



D5.6. INSTITUTIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS



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Framework

In the 21st century, European society faces a pressing challenge in the battle against gender-based violence. Reports from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and the EIGE reveal a harsh reality: one in three women in the European Union has experienced physical and sexual violence since the age of 15. This bleak landscape reflects the urgency to address this problem deeply rooted in social and cultural structures.

However, legal frameworks and preventive measures have proven insufficient in the face of this challenge. Gender-based violence not only has devastating consequences for the victims but also bears an estimated economic cost of nearly 226 billion euros in the EU. Additionally, the normalization of violence and abusive attitudes in online pornography has been identified as a threat to healthy sexual development in young people, representing a concerning turn in contemporary culture. The social conditioning of boys and girls during their formative years has an influence on the learning of gender-related roles and behaviours, and this can have an impact on the patterns of violence and victimization that remain in their lives in the long term. Therefore, promoting healthy gender roles among young people and hindering the impact of the Internet on premature sexualization and hypersexualization is key to preventing gender-based violence, as well as creating more egalitarian relationships based on consent and mutual respect.

With the widespread integration of web technologies and digital devices, the virtual realm has become a cornerstone of communication, information sharing, and interaction. The virtual environment has been normalised as a primary avenue of expression, learning, and social interaction for young individuals. As they explore the online sphere, they often turn to readily accessible content, especially concerning intimacy and sexuality. Unfortunately, much of this content lacks authenticity and reliability, potentially distorting their understanding of self, emotions, and relationships. Moreover, the digital realm blurs the lines between private and public, creating a delicate boundary that can easily be breached, leading to long-lasting consequences.



In this context, the CONSENT project stands out as a promising initiative. It arises from the collaboration between specialized gender-based violence support services, programmes for violent men, researchers, and IT specialists in Spain, Italy, Sweden, and Germany.

The CONSENT project (Combating ONLine early access to Sexually explicit material and ENhancing Tools to foster youngsters' healthy intimate relationships) was carried out between February 2022 and February 2024 and aimed to:

- Prevent gender-based violence among young people, specifically sexual violence.
- Reduce the impact of the Internet on premature sexualisation, hypersexualisation and sexism, as well as prevent online violence against and between children and adolescents.
- Promote healthy gender roles, equality, and consensual behaviors among young people in peer relationships to protect their emotional development and well-being.

Our work

- Inform parents and caregivers about the easy access to sexually explicit material by children and enable them to hinder early contact and to foster healthy sexual and emotional development in youth.
- Improve the knowledge of teachers and educators on online abuse and use of pornography, and their capability to detect and tackle them with youth, to improve their affective development and protect their health.
- Raise youngsters' awareness on gender roles and stereotypes, consent, and the implications of pornography on intimate relationships, to empower them to become critical agents.
- Improve the engagement of institutions, key stakeholders, and IT experts, to safeguard online security of children and healthy development of youth, through developing actions, tools and policies.



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Outputs

- CONSENT capacity building programme and manual for parents/caregivers and teachers/educators
- CONSENT Emotional education toolkit for youngsters of primary school (Manual for Teachers)
- CONSENT Emotional education toolkit for youngsters of secondary school (Manual for Teachers)
- CONSENT tools for practitioners and multipliers: mapping of best practices, guidelines for focus groups
- CONSENT Campaign Materials
- CONSENT institutional recommendations

The programmes and tools of the CONSENT project have been aimed at parents, teachers and youngsters, are available in 5 languages (English, Italian, Spanish, Catalan and Swedish) and have been disseminated throughout Europe for replication. In addition, the CONSENT project has developed a campaign for youngsters to become critical agents and a campaign to prepare adults to increase the impact on gender equality and safeguarding children across Europe.

