

Sexual harassment and Bullying in the Nordic Region



Research-based knowledge against sexual harassment
and bullying among children and young people



Nordic
Co-operation



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Sexual harassment and bullying in the Nordic region - Research-based knowledge against sexual harassment and bullying among children and young people

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About the report

This report is a part of the project *Research-based knowledge against sexual harassment and bullying among children and young people*. The project is funded by the Nordic Gender Equality Fund.

The project aims to increase research-based knowledge about sexual harassment within the participating non-profit organizations in the Nordic countries and Lithuania, as well as its target groups. The project focuses on network meetings and the sharing and dissemination of research-based methods. Through the project the participating partners have been strengthening the efforts on sexual harassment in the Nordic region and Lithuania, by making best practice, research and research-based methods more available.

The non-profit organizations included in the project are all working against bullying and their target groups includes adults working with and for children and young people – as well as children and young people themselves. The organizations in the project are:

- Friends (Sweden)
- Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (Finland)
- Folkhälsan (Finland)
- Home and School – the National Parents Association (Iceland)
- Childline (Lithuania)

This report is part of the dissemination of knowledge gained in the project.



Hello Åsa Gustafsson, expert and advisor at Friends in Sweden!

You are the project manager for this project. Why did Friends initiate this Nordic project on bullying and sexual harassment?

The Nordic region is world leading in preventing bullying, the prevalence of bullying is low in all Nordic countries. The efforts to combat and highlight sexual harassment have been extensive in the Nordics, especially since #metoo. Our intentions with the project have been to link these two fields and clarifying that sexual harassment can be a form of bullying, as well as to strengthen the network between anti-bullying organizations in the Nordic region and make best practice available among us as well for our Baltic neighbors.



What challenges does Friends face when working with prevention of sexual harassment?

Our experience is that Swedish schools in general have knowledge about different forms of bullying, including sexual harassments - but they do not always have time to actually work to prevent bullying. A lot of time is allocated to acute measures, and less to prevention and promotion work. Also, we see that sexual harassment have become normalized and sometimes even expected. For many students unwanted touching and sexual jokes are part of the school day.

What do you hope for in the future?

I hope no child or youth will ever have to bear shame or guilt when it comes to experiences of bullying and sexual harassment. #metoo showed the importance of breaking the silence about experiences of being exposed to various forms of sexual harassment. Adults need to start talking to children at an early age about everyone's right to their own bodies. We adults should take the lead, be role models and practice what boundaries, physical integrity and consent means. The change begins with us!

Understanding sexual harassment

Bullying and sexual harassment

Bullying can be seen as an umbrella term, within which sexual harassment in various forms can occur. Both Nordic and international studies indicate that a large proportion of bullying during adolescence is of a sexual nature and all forms of bullying can include sexual undertone¹. In an American study 64% of those who had been bullied reported that they had also been subjected to sexual harassment². Homophobic bullying between boys is fundamental in constructions of masculinity³ and is strongly related to boys' sexual harassment of girls and gender-based violence⁴.

Sexual harassment can be defined as behaviors of a sexual nature that is unwanted and violate someone's dignity. Sexual harassment, abuse and sexualized violence are both common and, in many cases, normalized for children and young people. Girls are particularly exposed, and in almost all cases boys are the offenders⁵. The fact that girls are exposed to a greater extent than boys should be seen as part of a pattern that reflects society, where norms for gender and heterosexuality create rules and expectations. Girls are often expected to be passive sexual objects, while boys are expected to be active and behave as if they have the right to other people's bodies. The sexual harassment and violence against girls and women is an important gender equality challenge.

Research shows that sexual harassment can lead to decreased self-confidence and/or self-esteem, depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicidal thoughts⁶. School performance is also affected by sexual harassment, even to a greater extent than by bullying, and can lead to school absence and feelings of insecurity at school⁷. On digital platforms young people can encounter both sexualized violence and are at risk of being exposed to various abuse, such as grooming, unwanted dick-picks or sexual blackmail like being persuaded by threats to undress in front

of a camera⁸. Gender-based violence, such as sexual harassment and bullying is a normalized part of children and young people's everyday lives, where norms around femininity and masculinity are key drivers.

