leaders are invited on board and join forces in promoting gender equality and preventing violence. The campaign kicks off with a workshop that is led by students who have been trained on topics like healthy relationships, and gender stereotypes. Different personalities are invited to share stories about the importance and respect and equality. The campaign continues with the school hosting students, parents and community members who work together to create murals around the town, portraying important themes. All these events can be covered by local media in order to promote and increase the visibility of the campaign.

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## MODULE 4:

### Information to support lesson plans

This Module offers strategies to promote equality, critical thinking and respect along with non-violent conflict resolution in the classroom. It is specifically designed for teachers who could integrate these principles, adapt activities to student needs, use real-life examples and actively promote equality and non-violence.

### Promoting equality and non-stereotyped gender roles

Changing the narrative about girls, in every field of life, requires a change in the narrative about boys, simultaneously (Women in Sport, 2024). Gender stereotyping, which starts in families and then is reinforced by society's expectations, should not be supported in schools. Schools must be strong advocates of equality and non-stereotyped gender roles; each teacher/educator plays a pivotal role.

● **Scenario:**

During a book tour, author [Shannon Hale](#) faced scepticism about her book series "The Princess in Black" from a parent questioning why she didn't write a similar series specifically for boys. Hale explained that the books were intended for everyone who enjoys stories about a hero, regardless of gender. Despite her response, the parent was doubtful.

Hale's experiences didn't stop there. When she published the graphic novel "Real Friends," which features mostly female characters, some reviewers advised against recommending it to boys. A school librarian introduced Hale's book at an assembly with comments implying it was primarily for girls. At a book signing, a mother expressed regret over not being able to buy the books for her sons, and a boy's father dismissed a book Hale wrote as a "girl book."

These encounters reflect a broader cultural assumption that boys will not enjoy books featuring female protagonists, and stories about men are considered universal, while stories about women are only for girls (Hale, 2018)

Schools are supposed to create safe, inclusive environments free from prejudice, bullying and harassment fostering a culture of acceptance (for example, see [Let Toys be Toys, 2024](#)). Teachers must be able to identify and challenge gender stereotypes, that are often unconscious and rooted in beliefs (IOP Institute of Physics, 2019). Here are some examples to help recognise and address classroom biases.

● **Scenario 1:**

As a teacher, you assign a project titled “A Famous Scientist/Inventor” to your class. The assignment includes questions like “Who was he?” and provides examples exclusively of male scientists and inventors such as Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein, Alexander Graham Bell, and Steve Jobs. While the intention is to introduce students to significant historical figures in science and invention, the assignment inadvertently suggests that notable scientists and inventors are all male (Let Toys be Toys, 2024).

**Scenario 2:**

As a teacher, you decided to place disruptive boys to sit near or with girls. This arrangement is intended to encourage better behaviour by leveraging the perceived calming influence of female students. However, by consistently placing boys near girls, you may be unintentionally reinforcing the stereotype that boys are inherently undisciplined while girls are cooperative and orderly. This practice can also imply that it is the girl’s responsibility to manage and ‘look after’ the behaviour of the boys (see [A teacher’s guide to gender sensitivity in classroom, AWARE n.d.](#)).

**Scenario 3:**

In your classroom, one of the boys starts to cry after an argument with a classmate. You notice that some students react with comments like, “Come on, boys don’t cry”, or “Don’t cry like a girl”. As a teacher, you observe the situation but choose not to address the comments or intervene in the interaction between the students. You continue with the lesson as if nothing happened and tell the boy “Come on now, calm down” ([Maulana, 2021](#))

Reflect on scenarios that may reinforce gender stereotypes and consider instances where unconscious bias may have influenced student interactions. Once identified, challenge these stereotypes by using inclusive language, avoiding biased phrases, engaging in open discussions, and showcasing diverse role models (Reeson Education, 2024). For more guidance, refer to **Module 3** on the whole-education approach and additional strategies from the [European Training Platform on Domestic Violence](#) (ETP on DV, 2024).

## **Encouraging critical thinking**

Students must be prepared to engage in critical thinking. Only through critical thinking will they be able to question norms and form their observations. Below are some examples of how this can be achieved.