Project Team

The CONSENT project has been run throughout Europe thanks to the collaboration of an international and interdisciplinary project team:

- **Fundación Blanquerna**, research and education organisation within the Faculty of Psychology, Education and Sports Sciences from Ramon Llull University, Spain
- **Conexus**, Associació CONEXUS Atenció, Formació i Investigació Psicosocials, non-profit NGO with GBV as its main field of expertise and activity, offering intervention programmes for women, children, and youth, and for male perpetrators, Spain



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- **CAM**, Centro di Ascolto Uomini Maltrattanti E.T.S, NGO and perpetrator programme focussing on the intervention in violence against women and children by promoting the work with men who act violently in emotional relationships, Italy
- **Unizon**, represents over 130 Swedish women's shelters, young women's empowerment centres and other support services that work together for a gender equal society free from violence, Sweden
- **Kaspersky**, global cybersecurity and digital privacy company
- **WWP EN**, the European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence, Germany and Europe



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Actions

During the two years of its journey, the CONSENT project consortium has developed various materials in relation to affective-sexual education, addressing pornography consumption and promoting online safety among minors and healthy relationships free of gender stereotypes. These documents are as follows:

- **Mapping of best practices and needs assessment:** This is a thorough mapping of the already existing methods, methodological material and best practices of pornography-critical sex education and fact-based conversations about pornography and its harms with children and youth. 29 different materials developed in Australia, Canada, Sweden, UK and US were included in the mapping.
- **Manual for families and teachers:** This manual is based on the extensive research on the topics of sexual health, pornography, and violence as well as on the analysis of the existing methods of gender-specific pornography-critical sex education from different countries.
- **Emotional education toolkit for youngsters of primary school and Emotional education toolkit for youngsters of secondary school:** it's a collection encompassing exercises, videos, awareness materials, quizzes, etc., suitable for promoting awareness and changing attitudes. It is focused on experience-based learning, drawing from successful models such as the Compass for non-formal education of youth and Compasito for non-formal education of children by the Council of Europe, focusing on learning through direct experience. Co-creating the toolkit with young people and validating it through youth advisory panels has ensured it caters to their needs and perspectives. This Toolkit for Emotional Education of Youngsters aligns perfectly with the objectives of CONSENT by being an innovative and adaptive tool for educating young people about gender equality and healthy relationships. By integrating direct experience from young individuals, it becomes an essential pillar of this holistic project, providing a pathway to address challenges related to exposure to pornography and the normalization of violence in relationships.

These materials have provided the basis for the training that has been carried out with both families and teachers, who, in turn, have delivered the educational programme with students between the ages of 10 and 16 at their schools. The impact of the project activities has reached a total of 1,431



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participants, of which 897 have completed questionnaires that have provided us with information on the effectiveness of the interventions and their quality. The participants from each country are detailed below:

1. Children and **youngsters** trained in **Spain**

	Girls	Boys	Total
From 10 to 12 y.o.	10	21	31
From 13 to 16 y.o.	177	189	366
Total	187	210	397

2. Children and **youngsters** trained in **Italy**

	Girls	Boys	Total
From 10 to 12 y.o.	61	57	118
From 13 to 16 y.o.	283	104	387
Total	344	161	505

1. **Adults** trained

Spain	Teachers	133
	Families	123
Italy	Teachers	49
	Families	224
	TOTAL adults	529

The comprehensive analysis of the data, coupled with the insights and expertise gained through collaborative efforts among project partners, has been instrumental in shaping the formulation of the



Institutional Recommendations outlined below. This process involved meticulously reviewing and synthesizing the findings, identifying key trends, challenges, and opportunities, and drawing upon the collective wisdom and experiences of all stakeholders involved. By distilling this wealth of information and collective wisdom, we have been able to craft targeted and evidence-based recommendations aimed at addressing the multifaceted issues surrounding affective-sexual education, pornography consumption, and online safety among minors.

