



CarMiA – Caring Masculinities in Action **TRANSNATIONAL REPORT**

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INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a violation of fundamental human rights and one of the most widespread forms of gender-based discrimination, causing serious psychological, physical and economic harm to the persons involved and to society as a whole. In this report, our starting point is that gender socialization lies behind men*s¹ violence against women* within a triad that also includes violence towards other men* and against themselves (Kaufman 1999).

The CarMiA project starts from the point of view that an important part of promoting a culture of non-violence in the private and public spheres is to educate boys* and men* about non-violence and to involve them in various initiatives aimed at preventing all forms of GBV. CarMiA promotes care-oriented models of masculinity among boys* by addressing multipliers in education and younger “change agents” in peer-to-peer work. Conceptually, the project is based on critical studies of men and masculinities that shed light on the link between gender norms about masculinity and GBV. Connell (2005) introduced the concept of *hegemonic masculinity* as a pattern of masculine social behaviour that is considered the ideal norm of what it means to be a man* in a particular society at a particular time. These ideals are often portrayed in popular culture and the media, for example, men* as young, strong, assertive, leading, fearless, managers and politicians, breadwinners and protectors of families, fighters, athletes, winners and heroes, forging their own path and overcoming adversaries. Kimmel (2009) points out that for a hegemonic masculine identity, it is essential to differentiate oneself from femininity and women* (constructed as the 'weaker' gender) and from people marginalised and defined by society as supposedly weak, such as the poor, people with disabilities, physically weak, migrants, gay, transgender, non-binary and queer identities. In today's social gender order, violent behaviour has two main functions: violence against women* is a mechanism to consolidate and maintain male superiority and to subordinate women*; violence against other men* is a mechanism to enforce hierarchy among men* (Connell 2005). From this perspective, sexism, homophobia, heterosexism, racism, xenophobia, and class arrogance, which constitute key mechanisms of social oppression, are inherent in the norms of homogeneous masculinity. The norms of hegemonic masculinity deny the vulnerability of men* associated with feelings of powerlessness, shame

¹ Throughout this report, we use the asterisk* when writing about boys*, girls*, men*, women* or trans*. We do so to point out the constructivist character of gender and gender identities and to show that more than two of these identities exist. By doing so we want to emphasize that not all persons who are perceived as boys*, men*, women* or girls* also identify as such. The asterisk* also indicates the openness of gender identities and that these are ongoing and never concluded processes. Exceptions are fixed terms (e.g. Boys’ Day, Men and Masculinities Studies).

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and fear, and push them to constantly prove their self-confidence, strength and invulnerability to themselves and others. This makes boys* and men* more insensitive to violence and less sensitive to the vulnerability of others.

According to the definition proposed by the European Commission², the project understands GBV as violence directed against a person because of their gender, or violence that disproportionately affects persons of a particular gender. It can be expressed as physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence. Examples of GBV cited by the European Commission include violence against women* and girls*, domestic violence, sexual harassment, cyber violence, forced marriages, etc. However, drawing on studies on men and masculinity, we are broadening this definition to also include the violence of men* against other men* and other gender groups, since it is deeply rooted in traditions of masculinity and often violent, toxic competition among men*.

This report presents the comparative findings of a study on the perception and treatment of masculinity and GBV in six European countries. Particular attention is paid to the identification of training and awareness-raising needs regarding the social norms of masculinity and GBV among teachers, youth workers and young people in prevention approaches. The selection of countries encompasses diverse European perspectives as it includes partners from Central Europe (Austria and Slovenia), Western Europe (Germany), Southern Europe (Italy, Spain), and the East of Europe (Bulgaria). Involved countries have different educational and gender regimes as well as different GBV-related policies/programmes that provide context for the European exchange, learning and transfer of good practices.

All the countries involved ratified the Istanbul Convention, except Bulgaria, where even speaking about gender is becoming increasingly suspicious (Kmetova et al. 2022). The majority of policy and systemic activities in the involved countries are focused on intimate-partner and domestic violence, and on curative programmes for the support and protection of victims. The increase in intimate-partner violence has been highlighted all over Europe during the Covid-19 pandemic (EIGE 2021). In Austria, femicides have received increasing public attention in recent years (Gärtner and Scambor 2023). As a result of the global 'Me Too' campaign, more attention has been paid to GBV, harassment in the workplace and sexual violence. In Germany, in 2016 the criminal law related to sexual violence was reformed according to the '*no means no*' principle (Dahlmüller and Könncke 2023). In 2021, Slovenia went one step further with a new definition of rape in line with the '*yes means yes*' model in

The Criminal Code (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022). In Italy and Slovenia, there is a growing awareness of the need to take action on GBV online, such as sexual extortion, cyberbullying, sexual recruitment, voyeurism and revenge pornography (Bernacchi et al. 2023; Hrženjak and Markelj 2022;).

In Germany, in many places measures of gender-reflective violence prevention for boys* and men* have been implemented since the 1980s. There are gender-reflective educational programmes for boys* and male youth on the de-stereotyping of masculinities, violence prevention, gender-role atypical career choices, sexual and gender diversity and other topics that should contribute to the reduction of GBV (Dahlmüller and Könncke 2023). Austria stands out with many programmes for working with perpetrators that have developed in recent years such as telephone hotlines, anonymous counselling centres, perpetrator programmes, and forensic psychotherapeutic and psychiatric interventions. The Austrian umbrella organization for men*'s work, DMÖ, promotes both men*'s counselling (for perpetrators and victims) and work with boys* as means of violence prevention. This is implemented on a regional/local basis, also by the men*'s counselling centres (Gärtner and Scambor 2023). In Slovenia, the state systematically funds only one programme that explicitly addresses men*, the social construction of masculinity and gender inequalities in relation to GBV. The programme is aimed at social skills training for adult men* who are perpetrators of domestic violence against women* and children (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022). Spain is witnessing an advance in man*'s involvement in care work, promoted by the Co-responsibilities Plan at the state level and carried out by the administrative communities. Awareness-raising measures related to caring masculinities are understood as a genuine alternative to violence (Abril et al. 2022). In recent years, all national contexts have seen some general progress in the improvement of legislation, curative and victim-oriented services and the implementation of preventive interventions in schools that deconstruct gender stereotypes, and raise awareness about GBV. However, such interventions rarely include an explicit focus on a masculinity studies-based perspective (Bernacchi 2022).

