



Launch of the CONSENT project to promote healthy gender roles and consensual behaviours in peer relationships among youngsters

24 March 2022

An EU-wide project will raise awareness among youngsters, parents, teachers and institutions on the negative impact of pornography, to prevent all forms of Gender Based Violence (GBV) with a special focus of sexual violence, and hinder the effects of premature sexualisation and hypersexualisation among children and youth

Beginning in February 2022, five partners from Spain, Italy, Sweden, and Germany, have joined forces to work on the EU-wide “CONSENT” project, which the European Commission chose to support with its Citizens, Equality, Rights and Value (CERV) programme.

Social conditioning of boys and girls during formative years affects gender related roles and behaviour, which can have an impact on patterns of violence and victimisation that carry on to their later lives. Therefore, promoting healthy gender roles among youngsters and hindering the internet’s impact on premature and hyper sexualisation is key to preventing gender based violence, to creating more equal relationships where consent is respected.

“I’m thrilled to be working on the project ‘Consent’! I can’t wait to start a conversation with my peers about a subject that I feel is so urgent: how and at what age we see porn, how we metabolise it and how it affects us and the many more issues I’m sure will arise.” says Lisa Andreozzi, Youth Ambassador for the CONSENT project.

Premature hypersexualisation and normalisation of violence via pornography

The European Agency for Fundamental Rights stated that one in three women in the EU (33%) has been victim of physical and sexual violence since the age of 15¹. One of the most worrisome threats₁ for the healthy development of sexuality among youngsters nowadays is online pornography. The



Funded by
the European Union



atenció, formació i investigació psico-socials



www.work-with-perpetrators.eu



Internet and rapid changes in the digital landscape brought significant change to the pornography industry, making pornography easily accessible 24/7, usually completely free of charge, and most of the time anonymous. As a result, pornography consumption has dramatically increased, especially among youngsters.²

“2022 is the European Year of the Youth to promote cooperation with stakeholders and young people in many areas. One of the European Youth Goals is the health and well-being of young people, with a focus on promoting mental and sexual health. I support the Consent project’s multi-stakeholder approach of working with youngsters, parents, teachers and institutions to raise awareness on the negative impacts of pornography,” confirms Rosanna Di Gioia

The most concerning aspect of pornography, is the normalisation of violent and abusive attitudes towards women that are increasingly characterising this kind of sexual content (aggression, degradation and sexual objectification). 9 out of 10 most popular pornographic scenes contain physical violence and aggression, and about a half of the scenes contain verbal aggression.³ This violence is almost always directed towards women (94%), and mostly perpetrated by men.

On the one hand, boys who watch pornographic content therefore can be conditioned to believe that women enjoy objectification and violence in sexual relationships and that when they say “no” they indeed mean “yes”. On the other hand, girls are given the message that physically and verbally aggressive sexual acts enhance sexual pleasure, and that their role in intimacy is partners’ satisfaction.

Systemic approach to raise awareness among youngsters, adults and institutions

There is an urgent need for preventive measures, education and knowledge enhancement on the harmful effects of pornography not only among youngsters, but also among parents/caregivers, teachers and other educators. There is a lack of a systematic approach and engagement from the public authorities and responsible professionals to tackle the issue. This leaves most young people

2



Funded by
the European Union



atenció, formació i investigació psico-socials



www.work-with-perpetrators.eu



with very little or no knowledge of pornography and its effects, while the pornography industry keeps greatly affecting their sexual health, relationships and well-being.

“We at MÄN really look forward to taking part of the project findings throughout this journey and to add our experiences to the project. With the collective knowledge base of partners and Advisory Board we anticipate a great output for youngsters in their formative years” affirms Martin Odh, MÄN.

The CONSENT Consortium will inform parents and caregivers about the easy access to sexually explicit material by kids, improve the knowledge of teachers and educators on online abuses and use of pornography, raise youngsters’ awareness on the implications of pornography on intimate relationships, and improve the engagement of institutions, key stakeholders and IT experts, to safeguard online security of children and healthy development of youth.

About the partnership

The CONSENT project is developed by an international, interdisciplinary team consisting of:

- [Fundación Blanquerna](#), research and education organisation within the Faculty of Psychology, Education and Sports Sciences from Ramon Llull University, Spain – Coordination and scientific support
- [CAM](#), Centro di Ascolto Uomini Maltrattanti Onlus, 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
- [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
- [Kaspersky](#), global cybersecurity and digital privacy company
- [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
- [WWP EN](#), the European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence, Germany and Europe



An external Advisory Board will supervise and support the Team. The board consists of:

- **Marianne Hester**, Affiliated Professor at University of Gothenburg, Sweden and Chair in Gender Violence & International Policy, University of Bristol
- **Anna Lindqvist**, Manager of Män, Sweden, expert in gender equality education and GBV prevention among youth
- **Rosanna Di Gioia**, Italy, researcher on online safety and child sexual exploitation prevention at the Cyber & Digital Citizens' Security Unit at the Joint Research Center

Media contact

Dimitra Mintsidis - WWP European Network – [d.mintsidis\(at\)work-with-perpetrators.eu](mailto:d.mintsidis@work-with-perpetrators.eu)

Berta Vall - FPCEE Blanquerna, Ramon Llull University - [bertavc\(at\)blanquerna.url.edu](mailto:bertavc@blanquerna.url.edu)

www.work-with-perpetrators.eu/consent

1. European Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2014). Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14_en.pdf
2. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/assets/documents/research/eu-kids-online/reports/EU-Kids-Online-2020-10Feb2020.pdf> (pag. 82, 89, 135)
3. Bridges, A. J., Wosnitzer, R., Scharrer, E., Sun, C., and Liberman, R. (2010). "Aggression and sexual behavior in bestselling pornography videos: A content analysis update," Violence Against Women, 16(10): 1065-1085

4



Funded by
the European Union