3) Recommendations

The following recommendations have been extracted from the conclusions of the CONSENT project after carrying out an exhaustive analysis of its results and sharing them with all members of the consortium. We are pleased to present these recommendations aimed at the development and effective implementation of comprehensive sexual affective education programmes that aim to prevent gender-based violence among young people, specifically sexual violence, reducing the impact of the Internet on premature sexualisation, hypersexualisation and sexism, as well as preventing online violence against and between children and adolescents, and promoting healthy gender roles, equality and consensual behaviours among young people in peer relationships to protect their emotional development and well-being. These programmes should use age-appropriate content, interactive activities, and discussions tailored to the developmental stages of participants. By fostering a safe and supportive learning environment, these initiatives can empower young individuals to recognize and challenge harmful societal norms, cultivate respectful relationships, and safeguard their emotional well-being against the pervasive influences of gender-based violence and online threats.

3.1. Programme design and adaptation

- **Adaptation to Needs and Active Involvement of Adults and Youth**

It is crucial that sexuality education programs are designed to adapt to the specific needs of the target population. To achieve this, we recommend involving both adults and youth in the process from the outset, thus allowing for a better understanding of the realities and challenges they face, as well as their needs and interests.

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- **Flexibility and Modularity for Adaptation to Different Realities**

Flexibility and modularity are crucial aspects of designing sexuality education programmes that can effectively address the diverse socio-cultural and contextual realities of participants.

- **Modular Design**

Sexuality education programmes should be structured in a modular format, meaning that they are composed of distinct, interchangeable units or modules. Each module could focus on a specific topic or aspect of sexuality, such as anatomy, reproduction, contraception, sexual orientation, gender identity, relationships, pleasure, consent, and sexual health. By organizing the curriculum into modules, educators can easily adapt and customize the programme to meet the unique needs and interests of their students. Modular design also allows educators to select and prioritize modules based on the developmental stage, cultural background, and learning preferences of their students. For example, educators working with younger children may emphasize basic concepts of body autonomy and personal boundaries, while those working with older adolescents may delve into more complex topics such as sexual consent, healthy relationships, and LGBTQ+ identities. Additionally, modular design facilitates flexibility in programme delivery, enabling educators to adjust the pacing, sequencing, and depth of coverage based on the time available, the classroom dynamics, and the specific learning goals of their students.

- **Flexibility for Adaptation**

Sexuality education programmes should be flexible enough to accommodate the diverse socio-cultural and contextual realities of participants. This means recognizing and respecting the cultural norms, values, and beliefs of different communities, as well as addressing the unique challenges and barriers they may face in accessing comprehensive sexuality education. Educators should have the flexibility to tailor programme content, teaching methods, and instructional materials to align with the cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds of their students. This might involve incorporating culturally relevant examples, stories, and perspectives into the curriculum, as well as providing materials in multiple languages and formats to ensure accessibility for all learners. Furthermore, flexibility for adaptation extends beyond cultural considerations to encompass broader contextual factors such as socioeconomic status, geographic location, and individual differences in learning styles and abilities.



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Educators should be empowered to modify programme activities and strategies to meet the diverse needs and preferences of their students, thereby enhancing engagement, relevance, and effectiveness.

- **Integration of Multidisciplinary Content**

It is suggested to incorporate content from various disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, public health, and human rights, into sexual education programmes. This will enrich the perspective offered and promote a more holistic understanding of sexuality and human relationships.

- **Promotion of Diversity and Inclusion**

Sexual education programmes should promote diversity and inclusion, recognizing and respecting the multiplicity of gender identities and sexual orientations. This will help create safe and welcoming environments for all participants, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

- **Attention to Vulnerable Groups**

Special attention should be paid to the most vulnerable groups of young people, such as those in poverty, migrants, refugees, people with disabilities, and ethnic or sexual minorities. Sexual education programmes should be inclusive and accessible to all, leaving no one behind.

3.2. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

- **Thorough Result Analysis and Ongoing Evaluation**

We urge for a thorough analysis of the results obtained during programme implementation, to identify areas of success and improvement. Furthermore, continuous evaluation is recommended to monitor long-term impact and adjust as needed.

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- **Comprehensive and Ongoing Programme Evaluation**

We recommend conducting a comprehensive and ongoing evaluation of sexuality education programs, including not only short-term outcome measurement but also assessment of their medium and long-term impact on participants' relationships, health, and well-being.