Methodologically, the report is based on a review of existing practices and focus groups with professionals and young people conducted in all six countries. In the first part, selected examples of good practices are analysed in terms of addressing topics related to masculinities, the promotion of non-violent masculinities and a peer-to-peer approach to addressing GBV. In the second part, we present findings from group interviews with teachers, youth workers, activists and other professionals in the field of GBV prevention, boys*' work, pedagogy, and gender equality. The purpose of the group interviews was to identify the need for new forms and contents of work with young people, especially boys*, to

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-based-violence/what-gender-based-violence_en

support them in non-violent identity formation and to promote non-violent masculinities. What follows is the analysis of consultations with young people, focusing on their perceptions of dominant and alternative models of masculinity, their attitudes towards GBV and their needs for support in the gender-sensitive self-reflection and formation of non-violent behaviour. All three analyses result in the identification of existing gaps in the awareness-raising, pedagogical and support programmes available to boys* in their socialisation into caring, egalitarian, inclusive and non-violent adults. The study provides a basis for the development of training for professionals and young people to act as agents of change in peer-to-peer activities in schools and youth centres.

REVIEW OF NATIONAL GOOD PRACTICES

The purpose of the review of the existing good practices is to analyse different approaches and topics in working with young people, with a focus on boys*, to provide insight into the state of the art in addressing masculinities and violence, i.e., what is already in place and what is missing. The following criteria were used to identify good practices of programmes and projects working at the national level to reduce GBV:

- the programme explicitly addresses boys*, men*, social constructions of masculinity and gender stereotypes associated with men*;
- the programme articulates and promotes alternative, non-violent masculinities;
- the programme includes a peer-to-peer approach.

In each partner country, a review of good practice examples was conducted, and after that, at least three examples were selected which best met the above criteria. Altogether 17 good practice examples were identified with 6 of them following the peer-to-peer approach. All good practices are conducted by NGOs or associations and funded by state institutions or the European Union. Many EU-funded good practices (mostly within the Daphne programme) cover a wide range of topics and formats, such as training, self-learning packages, manuals, capacity-building programmes, political lobbying and/or campaigning.

Table 1: Samples of Good Practices Examples

Country	No. of good practices	Peer-to-peer approach	Focus/type of good practices
Austria	3	1	Peer2Peer Training Programme, Training/Manual, Training
Bulgaria			
Germany	5	1	Training/Manual, Training/Manual, Training, Manual, Manual
Italy	3	1	Campaign/Manual, Video Campaign, Manual
Slovenia	3	1	2 Trainings, Manual
Spain	3	2	Photo exhibition/P2PTraining, Training/Manual
TOTAL	17	6	

Content focus, context-specific projects, target groups and intersectional perspectives

Almost all good practices focus on the relation to gender stereotypes, especially about masculinity and how traditional concepts offer a fertile ground for violent behaviour. Most of them focus on GBV exercised by men* against women*, many also include GBV exercised by men* against men* (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022). Although the existing material on gender-sensitive violence prevention is vast and varied, in terms of thematic focus, methods, approaches and target groups, violence against queer, non-binary, trans*, and inter* people is rarely explicitly addressed. Though some good practices are directed at young men* at the intersection of race/gender, as of experiencing racism as a young man* (Dahlmüller and Könnecke 2023) or of migrating as a minor (Abril et. al. 2022), a systematical integration of intersectional approaches and perspectives is an exception rather than the rule. Some good practices focus on young men* in specific contexts, such as sports (ibid.). Some deal with different forms of online violence against women and girls through the deconstruction of gender stereotypes and instructions about nonviolent behaviour online. One example of good practice targets boys to inform them about consensual and safe sex as well as the harms of pornography and prostitution (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022). Taken together good practices from all partner countries cover all forms of violence, whereas within single projects or countries, they focus on specific forms or aspects of violence, such as violence in intimate relationships, sexual or digital violence or violent language and its relation to different forms of discrimination (Bernacchi et. al. 2023). Good practices target both, gender-mixed and gender-homogenous groups. Some projects, for instance, deal with masculinities indirectly, by empowering particularly adolescent girls* to identify the potential risks of hegemonic masculinity and gain confidence to reject abusive behaviours and relationships.

Approaches and formats

Approaches towards working on gender-sensitive prevention of GBV can be schematically divided into what could be called norm-critique and resource strengthening:

While methods and approaches of norm critique encourage young people to critically reflect on masculinity and gender and other power relations (racism & classism), resource orientation starts with the strengthening of individuals' resources: individual potentials of nonviolent behaviour are discovered and strengthened, alternative, non-violent ways of acting are developed (Dahlmüller and Könnecke 2023).

Many projects include both approaches; a critical reflection and discussion about gender norms and the development, support and promotion of non-violent ways of acting through training and strengthening of resources and skills, such as: expressing emotions, dealing

with anger, developing self-care techniques etc. Discussing and reflecting on violence often takes place through case discussions (case vignettes) sometimes presented in the form of a short staged performance. Theatre pedagogical methods and dialogue-oriented seminars are used to raise awareness of gender inequality, stereotypes and violence (Scambor and Gärtner 2023). Older manuals contain approaches and methods that are less common today and where aggression is treated as a potential for and distinguished from violence. They also include body-oriented methods, such as massage and meditation. They are intended to strengthen body awareness that can be easily constricted in the course of male socialization. Some good practices address the link between young men*'s experience of structural violence and their perpetration of violence. They usually tie in with experiences of discrimination and violence that young people experience through racism (Dahlmüller and Könnecke 2023). The approaches aim at strengthening self-reflection, listening and speaking skills and informing about the principles of non-violent communication thus promoting behavioural change. Self-awareness, mindfulness, and empathy are underlined in some approaches. Others promote the active participation of boys and men in preventing violence and their commitment not to cause or remain silent about violence against women and girls.

Caring and multiple masculinities

Highlighting a diversity of masculinities can be seen as both: a resource for primary prevention (Abril et. al. 2022) as well as secondary and tertiary prevention. Many good practices try to broaden the images and concepts of masculinity, but also discuss, criticize, deconstruct, or alter traditional, hegemonic stereotypes about masculinity and gender issues. Still, most projects remain in a binary gender perspective, non-binary and queer topics or perspectives are seldom taken into account. Moreover, they sometimes lack a more positive focus on masculinity and the use of the concept of caring masculinities. However, care is often their key topic, including self-care, care for others and some other care-related topics, such as recognizing vulnerabilities, engaging for gender equity etc. Still, an explicit link between care and masculinity is not always being made. There are just a very few good practices with a dedicated peer-to-peer approach (Scambor and Gärtner 2023).