● **Example 1:**

In a history class, when you assign a reading of a certain lesson that might feature mainly males in leadership roles, engage students in a critical discussion about the contributions of women, people of diverse ethnic backgrounds and individuals with disabilities whose roles might have been overlooked.

**Example 2:**

Take news from the media on the recent Olympic games in Paris, that talk about the accomplishments of judo athletes from Kosovo such as Distria Krasniqi, Nora Gjakova and Majlinda Kelmendi, who brought medals to the country. Foster discussions on how female athletes, athletes from different ethnic backgrounds and athletes with disabilities are portrayed compared to male athletes, and how media can perpetuate or challenge stereotypes.

**Example 3:**

During the civic education subject, you can talk to students about women politicians, including women politicians of different ethnicities. Assign students homework asking them to research and comment on news articles on male and female politicians, and then think critically about how media represents both male and female politicians and those from diverse backgrounds, focusing on how media represents them e.g., how they dress, look, and talk. Use this to foster discussions on how media biases can reinforce or break down racist, sexist and ableist assumptions.

**Example 4:**

You can watch videos tackling gender stereotypes (search and find online). Extend discussions to explore stereotypes related to gender, race, disability and family structure.

Encourage students to express their opinions and guide discussions in an age-appropriate way that considers their developmental stages. Asking students to reimagine scenarios that challenge stereotypes helps nurture their critical thinking skills and fosters their ability to question gender norms. It also gives students a sense of ownership (Chauhan et al., 2022; Vilhjalmsdottir, 2014).

## **Classroom activities and discussions**

This section offers classroom activities and discussions for teachers of grades 1-9, fostering age-appropriate learning. Resources like [Raising Boys/Children: The Feminist Way](#) (Mackay, n.d.) suggest challenging gender norms by treating children as individuals, allowing emotional expression and independence (Mackay, n.d.). The [EU Commission's Educational Toolkit](#) to help fight gender stereotypes in primary school (Janeckova et al., 2021) provides concrete activities to help younger students (grades 1 and 2) counter stereotypes.

### ● Example 1:

#### Activity:

- Sit in the centre of a circle and toss a ball to a student while saying “girls are...” or “boys are...”.
- The student who catches the ball responds with the first word that comes to mind.
- Record responses in two columns on the board (one for girls, one for boys).
- Repeat until you have enough responses to discuss.

Start a debriefing session, by reading responses on the board aloud, and discussing with the group:

- Do you think girls and boys must act according to the words on the board?
- Can boys and girls do things from both lists?
- Do you believe they can behave in similar ways?

Ask students if they agree that girls can enjoy football, boys can bake, girls can lead and boys can be sensitive.

Explain the concept of gender stereotypes (e.g. boys are noisy, girls prefer dolls), emphasizing the importance of viewing people as individuals rather than through stereotypes or assumptions based on gender (Janeckova et al., 2021, 14).

### Example 2:

Provide a list of common chores such as washing dishes, taking out the garbage, cooking, ironing, repairing things, babysitting and the alike). Have each student draw their family members (including themselves). Ask students to identify who does each chores in their household. For younger students (e.g., 1st grade), use images of chores to match with family members instead of writing. Students compare their results in groups.

Start debriefing with the students by asking the following questions:

- Who are the adults or caregivers in your home, and what chores do they do? Are chores shared equally? ]
- Do you help with the chores? Do your siblings help in the same way?
- Do your family members have free time for their hobbies? If not, why?

Teachers could challenge some of the students’ answers (Janeckova et al., 2021, 39-40).

● **Example 3:**

Create a List of Statements related to gender (e.g., “All boys like to play outside”, “girls like to wear dress”, “some girls like to play with trucks”). Modify or add statements as needed.

Read each statement aloud. If students agree, they raise their hand; if they disagree, they keep their hands down. Count the hands.

After the answers are collected, the teacher will start a debriefing session and ask students the following questions:

- Which statements had the most agreements or disagreements?
- Was it easy to reply?
- How did the statements make you feel?