- **Long-term Impact Assessment**

In addition to evaluating the immediate results of sexual education programmes, longitudinal studies are recommended to analyse their long-term impact on behavior, health, and well-being. This will provide solid evidence of the long-term effectiveness of such programmes.

3.3. Participation and Active Learning

- **Long-term Participatory Activities and Active Learning**

- Open and Participatory Activities:

Sexuality education programmes should prioritize activities that encourage active participation and engagement from participants. This involves creating a safe and supportive learning environment where children feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, asking questions, and sharing their experiences.

Open-ended discussions, group exercises, role-playing scenarios, debates, and interactive games are examples of participatory activities that can stimulate dialogue, reflection, and peer interaction. These activities provide opportunities for students to explore complex topics, challenge assumptions, and learn from each other's perspectives in a collaborative manner.

By actively involving children in the learning process, educators can empower them to take ownership of their education and develop critical thinking skills that enable them to navigate real-life situations and make informed decisions about their sexual health and relationships.

- "Learning by Doing" Approach:

The "learning by doing" approach emphasizes hands-on, experiential learning opportunities that allow children to actively engage with the material and apply theoretical concepts to real-life situations. This approach is particularly effective in sexuality education, where personal experiences, attitudes, and behaviours play a central role in shaping individuals' understanding of sexuality and relationships.



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Practical activities such as condom demonstration, communication skills practice, boundary-setting exercises, and decision-making simulations enable students to develop practical skills and strategies for promoting sexual health and well-being. These activities bridge the gap between theory and practice, empowering students to translate knowledge into action and build confidence in their ability to navigate challenging situations effectively.

Moreover, active learning approaches promote a deeper level of understanding and retention of information compared to passive learning methods. By actively engaging with the material through hands-on activities and experiential exercises, students are more likely to internalize key concepts, develop critical thinking skills, and apply their learning to real-world contexts.

- **Promotion of Intergenerational Dialogue**

Promoting intergenerational dialogue between adults and young people to facilitate the transmission of knowledge, values, and experiences related to sexuality and human relationships is recommended. This will help build bridges of understanding and mutual support between different generations.

3.4. Training and Resources

- **Teacher Training and Adequate Resources**

Educators responsible for implementing sexuality education programmes should receive comprehensive training that covers a wide range of topics related to sexual health, relationships, consent, gender identity, sexual orientation, and diversity. This training should be evidence-based, culturally sensitive, and grounded in best practices for sexuality education. Training sessions should provide educators with up-to-date information on relevant laws, policies, and guidelines governing sexuality education in their region or jurisdiction. This includes information on age-appropriate content, teaching methods, and strategies for creating inclusive and supportive learning environments.

In addition to content knowledge, educators should receive training in pedagogical approaches and instructional methodologies that promote active learning, critical thinking, and skill development among students. This may include techniques for facilitating open discussions, addressing sensitive



topics, responding to student questions, and fostering positive communication and decision-making skills. Ongoing professional development opportunities should be provided to support educators in continuously enhancing their knowledge and skills in sexuality education. This may include workshops, seminars, conferences, webinars, and online courses focused on emerging issues, new research findings, and innovative teaching strategies.

In cases where educators require additional support or expertise in delivering sexuality education, access to external trainers specialized in this field should be made available. These trainers may include sexual health educators, public health professionals, psychologists, social workers, and other experts with experience in sexuality education. External trainers can provide specialized knowledge, guidance, and resources to educators, helping them address complex topics, navigate challenging situations, and implement evidence-based interventions effectively. They can also offer mentorship, coaching, and ongoing support to educators as they develop their skills and confidence in delivering sexuality education.

Collaboration with external trainers can enrich the professional development experience for educators, providing opportunities for networking, peer learning, and exchange of best practices. By tapping into the expertise of external trainers, educators can enhance the quality and impact of sexuality education programmes, ultimately benefiting the youngsters they serve.