FOCUS GROUPS WITH EXPERTS AND YOUTH

3

In this section, we present findings from focus groups with professionals in the field of GBV prevention, including experts from NGOs, pedagogues and youth workers. The purpose of the focus group was to identify the need for new forms and contents of work with young people, especially boys, to support them in non-violent identity formation and to promote norms of non-violent masculinities. We were interested in how professionals see GBV prevention work with young people and whether in their existing activities they take into account aspects of gender, gender identities, masculinities and intersectionality. What are the approaches to integrating these topics into work with boys and men? What training, skills, tools and methods would be needed to raise awareness about non-violent masculinities among young people, in particular boys?

Altogether 15 focus groups were conducted, which included 75 professionals. In selecting focus group participants, attention was paid to covering two key areas of the CarMiA project: expert work in the field of GBV prevention and work with young people in formal or non-formal education, therefore focus groups were diverse in terms of professionals' field of work and experiences (see Table 2). For practical reasons, some of the focus groups were carried out virtually. The interviewees signed an informed consent about their participation. With their permission, the interviews were recorded and summarised for analytical purposes. In the analysis, key themes raised by the interviewees were identified and the main topics were summarised.

Table 2: The sample of focus groups with professionals.

Country	No. of focus groups	No. of participants	Profiles of participants
Austria	3	18	Secondary school teachers, social pedagogues, social workers, youth workers
Bulgaria	2	10	Practitioners from NGOs and youth organizations, primary and secondary school teachers, a psychologist, a pedagogical advisor
Germany	2	6	Pedagogical heads of an open child and youth facility, practitioners from NGOs, a youth worker, and a "special school" teacher (Sonderschule)
Italy	2	11	Practitioners from NGOs, a retired teacher, secondary school teachers, a teacher expert in gender equality
Slovenia	2	6	Practitioners from NGOs, youth workers
Spain	4	24	Practitioners from NGOs, secondary school teachers, professionals from formal and non-formal education
TOTAL	15	75	

Gender and gender relations

Despite the rising gender conservatism in some parts of the involved countries, professionals working with youngsters notice a transformation of gender roles in terms of transgressing traditional and patriarchal patterns of behaviour. This is particularly visible in overcoming the perception of traditional gender-specific occupations (boys* are not afraid to choose typically female professions and vice versa) (Kmetova et. al. 2022), more openly accepting LGBTIQ+ community, and talking about topics related to gender equality and non-binary gender identities (Bernacchi et al. 2023; Hrženjak and Markelj 2022). Professionals from Bulgaria noted that *“stereotypes are breaking down with more and more families being „democratic“ and not passing gender stereotypes onto their children”* (Kmetova et. al. 2022). However, there are also many families in which gender stereotypes are still very much alive and passed on to the children. Sometimes following their parents' example and behaviour can be damaging to youngsters, especially if their perceptions of gender and gender roles are different from the (traditionalist) expectations of their parents. They often feel misunderstood, oppressed, confused, and lacking support and understanding from the family. In schools, traditional gender identifications persist in gender segregation of all sports classes, which are imposed structurally/externally, or by youngsters themselves in group activities (Gärtner and Scambor 2023).

The experts observed that traditional and hegemonic models of masculinities persist in the socialization of boys* from a very early age, which demands from boys* not to show feelings, vulnerabilities and weaknesses. Youth centres in Austria face rigid masculinity norms among marginalized young men* from conservative religious backgrounds. These are strongly related to national identity, faith, and perceptions of traditional gender roles. There is a permanent discussion, especially among boys*, about the relationship between showing strength, being masculine, being a thug, being proud to be of a certain nationality, being good in a certain religious conviction, and being a man* (ibid.).

Hegemonic masculinity is also promoted by the appearance trends from the internet. Boys* show great respect to men* with muscles and sculpted bodies and they want to look like them. Some professionals highlight that the internet contributes to the internationalisation of emotions, which results in difficulty to express emotions, feelings and fears. Since young people spend a lot of time in the digital world, they prefer to express themselves in English, rather than in their native language. The pandemic period deepened these communication difficulties (Kmetova et. al. 2022).

In terms of sexuality, it was mentioned, that boys* are under pressure because of the stereotypical expectations that they must always be ready for sex and that they must take the initiative in sexuality (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022).

Norms of hegemonic masculinity are problematic for transgender men*, too, who face challenges of "doing masculinity" properly and finding a balance between conformity and resistance to gender norms. In the early stages of gender transition, they often perform gender through distinct masculinity to be recognised as "real" men* in society (ibid.).

According to professionals, non-violent, positive, and caring masculinities can be observed among boys*. Some professionals noted alternative forms of masculinities that anticipate gender equality and non-violence and highlighted various intersectional factors that influence young people's openness and willingness to talk about those topics which relate to the rural or urban environment, educational background of parents, class, etc.

Violence

Professionals describe experiences with various forms of violence in their national contexts. We were particularly interested in the situations in which violence is perpetrated, with a special focus on how they explain violent behaviours and if there are gender-specific differences in the expressions of violence.

In Austria, professionals reported various forms of violence daily: physical and verbal abuse, homophobia, racism, catcalling, material violence (vandalizing school property), and self-harming, including suicides (Gärtner and Scambor 2023). In Germany, verbal violence was mentioned as not sufficiently recognized as abusive and as a transition to physical violence (Dahlmüller and Könnecke 2023). In some countries bullying, including cyber-bullying, is recognized as a salient issue perpetrated by all genders (Bernacchi et al. 2023; Dahlmüller and Könnecke 2023; Hrženjak and Markelj 2022).

Professionals assess that boys* and men* are most commonly the perpetrators of violence, however, they also mention the presence of female bullying as an emerging phenomenon (Bernacchi et al. 2023).

Peer violence in the form of hate speech in social networks, social exclusion of deprived young people, homophobia and transphobia, and violence perpetrated by youth gangs and a football supporters group in which young men* and boys* participate were also brought to the fore as pressing issues for which professionals do not have clear strategies of how to approach them (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022).