**Discussion:**

Explain gender stereotypes-commonly held beliefs about how boys and girls “should” behave. Reread the statements and ask students to identify which are based on stereotypes. Encourage them to identify stereotypes in the list. Encourage them to remain attentive to stereotypical behaviour at their own home, with friends, at school, when watching online videos, TV, on social media, and when reading textbooks) and share their observations in the class (Janeckova et al., 2021, 42-43).

**Note:** Some additional useful resources can be found in [Teaching About Gender Inequality](#) (Educators 4SC, Teaching about Gender Inequality).

The following examples are borrowed from the Let Toys be Toys platform and adapted to the local context. They are divided into different age groups and provide suggestions on how to integrate them in different subject matters. These examples target children in **grades 3 & 4**.

● **Example 1:**

Students will be asked to write down on a small piece of paper their favourite toy and then fold that piece of paper and put it in a common box. The teacher will then take each of the letters, identify the student, and ask the student why they like a particular toy. Teachers can use a chart to compare the results and look out for common themes between responses from both boys and girls.

Once this is done, the teacher will present a variety of toys to the class i.e., dolls, cars, pink toys, board games or any other toy of preference. For each toy, the teacher will ask the class “Who is this toy for?” and see whether they associate the toy with a specific gender. The teacher will inquire why they believe it is a ‘girl’s toy’ or a ‘boy’s toy’. Discuss this with students by taking into account the lessons for critical thinking.

● **Example 2:**

The teacher will show the class a video on toy stereotypes (you can find plenty of them on Youtube).

The following examples are borrowed and adapted for this Manual ([Equaliteach](#), n.d., 77-78). They aim at encouraging discussions with children in **classes 5 & 6**, on issues such as the impact of stereotypes, stereotypes in media, consent, and boundaries. As such, these exercises can be included in classes of civic education, art and design and alike.

● **Example 1:**

The teacher introduces possibly using a PowerPoint with twins (a boy and a girl) who share the same starting point in life, with the same family, same home and same upbringing. The key difference is their sex and how gender stereotypes shape their futures.

Activity:

- Divide the class into small groups.
- Give each group four “Statistics Cards”.
- Groups spend five minutes reviewing the stats and discussing how gender or other identity factors might shape their twins’ future interests and careers.

Afterwards, each group shares one statistic and their conclusions about how different toys, activities and media exposure influence the twins. The teacher collects these ideas and prompts deeper thought by asking:

- What makes people think certain subjects are only for boys or girls?
- How do stereotypes about being ‘weak’ or ‘strong’ affect people’s view of themselves and others?

Sample Statistics Cards & Questions:

● **Card 1:**

Statistic: 60% of boys prefer football;50% of girls prefer dancing. However, 40% of girls like playing sports like football and basketball.

*Questions:*

- Why do you think boys say they like football and more girls say they like dancing?
- Can boys and girls enjoy both sports and dancing? Why?
- How might this affect what the twins think they are good at?

**Card 2:**

Statistic: 65% of boys want to be engineers/builders; 70% of girls want to be teachers or nurses.

*Questions:*

- Why this difference?
- Can anyone choose any career? How does playing with certain toys influence these choices?

**Card 3:**

Statistic: Research shows that in children's TV shows, 75% of the main characters are boys, while only 25% are girls. The boys' characters are often shown as adventurous, while the girls' characters are often shown as caring.

*Questions:*

- Why do you think more main characters in children's shows are boys?
- Can girls be adventurous, and boys be caring?
- How might seeing these kinds of characters affect how twins think they should act?

**Card 4:**

Statistic: In a survey of toy ads, 90% of the ads for cars and action figures featured boys, while 85% of the ads for dolls and kitchen sets featured girls.

*Questions:*

- Why do you think toy companies advertise certain toys to boys and others to girls?
- Do you think boys and girls can both enjoy playing with cars and dolls?
- How might these ads influence the toys twins are 'supposed' to play with?

