

# BOYS\* AND CULTURE OF CARE

The project, funded by the European Commission, started in January 2017 and will last two years. It aims at creating and strengthening a supportive environment for male (potential) victims of sexualized violence, so that they will be less likely to experience it, hence addressing both prevention as protection. In particular, the project will support male (potential) victims of sexualized violence by identifying and training First-Points-of-Contact (FPC) that these boys and male youths are in contact with. This is to be achieved through a capacity-building programme for professionals in specific institutions such as schools, residential care facilities, youth organisations and welfare services. Additionally, within these institutions boys will also receive specific support actions to improve their knowledge on the issue of sexualised violence and to raise their awareness, and a specific awareness raising campaign will be organised in all involved partners countries, as well as conferences.

This is the project's website and there you can find detailed and updated information about the project and the partners' activities.

<https://boyscultureofcare.wordpress.com>

#BOYSCULTUREOFCARE

THE PROJECT HAS A CHILD-CENTRED AND GENDER SENSITIVE APPROACH AND WORKS ON GENDER STEREOTYPES ACROSS ALL ITS ACTIVITIES.



Funded by the **Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC)** Justice Programme of the European Union

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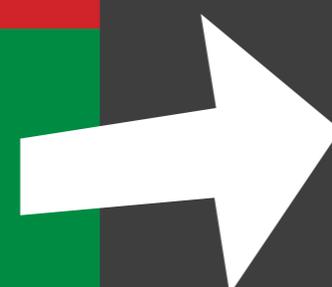
## PARTNERS

Five organisations are partners in the project:

**Dissens**, as leading partner, a German gender education and research agency based in Berlin; **Animus Association Foundation** from Bulgaria, provide services via a Centre for rehabilitation, counseling and psychotherapy; **Verein für Männer- und Geschlechterthemen (VMG)**, an Austrian centre for masculinity research, education and psychosocial support, based in Graz; **Istituto degli Innocenti**, an Italian child welfare and child policy organisation based in Florence; and **AHIGE**, a Spanish organisation specialised in working with men and gender equality.

Partners links:

[www.dissens.de](http://www.dissens.de)  
[www.animusassociation.org](http://www.animusassociation.org)  
[www.genderforschung.at](http://www.genderforschung.at)  
[www.istitutodegliinnocenti.it](http://www.istitutodegliinnocenti.it)  
[www.ahige.org](http://www.ahige.org)



# BOYS\* AND CULTURE OF CARE

A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT  
TO FACE SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE

FACTS & CONCEPTS

# A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT TO FACE SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE

## GENDER

In our understanding gender is a fluid social construct that is formed historically and changes constantly.

When we talk about gender we focus on the gender identity of a person. This identity does not necessarily correspond with the sex of a person. gender identity could be e.g. boy/man, girl/woman, genderqueer, agender etc.; sex is usually split in male, female or inter\*.

# CONCEPTS

UNDERLYING CONCEPTS THAT INSPIRE ALL THE PROJECT'S ACTIVITIES

## MASCULINITIES

We understand masculinity as a cultural concept, with distinct configurations and changes over time and geographic location, entailing a certain set of behaviors and physical appearances. People identified as male – by themselves and/or others - are faced with requirements to fit these behavioral and physical standards (at least to a certain extent). This includes for example having a penis, being dominant, confident and strong, emotional restraint (except for anger), not wearing dresses or skirts, being attracted to women, being sexually active etc. The set of requirements that come with masculinity can differ according to class, desire, age, social and community background etc. Children learn from an early age what it means to be 'a boy' or 'a girl' (through their families and peers, literature etc.) and to act accordingly (doing gender).

## SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE

Sexualized violence: we consider all acts against the sexual autonomy of a person as sexualized violence. Sexualized violence can take different forms, such as sexualized comments and remarks, direct or via phone or internet, unwanted touching, forced kissing, showing and producing of pornography, manipulation of the genitals, anal/oral rape (vaginal rape with trans\*gender boys) etc. These acts can be committed directly on boys/young men, in front of them or they can be forced to commit sexual acts on others. All this is sexualized violence. Sexualized violence harms the victim physically and/or psychologically, whereby sexuality is used to exert violence and is undertaken against the other person's will. For different reasons people may not be able to give informed consent to sexual acts, e.g. they are not physically or mentally capable (through disabilities or drugs). Children can never give informed consent to sexual acts with adults as they are not able to oversee adult sexuality.

## DISCLOSURE

It is not only the moment when sexualized violence is talked about, as it is a complex process defined by different aspects including: remembering, which enables reflection and (re-) valuation of the past incidents; integration which is understood as the classification/understanding of past (or present) incidences as sexualized violence and derives from the knowledge about sexualized violence; revelation/disclosure to other people, in verbal or non-verbal form (e.g. suddenly going to bed fully clothed) by the victim or third parties; (professional) help which might be useful to the victim to stop the violence, for emotional support and support to cope with daily problems; recognition as for many victims it is important that the sexualised violence they had to suffer is recognized as such widely, e.g. by institutions in which these incidents happened, by the State in form of a judgement/sentence in court, by families etc.

## CULTURE OF CARE

The social environment of survivors/victims is essential for the disclosure process. Aware, supportive people play a key role in how survivors/victims can deal with sexualized violence. When survivors/victims are not sure if they should talk about their experiences or how to categorize them they often send signals that need to be perceived and understood. This awareness is the basis for any form of (helping) actions taken. Offering and creating spaces to talk continuously is often a prerequisite for survivors/victims to reveal their experiences. Survivors/victims should not be forced or pressured to speak though! There are many good reasons for silence. As sexualized violence mostly happens in close relationships, building trust can be difficult for survivors/victims. What matters the most is that the surrounding people are available and open, listen and give the survivors/victims the feeling not to be alone.

# 9 FACTS ABOUT SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE FOR BOYS\* AND YOUNG MEN\*

- 1 Unwanted touching, harassment online and in social media, sexual abuse – many girls\* and boys\* experience such or other forms of sexualized violence. Male youth and young men\* become victims too.
- 2 It is estimated that 1 out of 10 men\* experienced sexualized violence in their childhood or youth. Most perpetrators are adult men\*. But sexualized violence is also committed by women\*, girls\* or other boys\*/peers.
- 3 Very often the boys\* or young men\* who suffer from sexualized violence knew and trusted the perpetrators. This trust was exploited and betrayed. Many boys\* and young men\* find it hard to trust people afterwards and become insecure towards others.
- 4 Victims/ those affected by sexualized violence are never to blame for it! Perpetrators might try to convince/manipulate their victims into believing that.
- 5 Some boys\* and young men\* have sexual reactions. This does not mean that they wanted the sexualized violence or that they had fun!
- 6 The sexuality of a boy\* or young man\* is not defined by the sexualized violence! Whether gay, bi or hetero – everyone decides for themselves who they want to love and how they want to live their sexuality.
- 7 Affected boys\* and young men\* react very differently (loud, quiet, sad, angry, scared,...). Every way is okay, there is no right or wrong!
- 8 It takes time and patience to come to terms with sexualized violence. It is very different how long it takes. Some seek for support, others don't. Sexualized violence for many marks a profound caesura – but most manage later to live a happy life anyway.
- 9 All victims of sexualized violence have a right to help and support!

(\*) We use the asterisk to refer in a broad sense to the categories boy, man or woman, beyond its binary conceptualization.