Concerning push factors for the violent behaviour of boys*, the following were pointed out: violence is a form of 'defence' against (verbal) attacks of peers to restore feelings of 'power'; low self-esteem; 'honour' (feelings of being humiliated would be turned into violence); difficulty resolving conflicts because of the lack of capacity to communicate; lack of empathy in conflict situations; competitiveness; impatience, frustration and anger related to other issues, e.g. learning difficulties. The orientation towards traditional masculine role models in school and family also drives boys* into violent behaviour. In older male adolescents, alcohol consumption can be a significant factor in violence (Dahlmüller and Könnecke 2023).

In the light of rigid gender norms, professionals observe that some male youth would react aggressively and unfriendly towards someone who does not correspond to their traditional perceptions of being a man* (Gärtner and Scambor 2023). Homophobic and transphobic violence can be seen as a strategy for managing one's homosexual impulses and reinforcing a masculine identity, which is directed towards violence against the members of the LGBTIQ+ community in the form of projected homophobia (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022).

Existing practices

In all of the countries, the programmes addressing GBV are not adequate or sufficient to successfully combat GBV. The field is covered in a segmented way within individual NGO's projects and programmes and is lacking a systemic approach at the national policy level. Networking and greater connection between actors working with young people are also missing.

Despite this, the interviewed professionals mentioned some of the projects, practices or measures that strive to improve the current situation. In some countries, state institutions are partially involved in violence prevention through various programmes and measures, although professionals see them as insufficient. Some teachers are searching for alternative ways to include violence and gender-related topics in curricula, e.g. „class time" (Kmetova et al. 2022). However, the organization of such educational activities depends on the motivation of individual teachers or schools. Some schools are offering support services for youngsters, as Gärtner & Scambor (2023) state: girls* and women*'s representatives, confidential teachers, psychologists, guides or templates describing procedures in case of the existing violence.

In some countries (Italy, Slovenia, Spain), preventive approach is missing, since projects and programmes on gender education and masculinity focus on curative work with both victims and perpetrators of violence. The restorative approach is seen as particularly important in some of the existing programmes as it aims to manage aggression in a constructive and

caring way, considering that violence harms all parties and has an impact on the whole group or community (Abril et al. 2022).

Some of the GBV prevention programmes include gender-mixed groups, while few specifically focus on working with boys*. There is no consensus on which working method is more effective. Some professionals prefer to work in mixed groups as it allows them to consider the gender system more holistically. When working with boys*-only groups, the dynamics of polarized and opposed opinions and behaviour is often the case. Professionals observe that boys* cannot go deep into notions like masculinity, sexuality, identity, gender, and attraction, which is why special attention should be paid to tackling these topics (Kmetova et al. 2022).

Some professionals work with conflict situations in individual settings. They support boys* to develop a positive self-image, strengthen self-confidence and develop non-violent ways of acting. They sensitize boys* to their vulnerability and “trigger points” and to acknowledge and comprehend those of others. Some teachers also try to embody alternative masculine role models and caring models of acting when working with boys* (Dahlmüller and Könnecke 2023). When working with boys* professionals try to avoid the paternalistic and normative approach. They work on the narrative dimension so that boys* can acquire tools to learn how to express themselves in everyday life (Bernacchi et al. 2023).

A few examples of good practices were highlighted by the participants, including writing essays about masculinities, discussions between boys* and girls*, and various interactive methods such as photo and video labs and role play (which allows for easier projections of one's internal conflicts). The approach that does not negate violence, but replaces it with strategies of non-violent behaviour was identified as successful (e.g. emotional social learning training, training in mediations skills etc.) since it goes beyond the "blaming communication model" for boys* (Bernacchi et al. 2023). Awareness-raising campaigns are considered effective, such as the one in an Austrian youth centre on the occasion of Gay Pride Day, where a flower trough was painted to inform young people about LGTBIQ+ rights (Gärtner and Scambor 2023). The approach in which activities are led by people who have personal experience of violence was highlighted as effective (Hrženjak & Markelj, 2022).

Challenges

The focus group revealed several challenges in addressing GBV with young people, ranging from institutional factors such as professionals' lack of knowledge in dealing with these issues to young people's resistance to talking about it or parents' constraints.

Some countries face structural obstacles to introducing gender-related topics in schools. One of those is Bulgaria, which struggles with implementing these topics in the educational system after the unfortunate rejection of the Istanbul Convention by the Bulgarian authorities and society. Professionals have to modify and rename their activities to conceal their relation to gender. They also observe that teachers are reluctant to participate in any initiatives concerning gender equality and GBV as they are forbidden to talk to the students about those topics (Kmetova et al. 2022). However, difficulty with entering schools is also a problem in some other countries, too, such as Italy and Slovenia. Primary schools are particularly problematic, because of their biases on gender-related topics and prejudice against LGBTIQ+ issues.

One of the most troublesome problems that were highlighted by professionals from all countries is the lack of adequate knowledge to deal with violence, although they are faced with these situations daily. Some of them elaborated on situations in which the lack of knowledge comes to the forefront; e.g. professionals sometimes feel helpless in acute violent situations that require the use of their bodies (to prevent physical attacks) or calling the police (Dahlmüller and Könnecke 2023). Teachers also lack knowledge about non-cisgender identities, which is manifesting in stereotypical attitudes that build a climate that is not safe for trans* or non-binary* students (Gärtner and Scambor 2023).

Some of the interviewees note a strong reluctance in boys* and men* to discuss gender issues and to question existing gender roles (Bernacchi et al. 2023; Kmetova et al. 2022) or their having trouble with commitment to/continuous participation in these topics (Gärtner and Scambor 2023). In some cases, boys*' resistance also mounts as soon as romantic love or relationships are mentioned. The reaction shared by many boys* is that they are feeling attacked and treated as abusers, and even more so if they show attitudes of hegemonic masculinity (Abril et al. 2022).

Communication with parents is often problematic, as well as the fact that some parents do not want to give consent for their child to be engaged in gender and violence-related training. Masculinity and gender norms are closely linked to 'gender ideology', which is why interviewees often encounter resistance from parents who '*act as gate-keepers*', as they do not want their children to discuss gender issues in schools (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022).

The non-perception of violence among teachers is also problematic; e.g. homophobic and racist remarks are not recognized as violence, and physical assaults are dismissed as 'clumsy' or 'unintentional'. Some of the teachers would not notice violence as it happens outside of the classroom (e.g. during school breaks) (Gärtner and Scambor 2023). Another

problem is that teachers do not report cases of violence, even though they are obliged to, because there are no adequate consequences, either for students or for families (Kmetova et al. 2022).