**● Example 2:**

Activity:

- Arrange students into two lines facing each other. One line asks "Can I take another step" before moving closer. They can step only if the other person in front says "yes". If the partner is uncomfortable, they say "no", and the stepping stops

Consent can be given verbally or non-verbally during this exercise. The exercise shall continue until all pairs have stopped.

The teacher will then ask the following questions and discuss them with the class:

- Why did different people stop at different distances? (Everyone has different comfort levels).

- How did it feel to be able to say ‘stop’ and have it respected? How does it feel when people do not respect your boundaries?
- How would you have felt if the person kept stepping forward after you said to stop?
- What were some ways consent was communicated? Was it always verbal?

The following exercise has been borrowed and adapted for the purposes of this Manual (Learning for Justice, n.d., Bibi: Lesson 2). It is suitable for children in grades 6-9 and teaches the concept of intersectionality. It fosters a classroom discussion on how our various identities intersect and impact one another.

● **Example:**

Activity steps:

- Show students the YouTube video on intersectionality (look up “[Intersectionality 101](#)”). From minute 1:02 there are examples of intersectionality). Provide note-taking sheets if needed and replay as necessary. Explain intersectionality- how multiple identify factors (e.g., gender, race, class) combine to create unique experiences of privilege and marginalisation.
- Identify a character or scenario from the video that shows intersectionality and discuss how different identities interact to shape their experiences.
- Ask students to share examples of privileges and oppressions they noted. List them on a T-chart with “Privileges” on one side and “Oppressions” on the other.

Facilitate discussions with these questions:

- Why is it important to consider intersectionality when discussing identity?
- Are there examples of intersectionality in the video might not be immediately visible?
- How do our different identities intersect and influence each other? ([Learning for Justice \(n.d.\) Bibi Lesson 2: Intersectionality in ‘Bibi’](#)).

All these exercises can be combined and adapted to appropriate age groups and could serve as an inspiration for teachers/educational staff to develop their learning materials and resources.

## Promoting respect and non-violent conflict resolution

Conflicts are present in schools worldwide, including in Kosovo where bullying and intimidation create fear and insecurity.

To address this, Pristina's Education Directorate and MESTI have implemented teacher training, mediation groups, the "We Grow Together" forum, and adopted the Action Plan for Safety in Schools (2023-2026) to address school conflicts (Telegrafi, 2023; ; UNICEF, 2024).

Below are some examples inspired by UNESCO on promoting respect and non-violent conflict resolution among students (UNESCO, n.d., Best Practices, 13-14).

### ● Example 1:

If there is an ongoing conflict, divide students into two groups on opposing sides of a conflict. Each group shares their view, while the teacher identifies common interests and helps brainstorm a compromise. This encourages understanding and collaboration.

### ● Example 2:

Have students act out a conflict resolution scenario, such as two children disagreeing during a game, to practice cooperation and respect. In case of low engagement or interruptions, form a 'Listening Circle' where only one person holding an object speaks. This activity fosters attention and empathy.

Below are some example exercises for teachers to use in teaching children about conflict resolution. These include mediation as a common method in schools ([The Centre for Peaceful Solutions, n.d., Mediation in Schools](#)) (see the list of references), and some useful lesson ideas for exploring the meaning of conflict and various conflict situations.

### ● Example 1:

Present a scenario where two students disagree during a game. For example:

A: "Why did you not pass me the ball?"

B: "The coach told me to take the shot."

Two students role-play this scenario, adding emotions to their responses. The teacher facilitates a discussion using guiding questions like:

- What caused the conflict?
- How did each person feel?
- How could the conflict be resolved positively?

Continue with showing students pictures depicting different types of conflict (e.g., classmates arguing). Discuss:

- What is happening in the image?
- How might this conflict escalate or be resolved peacefully?
- Have you experienced something similar?

Encourage students to reflect on conflict as a natural part of life and discuss strategies for non-violent resolution (Fairfax Country Public Schools, n.d., 10 Lessons for Teaching Conflict Resolution Skills; [Carolina K-12, n.d., A Picture of Conflict](#)) (see the list of references)

● **Example 2:**

Act out a scenario in class:

Scenario A: Two students argue over sharing a desk, leading to name-calling and throwing objects. The teacher intervenes early, mediates and encourages cooperation.