- Access to Continuing Professional Development Opportunities

Ensure that teachers and educators have access to ongoing professional development opportunities related to affective-sexual education. This could include workshops, seminars, online courses, and mentoring programs to enhance their knowledge and skills in delivering comprehensive and inclusive sexuality education.

3.5. Legal Framework and Resource Allocation

- **Clear Legislation and Resource Allocation** .



Clarity in legislation regarding sexuality education is essential for ensuring consistent implementation across educational and community settings. Clear legislation provides a legal framework that defines the objectives, content, and methodologies of sexuality education programmes, as well as the responsibilities of educational institutions, teachers, and other stakeholders involved in their implementation. This legislation should outline the rights and responsibilities of students, parents, and educators, ensuring that sexuality education is delivered in a manner that respects human rights, promotes inclusivity, and addresses the diverse needs of learners.

Furthermore, clear legislation serves to protect the integrity of sexuality education programmes from potential political or ideological interference. By establishing legal guidelines, legislation can shield sexuality education from external pressures and ensure that it remains evidence-based, scientifically accurate, and age-appropriate.

In addition to clear legislation, adequate resource allocation is crucial for the effective and sustainable implementation of sexuality education programmes. Resources include funding for curriculum development, teacher training, classroom materials, guest speakers, and support services for students and families. Without sufficient resources, sexuality education programs may lack the necessary materials, expertise, and support to meet their objectives and address the complex issues surrounding sexuality and relationships.

3.6. Interinstitutional Collaboration and Support Networks

Sexual education programmes can benefit significantly from collaboration between formal educational institutions, such as schools, and non-formal education settings, such as community centers, youth organizations, or sports centers. By forging partnerships between these sectors, programmes can reach a wider audience and address the diverse needs and preferences of learners.

Formal education settings provide a structured learning environment with access to trained educators, curriculum frameworks, and resources. Non-formal education settings, on the other hand, offer flexibility, creativity, and opportunities for engagement outside traditional classroom settings. By



combining the strengths of both sectors, programmes can deliver comprehensive, accessible, and engaging sexuality education to learners of all ages and backgrounds.

Collaborative efforts may involve joint planning and implementation of educational activities, sharing of resources and expertise, and coordination of outreach and advocacy efforts. For example, formal education institutions may invite representatives from non-formal education organizations to deliver guest lectures, facilitate workshops, or provide supplementary materials and resources to complement classroom instruction.

Establishing support networks that bring together educational institutions, civil society organizations, government agencies, healthcare providers, and other stakeholders is crucial for providing resources, guidance, and technical assistance to implementers of sexual education programs. These networks serve as hubs for information exchange, capacity building, and collaboration, fostering a collective approach to addressing sexual health and well-being. Furthermore, support networks can play a crucial role in bridging the gap between formal and non-formal education sectors, facilitating collaboration, and promoting cross-sectoral learning and exchange. By fostering connections and partnerships across different spheres of education, support networks contribute to a more holistic and integrated approach to sexual education that reaches learners wherever they are.

3.7. Communication

- **Awareness raising and Effective Communication**

Conducting awareness raising campaigns and effective communication efforts are vital for informing the community, especially young people, about the importance and benefits of sexual education.

Utilizing appropriate communication channels, such as social media platforms, is particularly crucial for reaching and engaging with this demographic.

Effective communication strategies not only raise awareness but also aim to generate public support and overcome potential resistance or taboos associated with the topic of sexual education. By using platforms that resonate with young people, such as social media networks, campaigns can effectively



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disseminate information, spark conversations, and promote positive attitudes towards sexual health and well-being.

Through targeted messaging and creative content, awareness raising campaigns can capture the attention of young audiences, encourage participation, and empower individuals to make informed decisions about their sexual health and relationships. By leveraging the power of digital media and interactive communication channels, campaigns can effectively reach young people where they are and contribute to a culture of openness, acceptance, and inclusivity surrounding sexual education.

- **Integration of Information and Communication Technologies**

Leveraging information and communication technologies, such as online platforms, mobile applications, and social media, to complement sexual education programs is suggested. These tools can facilitate access to relevant information and encourage active participation among young people.



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