Needs and Recommendations

Professionals from Slovenia, Spain and Italy pointed out that GBV should be addressed at a systemic level and not only in the context of individual projects. Systemic change in the way schools operate should be achieved to include gender-related topics in the education system. In this manner, it is important to reach out to head teachers to find ways to implement these topics in the school environment and also encourage cooperation between different organisations and institutions to establish a support network for professionals. Young people should benefit from the integrated or integrative view of professionals in different fields (social, educational, leisure, health, etc.). It is necessary to avoid separating prevention, detection and intervention, but rather to integrate them into a complex and continuous process, where actions must be sustained through time (Abril et al. 2022).

One of the most urgent needs highlighted in the focus groups was training and other resources for working with young people on topics related to gender and violence, especially with boys* and marginalized groups. Teachers should be the ones offering space for conflict resolution and encouraging students to get involved in the conversation. This is why – besides expert knowledge – soft skills are important for professionals as well. Self-care tools such as supervision should be offered to them, since '*...it is extremely important to be able to relate to young people's experiences but without getting trapped in them*' (Abril et al. 2022). For work with migrant young people, building a trusting and safe relationship was stressed as crucial, although specific linguistic knowledge is also needed. Diversity in professional teams is important as young people can better identify with persons coming from similar backgrounds (Gärtner and Scambor 2023). Professionals also mentioned a wish for short methods (in the form of curricula) that can be used spontaneously during the course of their work (Dahlmüller and Könnecke 2023).

Since it is very difficult for teachers in schools to formally divide boys* and girls* during school time to work in separate groups, it is recommended that they organise a group of boys* of different ages, grades, etc. who attend the group on their own will, informally, on neutral grounds. Some professionals consider working in small boys*-only groups to be the most effective as it makes it easier for boys* to open up and decreases male performativity, which is more likely to occur in mixed groups (Bernacchi et al. 2023). On the other hand, working in mixed groups (also in terms of intersectionality, considering not only gender but also ethnicity, age, class, etc.) is also mentioned as very effective. Since young people are

sometimes reluctant to participate in peer activities, the importance of motivational rewarding factors is emphasized.

Preventing violence requires conscious work with all the interested parties – teachers, youngsters and parents. Work inside institutions is not fruitful if traditionalist/patriarchal and violent masculinities or unequal gender relations gain a lot of attraction and are normalized within significant relationships such as families (Gärtner and Scambor 2023). This is why including different actors is required in violence prevention programmes.

Professionals stressed that gender and violence-related topics should be addressed with great sensitivity in the context of education. It is important to be gradual in introducing topics into the conversation, starting with topics such as gender stereotypes and norms, and gradually working up to more complex ones (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022). The approach should build from a processual perspective (gradual, evolving), showing how violence unfolds during the evolution of relationships (Abril et al. 2022). The adult-centred and non-inclusive approach should be avoided. It is very important to work constructively with young people and avoid creating confrontational positions, prejudice or blaming. Professionals also highlighted the relevance of including intersectionality and diversity in the approach as it is necessary to address the issue of violence in an inclusive and integrative way (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022). The power relations in peer groups should also be reflected (Abril et al. 2022).

The methodology should be based on modern approaches and technologies, which are user-friendly and not complicated, interesting for young people, interactive, provocative, relaxed, conversational, using various multimedia materials (e.g. film, video, quiz), theatre and role play, and experiential methods. The peer-to-peer approach seems efficient in the topics such as sexuality and gender relations since they are considered taboo (Kmetova et al. 2022). The work with young people's role models (such as YouTubers, and rappers) was mentioned as very successful (Dahlmüller and Könnecke 2023).

Professionals said that the approach should address topics relevant to young people such as partnerships, friendships, sexuality etc. Sexuality should be specifically addressed with youngsters, especially the issues of consent in sexual relationships (Bernacchi et al., 2023). In working with boys* and men* it is important to make the plurality of ways to be a man and different meanings of masculinity visible (Dahlmüller and Könnecke 2023). It is necessary to question existing gender roles and norms, including at the level of everyday life and gender-specific division of labour, such as housework, financial decision-making, etc. (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022).

CONSULTATIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

4

In consultations with young people the research focus was on their views, opinions and standpoints about the dominant and alternative models of masculinities and their relations to (non)violence, as well as on their experiences and needs for support in non-violent identity formation. The consultations started with the presentation of the project, and informed consent of the participants, including a declaration of voluntary cooperation and protection of personal data. A semi-structured guideline with main and secondary questions (partly optional) was applied. In focus groups conversations, we followed the interviewee-centred approach (Frosh et al. 2002, 8) with the interviewer taking up a facilitative role, noticing issues the participants raised and encouraging them to develop and reflect upon these and to provide an illustrative narrative account. Therefore, the questions in the focus groups were not exactly the same. Nevertheless, in all focus groups, we directed the conversations towards exploring ideas of gender in general, and masculinities in particular, reflecting on relations to girls*/boys* and LGBTIQ+ people, relations to intimacy and dealing with emotions, to diversity and power relations, to GBV, and to potential ways of how to break the vicious circle of masculinity and violence. At the end of the focus group, the young people were given the opportunity to add questions, comments, etc. to the focus group. Focus groups lasted from 40 to 100 minutes. They were conducted *in vivo*, except in Bulgaria where they were conducted online. Consultations were recorded and summarised for analytical purposes. They were analysed thematically, according to the predefined themes in the questionnaire. Additional topics that popped up in the conversations were carefully taken into account as well.

Altogether, 15 consultations in six countries were organized participated by 140 young people aged from 14 to 22 years, of a different class, ethnic, rural/urban location, sexual orientation and migrant background, including 105 boys*, 32 girls* and 4 trans- or non-binary persons. The diversity of focus groups' composition enabled for a comparison between the attitudes and needs in the area of masculinity and GBV of different gender, age, class and ethnicity groups of young people.

Table3: The sample of focus groups with young people

Country	No. of focus groups	No. of youngsters	No. of boys*	No. of girls*	No. of other gender identities	Age
Austria	4	44	39	5	/	16 - 17
Bulgaria	3	21	15	6	/	14 - 19
Germany	2	11	6	4	1 non-binary	14 - 20
Italy	2	19	13	5	1 non-binary	15 - 18
Slovenia	2	21	13	6	2 trans-boys	16 - 22
Spain	3	24	19	5	/	14 - 21
TOTAL	13	140	105	32	4	

Reflecting the ideas of masculinities

Young people agree that the reasons for the popularity of certain boys* in their environment are different. Popular boys* are those who stand out from the majority in some way. As a rule, these are sportsmen (especially football and basketball players). The common trait of popular boys* is also that they are extrovert, loud and fun. They often have disruptive behaviour, misbehaviour, and even violent attitudes. They are also boys* who are more successful with girls* since they flirt more. In Slovenia, girls* point out that boys sometimes bring attention to themselves by making fun of girls*:

A boy humiliates his girlfriend and his friends laugh at him. Those that are more fun are also more popular* (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022).