The teacher explains to students how early intervention can prevent escalation. How can teamwork and empathy be fostered?

Scenario B (Teachers' reflection): Two staff members fail to cooperate, affecting the curriculum and creating tension. Mediation is used to resolve their conflict.

Consider how staff disputes influence the school environment.

Scenario C (School's reflection): One student reports bullying by another student. After exchanging harsh words, both students are punished. The school arranges mediation for parents and students.

Reflect on whether the response was fair, the suspension's effectiveness, and the parents' roles.

Teachers can use mediation to prevent escalation, reinforce the code of conduct, and train in de-escalation and inclusivity to build a positive culture. Peer mediation is an effective tool for helping students.

Proactive measures like mediation, prevent conflict escalation (Pollack, 2024). Consistent use of the school's code of conduct and early intervention in conflicts, especially bullying, are essential. Active listening, feedback and calming techniques like deep breathing aid in managing disputes ([InCompassing Education 2023](#)) (see the list of references). Peer mediation and regular staff training in de-escalation support a positive school environment.

## Personal integrity techniques

Teaching students about integrity involves building self-respect, recognising personal boundaries and learning about receiving and giving consent in age-appropriate ways. For students aged 8-12, the focus is on learning to respect themselves and others, being comfortable expressing when they do not want to participate in an activity, and recognising when others do the same. At this stage, the emphasis is on everyday examples of consent and respect rather than on sexual contexts. Practical techniques can help integrate these values for students aged 8-12 ([IPPF, n.d., A Guide for Educators](#)).

- **Example:** Students stand in a circle (either drawn or using a hula hoop) to feel the concept of personal space. The teacher introduces different types of relationships-such as family, friends and people they know less- and guides students to place people from these groups in concentric circles representing the level of closeness. By mapping these relationships, students learn that everyone has personal boundaries that vary depending on their familiarity and connection. This exercise helps students understand that respecting personal space and boundaries is a key aspect of integrity, fostering an environment where students recognise and respect their own limits as well as those of others (IPPF, n.d., A Guide for Educators).

Other useful techniques concerning personal integrity can be explored in the following example:

- **Example:** Begin by writing ‘integrity’ on the board and have students pair up to create their own definitions. Share and compile these definitions as a class. Next, share a personal story that illustrates integrity, such as reporting a friend who cheated on a test. Present four short scenarios and ask students to show a thumbs up if integrity is demonstrated or thumbs down if not, followed by a brief discussion of each. Divide the class into small groups and provide each group with a “The Right Thing to Do” worksheet and a scenario and have them discuss and decide on the best course of action. Encourage groups to role-play their scenarios before presenting their solutions to the class. Conclude with a discussion on why integrity is important and how students can demonstrate it in their daily lives.

Teaching children about personal boundaries and consent goes hand in hand with making them feel confident and create a positive image of themselves.

- **Example:** Students learn the power of compliments by filling in handouts with kind words about classmates and forming a ‘chain of compliments’ by linking the sentences. Following this, students compliment themselves by listing five things they are good at or enjoy, boosting self-esteem ([KidsHealth in the Classroom](#)).

## Addressing violence against women and domestic violence in the classroom

This Manual highlights the importance of a whole-education approach to addressing violence against women and domestic violence.. Teachers need to be vigilant for signs of violence, such as unexplained injuries or behavioural changes, and respond sensitively to disclosures, following school protocols and reporting to authorities (See Module 5). Collaboration among teachers, parents, staff and the community ensures comprehensive support. The Istanbul Convention emphasizes age-appropriate

educational materials like videos and role-plays to teach students to recognise and challenge violence effectively.

The following example is borrowed from [Activities and Lesson Plans](#) (Equaliteach, Activities and Lesson Plans. Violence in Schools, see the list of references).

● **Example 1:**

Briefly review violence against women and domestic violence and ask students to share media examples from their homework. Divide the class into two groups: “people” and “things”.

- “People” can think, feel and make decisions. They give orders.
- “Things” cannot think, feel or decide. They must follow orders and ask permission.