In Spain, popularity in the digital environment of social networks was reflected as a ‘verified’ masculinity, because *TikTok* has verified the account and the person becomes famous, a celebrity and this is framed as a ‘success’. The physical capital – having a strong and attractive body – is also considered important, along with the style, dressing well and taking care of oneself in this dominant and verified masculinity. The aesthetic pressure has also reached boys*’ world. An example of this aesthetic pressure is the case of boys* who do not want to take their shirts off in front of others because they think they are not strong enough (Abril et al. 2022).

Some boys* consider physical appearance important because, as they say, it is valued by girls*. In Italy, young people pointed to the stereotypical sexualization of ethnicized

masculinity (Phoenix 2003) as Moroccan boys* are idolized, especially by girls*, as the “real men*” (Bernacchi et al. 2023). This points to a relational dynamic between boys* and girls*, which is expressed by boys* doing masculinity in a way that responds to what they think is important to girls*.

In Slovenia and Bulgaria, Andrew Tate who represents a distinctive anti-feminist and toxic masculinity³ was mentioned as a role model. He is an American-British influencer and former professional kickboxer. Following his kickboxing career, Tate began offering paid courses and memberships through his website and later rose to fame as an online influencer. He has described himself as ‘*absolutely a sexist*’ and ‘*absolutely a misogynist*’. Tate's misogynistic commentary on social media has resulted in his bans from several platforms. He is the leading voice of the Manosphere (Kmetova et al. 2022). Tate was described by one boy* as ‘*an ideal, possessing a combination of the best qualities in men*’ (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022).

Young people described subordinate masculinities as boys* who were shy, quieter, and less physically developed, smaller, shorter and less strong. Introvert boys* are considered unpopular:

They keep to themselves more, they are quiet, and they are not communicative. ... If someone is loud, even if they say meaningless things, they stand up for themselves. But if someone is introvert, if they don't respond to confrontation, and if they don't stand up for themselves, it's harder for them to succeed (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022).

In Bulgaria, it was expressed that boys* who behaved like girls and schoolmates that were good pupils were labelled as sissy and weak (Kmetova et al. 2022).

In progressive environments, stereotypical ideas of masculinity (and femininity) were critically reflected by boys* and girls* and described as constraining and/or unfair. Some boys*, in particular in Germany, openly expressed their discomfort with traditional gender stereotypes and masculinity requirements. They named recurring experiences of discomfort with dynamics in boys* groups, recurring feelings of not belonging, and difficulties identifying with masculinity because they had been surrounded by boys* and men* who embodied traditional masculinity and expected them to do this as well. While images of femininity diversify, the images of masculinity remain more rigid, according to some participants. Only when boys* experienced alternative, diverse masculinities in their circle of friends or youth

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/aug/06/andrew-tate-violent-misogynistic-world-of-tiktok-new-star>

center, it became easier for them to identify as male. There was a discussion about the transmission of traditional notions of masculinity across generations, and more frequently in rural compared to urban areas (Dahlmüller and Könnecke 2023).

Suppression of emotions

Strength is not only related to the body but also emotional stoicism, as one boy* in the Barcelona focus group expressed:

You have to be quiet. In other words, you have a personal problem for yourself, you solve it by yourself, and you don't need to involve others or make others worry, I think (Abril et al. 2022).

Boys* who assertively expressed traditional views on masculinity and gender roles and resisted gender reflexivity expressed the view that it was natural for men* not to show their vulnerability because it was a sign of weakness:

Even an animal in the wild that has one leg less will be more likely to attract predators because it is weak. If you are weak, you are more vulnerable. You must not show vulnerability, if you do, you are even more vulnerable, an easy target (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022).

The same boy* also expressed his disagreement with encouraging boys* to show emotions:

Nowadays it is encouraged to cry and be sad. It's the only way to get out of being sad, to just cry and confess. That doesn't attract many women at all, and then you can't even have an offspring if you just confess* (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022).

However, generally boys* recognize that they keep their emotions bottled up, they don't explain what they feel which sometimes turns into violence. Some of the participants said they let off steam by ‘*punching the first thing that comes to hand*’. In general, they do not trust their families to explain their feelings. A few report having friends to whom they tell how they feel and the things that happen to them. They also pointed out strategies to combat sadness such as doing sports or some activity that clears their heads. Boys* who reflect gender norms described the demands on boys* and men* to restrict emotions, especially not to cry and to (always) show themselves strong, as the ‘*biggest problem of masculinity*’, which creates a vicious circle: being strong and not showing weakness creates fear, which in turn cannot be expressed. Boys* and men* would often compensate for this with violence (Dahlmüller and Könnecke 2023).

Differences between women* and men*

Differences between women* and men* were often argued biologically/genetically, also origin myths (hunter/gatherer) were offered. However, social construction and socialization were also argued. Discussions were controversial also when it came to gender inequality: some boys* were in favour of gender equality and were positive about women*'s efforts to achieve gender equality in all areas of life, others, however, expressed strongly traditional views:

A man's job is to take care of the family, to work, to protect, and a woman*'s job is to take care of the children. For me, the traditional view is the best, I live like that, my father is like that and he doesn't deviate from it (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022).*

This anachronistic view of traditional masculinity as a family provider persists, although nowadays it is obvious that both, men* and women*, work and contribute to the family's economy.

In progressive focus groups the gender pay gap, unequal share of household tasks, and fewer women* in decision-making were mentioned as problematic, but also prices for cosmetic products, hygiene items, the lack of research on contraceptives for men*, insufficient funding for protection of victims of violence, and the unequal accessibility of public toilets for men* and women* (Dahlmüller and Könecke 2023). There was a recognition among progressive young men* that the emancipation of women* is not conceivable without serious changes in men*'s behaviour. However, role models are needed for a gender-equal redefinition of masculinity.

Sexuality

In Spain, there was a consensus among the participants that they have not had sex education as such. Most boys* have not talked to their parents about sexuality and the school lessons have been limited to the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and reproduction. For boys*, access to knowledge about sexuality is limited to friends and pornography on the internet, often at an early age, between ten and twelve (Abril et al. 2022).

Attitudes towards LGBTIQ+

Gender diversity is a topic of concern to young people in a mixed way and with differences between social milieus and countries. Although there is a considerable openness towards and acceptance of LGBTIQ+ lifestyles and identities, tendencies of resistance show up at the same time. In Slovenia, young people feel that gender fluidity has become a fashion trend, which has 'crossed all boundaries' and become a privileged dimension of inequality

compared to racism and violence against women. Some boys*, however, critically reflect on homophobia as a constitutive of male identity:

Men have a different view of homosexuality. They are disgusted by the subject, they have more prejudices, and it's distasteful to them. Most men* react this way not out of direct hatred or misunderstanding, but more out of self-protection. In a male group, if anyone suspects anything about you, it's a problem. They don't say it because they hate the person in question, but because they want to separate themselves from that identity, which is stigmatised (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022).*

Also in Italy, a strong male aversion to dealing with LGBTQIA+ issues was observed for fear of putting into question heterosexuality as a normative dimension. However, a homosexual boy* in the focus group spoke about a greater propensity for homotransphobic attitudes on the part of girls* than boys* (Bernacchi et al. 2023). In Bulgaria, boys* confirmed that friendship with LGBTIQIA+ people will bring them a bad reputation, which they consider a normal situation (Kmetova et. Al. 2022). In Spain, on the other hand, homophobic or anti-sexual diversity discourse has not been found. Instead, trends have been observed towards inclusive masculinities (Anderson, 2009) that allow for the social dynamics among adolescent boys* not based on homophobia or rejection of feminine characteristics (Abril et al. 2022).

Gender-based violence

In general, violence by men* against women* has been condemned by young people. However, while boys* believe that violence against women* is an expression of men*'s powerlessness, some of them expressed approval of violence among men*:

Violence against women is an expression of weakness. If you are a real man*, you will fight with men*, not with women* (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022).*

In his account of being a victim of peer harassment, one of the boys* points to the gendered power relations between bullies and bystanders:

Usually, there is always someone laughing at the bullies. There are three boys in the company, one is the bully, and two encourage him, also because they are submissive. I was bullied when I was a kid. By a peer who had two companions with him. He was always talking, the other two were like appendages, laughing next to him. They were his audience (ibid.).*

Some boys* relate men*'s violence to testosterone, therefore, a biological explanation is given. Others think that family experiences where violence is used against a partner or children normalize violence and it is likely that these boys* will also use violence against their partners. Gender reflexive boys*, on the other hand, see the tendency towards a higher incidence of violence among boys* and young men* compared to women* or queer/non-binary persons because they are less able to recognize, articulate and non-violently process their vulnerabilities, emotionality, especially feelings of fear, stress or pressure and/or their own experience of violence. Low self-esteem can increase the risk of violent behavior, as can recurring experiences of powerlessness, for example, due to racism, classism or structural violence in school and family (Dahlmüller and Könnecke 2023).

In Spain, focus groups participants acknowledged that violence perpetrated by boys* is more physical and can have worse consequences, while the violence perpetrated by girls* is more psychological and verbal. They accepted that boys*' violence is more problematic, but they think that violence perpetrated by women* should also be discussed (Abril et al. 2022). The importance of verbal violence was also emphasized in Germany, as it has a great power to hurt and is not sufficiently recognized as such (Dahlmüller and Könnecke 2023).

In Italy, almost all of the boys* in focus groups showed difficulties in discussing the issues of masculinity, its construction and its role in combating violence against women*. They expressed an almost protective attitude toward the status of masculinity, through sarcasm, shifting of responsibility for violence onto others, and the tendency to minimize the debate on the relationship between GBV and hegemonic masculinity (Bernacchi et al. 2023).

In Austria, a strong correlation between class/marginalization and the rigidity of (masculinity) norms has been observed. Rigid norms seem to correlate with aggression and make violence more probable. They are also particularly relevant at a certain age (beginning of puberty) (Gärtner and Scambor 2023; Scambor et al. 2019).

Promoting non-violent masculinity

Young people confirmed that school environment is an important location for GBV prevention interventions, where gender stereotypes and especially rigid masculinity norms clearly play a role, but, as pointed out in Austria, even more at the youth centres (Gärtner and Scambor 2023). They think that the issues of violence and gender norms should be dealt with on a day-to-day basis in schools and at an earlier age, as they believe that in secondary school certain dynamics are already ingrained. As early as possible, schools should offer points of contact and spaces for discussion between people of different genders, experiences, and backgrounds. Gender dynamics between girls* and boys* came up once

again. One girl* pointed out the importance of reducing gender stereotypes of 'real man*' among girls*:

Men* need to feel that if they show their inner side, women* will not judge them. This should be done in such a way that women* could see there is a gap between what they want and what they really support in men*. That would also be the basis for men* to see that, too (Hrženjak and Markelj 2022).

Sensitization for vulnerabilities and the perception and expression of one's feelings was emphasized as a central topic of gender-reflective violence prevention. Young people proposed that violence should be addressed through personal experiences, real situations, and theatre or role-playing. In their opinion, an Instagram account would be useful, where young people could ask questions or be given advice and information on violence-related issues. Regarding the campaigns *We are looking for brave people who express what they feel* by Langui was mentioned⁴ in Spain as an example that invites people not to remain silent in the face of bullying and harassment (Abril et al. 2022). Suggestions were also made for the inclusion of online influencers in the campaign and online activities, especially on social media popular with young people, such as *TikTok*, where positive and alternative examples of masculinity should be created and showcased.

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omZkxy3wU1c>

CONCLUSION

5

In all the involved countries, the majority of policy and systemic activities relating to GBV are focused on intimate partner and domestic violence, as well as on curative programmes for the protection of victims. Also, a growing awareness of GBV online, in the workplace, and of sexual violence can be observed. Although NGOs are working to systematically integrate gender-sensitive prevention programmes into work with young people in the education system, this is still a matter of voluntary decision by individual schools and various short-term project activities.

Existing programmes addressing young people and GBV prevention in formal or informal education are not adequate or sufficient and are lacking a systemic approach at the national level. The field is covered in a segmented way within the individual NGO's projects and programmes. Schools are dealing with the problem partially and mostly curatively; the preventive approach is insufficient. Some of the teachers are searching for alternative ways to include violence and gender-related topics in curricula, but they face several obstacles, including structural, institutional and individual ones, e.g. barriers to introducing these topics in schools, lack of knowledge, the resistance of young people, and parents who act as gatekeepers. Even in the field of youth work, where there are fewer barriers, there has been no implementation of programmes on a systemic level so far.