“People” have 2-3 minutes to give simple, respectful (no aggressive or degrading actions) tasks to “Things”. Then switch roles.

After both turns, discuss:

- How did each role feel?
- Did you notice power imbalances or violence?
- Do we ever treat others like “things” in real life?
- How can we ensure everyone is treated with respect and free from violence against women/domestic violence?

The next example is borrowed from the [Manual: Training Programme on Gender-Based Violence](#) (European Commission, 2020, 24).

● **Example:**

The teacher will explain to students what violence against women/domestic violence means and the forms of violence, which are not only physical but can also be emotional and psychological like control, threat, isolation and so on. To engage some critical thinking among children, the teacher will list a few examples of ‘signs of unhealthy relationships’ such as he/she:

Humiliates you and makes you feel bad

- Constantly checks on you (where you are, who you are with, and what you are doing) Makes you uncomfortable doing what you want
- Unjustly accuses you
- I am running a few minutes late; my previous meeting is running over.
- Is extremely jealous
- Believes they have more rights than you.
- Demands your passwords (social media, email, phone).
- Forces you to do things you do not want to.
- Ridicules you in front of friends.

Adjust the list of signs as needed for the age group. Have students review the signs and comment, noting responses on the board.

Explain that gender-based violence can occur anywhere, anytime and ignoring it can signal that the behaviour is not wrong. Remind students that staying silent can make them complicit.

Divide students into groups of 4 and ask them to reflect for about 15 minutes on:

- A time they saw someone being hurt or treated unfairly?
- A time they participated in hurting of unfairly treating someone else?
- A time they saw someone hurt or treated unfairly and no one stepped in.
- A time they saw someone intervene.

Afterwards, discuss as a whole class, listing various examples of harm or unfair treatment on the board as a form of violence.

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## MODULE 5:

### Identification and response disclosures

This Module focuses on the identification and response to disclosures and is therefore designed to apply to all staff members. It provides guidance tailored to their roles while differentiating between the specific responsibilities of various positions within the educational environment. Readers can refer to Module 2 for detailed descriptions and definitions while using this Module for practical response strategies.

### Recognising signs of violence against women and domestic violence

*Recognising signs of violence against women and domestic violence early is essential, as these may be:*

- **Physical**, such as unexplained injuries.
- **Psychological**, such as anxiety, and withdrawal.
- **Behavioural**, such as frequent absences, aggressive behaviour, overachievement, staying late at school, appearing overly hardworking (European Training Platform on Domestic Violence, 2024, Indicators of domestic violence) (Child Safeguarding and Protection Handbook, 2021).

Teachers and school staff must respond gender sensitively, create a trusting environment, avoid judgment and ensure confidentiality while following school protocols and offering continued support. It is important to note that signs of violence against women and domestic violence may not always align with typical indicators. Because teachers are closer to students, they need to be aware that children experiencing domestic violence might show different behaviours, such as being overachievers, staying late at school, or appearing hardworking, rather than displaying more obvious signs. Knowing how to ask sensitively about concerns is crucial for identifying and supporting these students effectively.

### Access to support

Victims' support services, as required by the Istanbul Convention, include shelters, telephone helplines, sexual violence services, legal support services, counselling centres and support for child witnesses. Kosovo has the following governmental and non-governmental mechanisms and support services in place:



Kosovo has also developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) as inter-sectoral protocols for multi-sectoral cooperation among public institutions and other entities involved in supporting domestic violence and violence against women victims (Council of Europe, 2022, 8). These SOPs detail the steps for identifying and reporting violence, assessing risks, referring victims to support services, and addressing perpetrators.

## Support systems and resources for affected students

*Schools must provide safe, supportive environments for students affected by violence. This includes trained professionals, internal support systems, and connections to external services. Schools are supposed to have:*

- Psychologists trained in trauma-informed care.
- A safeguarding lead and dedicated safety and well-being teams.
- A code of ethics and incident reporting systems like the School Management Information System (SMIA).
- Safe spaces such as a designated office for confidential discussions.