A review of good practices shows that, systematically and in the long run the state does not fund preventive programmes explicitly addressing men* and the social construction of masculinity in relation to GBV in any of the countries involved, even though a large number of such projects now exist in Germany and Austria. Mostly EU-funded projects developed a wide range of materials, guidelines and tools, covering a broad range of aspects, and a diversity of approaches and formats, whereas the majority of the programmes consist of manuals, often linked with (school) workshops. Taken together they build a rich pool of pedagogical tools for gender-sensitive violence prevention. At the same time, these resources are not easy to access. There is no source with an overview of existing materials neither at a national nor the EU level. It is perplexing that there is no central website, learning platform or similar that professionals can use to find materials such as manuals on gender-reflective violence prevention. Also, there's a lack of programmes/projects on the topic of digital violence, transphobia & violence against trans* people, and peer-to-peer approaches.

Consultations with professionals revealed that gender and gender norms have been changing despite the relentless growth of neo-conservative and traditionalist forces. Young

people are becoming more open to talking about topics related to gender, gender identities, gender roles, and sexuality. Alternative models of masculinities, such as gender egalitarian and non-violent masculinity, can be observed among boys* and young men. On the other hand, traditionalist views on gender are far from disappearance, on the contrary – they are gaining recognition and power, especially among young boys*. Traditional models of masculinity are forcing boys* not to show feelings, vulnerability and weakness, which can trigger violent behaviour as a response to feeling misunderstood, oppressed, confused, and lacking support and understanding. According to professionals, rigid gender and masculinity norms are salient in marginalized young people from conservative, migrant or religious backgrounds. These are strongly related to national identity, faith, and perceptions of traditional gender roles. Professionals draw attention to the diversity of violence stemming from traditional concepts of masculinity. Forms of violence range from physical and verbal violence to homophobia, transphobia, racism, GBV, sexism, material violence, bullying and hate speech. It is important that the trainings and materials to be developed take into account the different backgrounds of the target groups, the already existing diversity of masculinities and intersectional perspectives.

Consultations with young people revealed polarised attitudes towards masculinity, violence and gender equality among boys*. Some boys* have strongly traditional views on masculinity and violence. They argue that boys* need to be tough, assertive, show invulnerability and even fight each other if necessary. They disapprove of violence against women* as the supposedly weaker sex in need of their protection. On the other hand, there are egalitarian boys* who advocate gender equality and respect for diversity between people, expressing their vulnerability and resolving conflicts through constructive discussion. Many boys* are somewhere in between and do not express their views. It is important that the training addresses these group dynamics and diversities.

Consultations with young people showed that they have a poor understanding of what GBV is. They mainly identify physical and verbal violence. For some boys*, there is an apparent shifting of blame for violence onto the victim or those around them. They do not recognise peer violence between boys* as GBV. Boys* who express greater self-reflection point to gendered power relations between bullies and bystanders who encourage bullies by their approval and inaction against violence. They also highlight the inherent homophobia of masculinity. More insight into the social construction of gender identity could also contribute to reducing tensions towards LGBTIQ+ people, which some young people experience mainly as an intrusive fashion trend, though in some countries and more progressive environments trends towards inclusive masculinity can be observed.

For some boys*, expressing their vulnerability, sadness and frustrations is a sign of weakness. Young people point out that they also experience emotions such as anger, the expression of which is socially unacceptable, and that they need skills to manage and communicate such emotions. The examples of men* who show their vulnerability but do not lose their power as a result, and the cultivation and socialisation of unpleasant emotions, seem to be an important topic for violence preventive work with boys*.

The body is one of the central topics with boys*, especially its size, strength and appearance. The group dynamics within the boys*' group revealed the domination of boys* who embodied the social norms of how a male body should look. It is important to cultivate heterogeneity within the category of masculinity not only according to the categories of class, race, sexual orientation, etc. but also according to differences in the physical constitution, and to provide examples of 'cool' men* with non-standard bodies visible.

Young people anticipate relational gender dynamics. Although peer opinion is very important among boys*, in their doing masculinity they also respond to girls*' opinions and stereotypes of what is a 'real man*'. Although a gender-homogeneous group has its advantages, the discussion in gender-mixed groups about stereotypes of masculinity also seems to be very important for deconstructing gender stereotypes among young people. . Therefore, it should always be decided under consideration of the concrete pedagogical goals whether the trainings are conducted in gender-homogeneous or gender-mixed groups. The representation of non-binary young people should also be considered and taken into account.

Some boys* have role models in online toxic influencers. Online sources are also an inspiration for some egalitarian boys*. In both cases, online representations of masculinity can be a rich source of material that represents the diversity of masculinity and engages young people in a discussion about the norms and values of masculinity. Interviews with professionals and youth workers also showed that online resources, films, videos, and images, provoke lively discussion and (self)reflection. Concrete practical and real-life examples, theatre plays and role-play games, and the quiz method, were also mentioned as relevant.

In the consultations with young people, digital networks, influencers, positive role models and the reduction of gender stereotypes of masculinity in boys*, but also in girls* proved to be important elements of a public campaign to disseminate non-violent and gender-equal role models and values of masculinity.

All in all, the pedagogical approach, named norm critique & resource strengthening (Dahlmüller and Könnecke 2023) in the CarMiA project, seems to be very much needed among young people, in particular boys* and men*, but also among professionals working with young people. While norm critique encourages young people to (self)reflect masculinity, gender and other power relations (racism, classism, etc.), resource orientation provides empowerment of their potential for acting beyond gender stereotypes and for nonviolent behavior. This should be shaped on a peer-to-peer, inclusive, intersectional, processual basis by using interactive, triggering, relaxed, conversational, and participative methods which address topics relevant to young people such as friendship, relationships, love, and sexuality. The visibility of alternative masculinities that can be experienced in one's environment and makes the diversity of masculinities tangible also seems very important to encourage young (male) people to question traditional, repressive concepts of masculinity, which offer a fertile ground for violent behavior. It is crucial to start implementing systemic solutions in the field of gender-reflective pedagogical work with boys that would grasp the complexity of the field and establish continuous and sustainable actions to combat GBV.

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