Teachers and staff must be able to recognise signs of distress and offer initial support. If a student discloses abuse, staff can follow Kosovo's SOP's- maintaining confidentiality, referring to external services and in emergencies, involving crisis protocols and child protection services.

Teachers and school staff may feel uncertain or unprepared to handle such situations, and heavy workloads can make it challenging to address cases effectively (Selvik, 2022, p.655). Continued training helps build confidence and knowledge. Teacher's reactions heavily influence outcomes. They are supposed to listen without judgment or interruption and avoid assumptions or too many questions, and recognise potential signs of distress, fear, or withdrawal).

Before discussing details, teachers and school staff should address emotional needs with calming techniques. Let students guide the conversation with open-ended questions and reassure them that their feelings are valid and not their fault. Keep disclosures confidential and follow the school's and Kosovo's legal procedures for child protection and reporting abuse, as outlined in the SOPs.

## **Support systems and resources for affected adults**

Adults, such as school staff and parents, may also experience violence and require support. Schools must be able to offer confidential counselling and resources to affected staff, and staff can be encouraged to use these services without fear of stigma or retaliation. School policies are supposed to promote a safe workplace by implementing anti-harassment and anti-violence policies and have protocols for reporting and addressing workplace violence.

*According to Article 18 of the Istanbul Convention, support services for victims of violence against women should:*

- be rooted in a gendered understanding,
- prioritise the victim's human rights and dignity, avoid secondary victimisation through a culture of belief, focus on empowerment and self-determination, promote economic independence and address the specific needs of vulnerable persons, including child victims and child witnesses. (Kelly, 2018, 6).

Supporting colleagues experiencing violence against women/domestic violence requires compassion and sensitivity. Avoid justifying the abuser's behaviour, as this minimises the seriousness and harms the victim's trust. Acknowledge limitations and never confront the abuser directly. Respect the victim's choices and acknowledge that safety concerns may continue even if the relationship ends. Avoid suggesting the victim change their own behaviour, as this reinforces self-blame. Offer long-term support, refrain from criticism and respect their autonomy (UK Says No More, 2024).

## **Roles and responsibilities**

Each role within the school system plays a vital part in supporting affected individuals and maintaining a safe environment.

### **Role of school administration**

*School administrations should set up and oversee support structures and ensure policies and SOPs are implemented consistently. According to best practices, school administration could:*

- Set up response teams and ensure all staff receive training on recognising and responding to violence.
- Establish clear, accessible protocols for reporting and addressing incidents.
- Maintain a list of local support organisations and ensure collaboration with external resources.
- Provide regular updates and reviews of school policies to ensure alignment with SOPs (Child Safeguarding and Protection Handbook, 2021, 13-14).

## **Role of child protection/safeguarding lead**

*The child protection or safeguarding lead can be the main point of contact for handling cases involving students affected by violence. Their responsibilities could include:*

- Serving as the primary responder when students disclose issues of violence or abuse, managing referrals and keeping records.
- Coordinating with external child protection services and following SOPs for reporting and intervention.
- Ensuring confidentiality, protecting the affected student's privacy and maintaining records as required by SOPs.
- Providing guidance to teachers and staff on how to support affected students appropriately (Child Safeguarding and Protection Handbook, 2021, 14).

## **All staff: confidentiality and sensitivity in handling disclosures**

The Istanbul Convention emphasises the importance of confidentiality in protecting victims of violence against women/domestic violence. Confidentiality safeguards victims' privacy, safety and dignity by ensuring that any disclosures remain secure and only accessible to authorised personnel who are directly involved in providing support (Article 28; Opinion of Advocate General, 2021). Victims need to trust that their personal information will not be shared unnecessarily, as unauthorised disclosures can deter them from seeking help, increase their vulnerability, or expose them to retaliation. Under these guidelines, any reporting by witnesses or professionals must be handled with the utmost discretion. The Istanbul Convention provides clear circumstances under which professionals may report incidents without breaching confidentiality obligations. Schools, therefore, are supposed to adopt strict confidentiality protocols that limit information sharing strictly on a "need-to-know" basis (Article 28). This approach encourages victims to come forward, reassured that their experiences will be handled responsibly, and helps create an environment where students feel safe when disclosing sensitive information

## **Collaboration with parents, guardians, and external support services**

Effective support requires collaboration with families and external support systems. Schools are supposed to work with parents and guardians, maintaining open communication about policies and protocols. This helps to build trust and encourages families to report any concerns about violence affecting their children. Schools are also supposed to have established partnerships with local support services, including child protection services, mental health providers and free legal aid services.

## **Immediate actions in case of disclosure**

Schools, often the first line of defence, play a key role in identifying signs of violence and are required to report suspected cases to authorities using referral forms.

*Imagine the following scenario:*

Hana has been withdrawn recently, missing several school days without explanation. The teacher notices bruise on Hana's wrists and a persistent look of anxiety. During a private conversation about her absences, Hana discloses that her father has been physically and verbally abusing both her and her mother at home. This situation clearly involves DV and GBV and requires immediate and coordinated action to protect Hana and her mother and hold perpetrator accountable.

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Below is a list of immediate actions to be taken by school staff in the event of a disclosure of DV or GBV. These steps are based on current SOPs for Protection from Domestic Violence in Kosovo, adapted for the school environment.

### **1. STAY CALM & PROVIDE A SAFE SPACE**

- If Hana discloses abuse or violence, stay composed. Your reaction can greatly influence how safe she feels.
- Choose a quiet, private setting where the student can speak freely, away from other students or staff who do not need to be involved.

### **2. LISTEN ACTIVELY & REASSURE**

Avoid expressing shock or disapproval. Let Hana share at her own pace.

- Use reassuring phrases: "I believe you," "It's not your fault," "You did the right thing by telling someone."
- Do **not** promise absolute confidentiality; explain your duty to seek help if needed.

### **3. GATHER ESSENTIAL INFORMATION (SENSITIVELY)**

- Ask simple, open-ended questions to clarify what happened:
  - "Can you tell me more about what happened?"
  - "Do you feel safe at home or here at school?"
- Take brief, factual notes (date, time, visible signs of harm, the student's own words). Your role is NOT to investigate, but to secure the student's safety.

### **4. ASSESS IMMEDIATE DANGER**

- If Hana is in immediate danger or severe distress, call the Kosovo Police (**192**) urgently.
- If there are injuries requiring urgent care, involve health professionals and follow your school's emergency protocols.

### **5. REPORT TO THE SCHOOL'S DESIGNATED FOCAL POINT**

- Inform the appropriate person (e.g., director, counsellor, psychologist, safeguarding lead).
- Share any notes or observations about the disclosure so they have a clear understanding of the situation.

### **6. REFER TO EXTERNAL AUTHORITIES & SERVICES**

- Contact the Centre for Social Work (CSW) as per SOPs.
- Inform Kosovo Police if not already contacted, especially if Hana is in immediate danger.

- Coordinate with other institutions as needed:
  - Victims Advocacy and Assistance Office
  - Shelters or Safe Houses
  - Healthcare Providers
  - Local NGOs

## **7. DOCUMENT ACTIONS TAKEN**

- Keep a clear record of dates, times, and the people or institutions contacted.
- Stay in contact with referred agencies to monitor Hana’s situation and ensure ongoing support.

## **8. PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORT**

- Ensure the student has access to a counsellor or trusted staff member for regular check-ins.
- Arrange seating changes or other protective measures if needed.
- Where safe, involve non-offending parents/guardians in collaboration with CSW and other relevant institutions.

## **9. RESPECT CONFIDENTIALITY & PROFESSIONAL ETHICS**

- Share details only with those directly handling the case.
- Fulfil mandatory reporting obligations responsibly and ethically under Kosovo law and SOPs

These immediate actions are based on the currently existing SOPs. Once new SOPs are approved, this section will be updated to reflect any changes in procedures. The primary goal is to ensure that every disclosure is addressed swiftly, safely and appropriately, always prioritising the student’s well-being and protection.

For additional details and further guidance, please consult the [Information Guide published by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation](#).

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