Bullying, sexual harassment and violence in young people's relationships as well as other forms of violence, are connected⁹. Many of the factors that can explain the occurrence of bullying also carry an increased risk of other forms of vulnerability among children and young people¹⁰. For example, there are common risk and protective factors for both violence between young people and violence in young people's close relationships¹¹. According to meta-analyses¹², bullying can lead to problems such as poorer school results, depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, loneliness and suicide. One of the strongest risks of subjecting someone or being subjected to bullying, or other forms of violence, is to have experienced violence as a child¹³. Bullying and homophobic comments among boys of younger school age later leads to boys' subjecting girls to sexual harassment¹⁴.

Asking about specific behavior

Of course, school is not an arena spared from sexual harassment. Students testify that sexual harassment has become so normalized that the behavior is expected, and that reactions from adults varies greatly, from ignoring it to taking it very seriously¹⁵. All schools should include efforts against sexual harassment in their general bullying prevention by strengthening students' knowledge on their right to their own bodies, their understanding of gender roles as well as norms around masculinity and femininity. To implement actions on sexual harassment, mapping the current situation in school is vital.

Mapping the situation can be done by for example observation, interviews or student led projects – but an anonymous survey is always a good start. When asking students about ex-

periences of sexual harassment, by only using the term “sexual harassment” very few students answer that they have been exposed. However, when asking about specific actions and behaviors that can be linked to sexual harassment, students tend to report higher levels of sexual harassment. Underreporting is a known problem when measuring sexual harassment. One reason for this is that the subject is taboo in many contexts. In general, people are more inclined to report experiences in surveys where specific behaviors are requested separately. Another reason for potential underreporting is normalization; that students and staff at a school have, over time, come to accept and expect a sexist environment¹⁶.

Three forms of sexual harassment

An important step in identifying sexual harassment is to define behaviors that constitute sexual harassment. Sexual harassment can be divided into three different forms: verbal, physical and public display¹⁷. The forms do not exclude each other, rather, one and the same event can consist of several forms. The three forms can be used to clarify that sexual harassment can be expressed in different ways and to understand and assess individual events.

Verbal sexual harassment is when someone says or writes something to or about someone else, that can be linked to sex or sexuality. The behavior is unwanted and unwelcome to the one subjected.

Examples of verbal harassment:

- Calling someone offensive words, like whore, cunt, dick or such words
- Calling someone a lesbian, gay, or similar words
- Publicly commenting on how attractive or unattractive someone is
- Comments or jokes about someone, that are connected to sex or sexuality
- Commenting on someone's appearance, someone's body or someone's privacy in a sexual manner

Physical sexual harassment is when someone performs an act with the body, linked to sex or sexuality, directly aimed at another person and in a way that offends the other person. The behavior is unwanted and unwelcome to the one subjected.

Examples of physical harassment:

- Grabbing or touching someone in a way that feels too close
- Forcing someone into a corner in a sexual way
- Trying to kiss or hug someone against their will
- Pulling on/off someone's clothes in a sexual way (e.g., pulling a bra strap, underpants or skirt)
- Looking at someone or making gestures in a way that feels intrusive and sexual
- Sending or showing someone sexual pictures, drawings, clips or messages (e.g., dickpics, porn or sexual invites)

Public display is when someone exposes someone else to a violation related to sex or sexuality and where the act has one or more spectators. These public acts or displays are important to investigate, as they include not only the actual event that occurs between individuals, but also other people who are not directly involved. In other words, public display can potentially affect students as a group, and the school culture. It can also mean that shame and guilt of the victim is intensified when the act becomes visible. The behavior is unwanted and unwelcome to the one subjected.

Examples of public display:

- Rumors that have to do with sex
- Written sexual messages on bathroom walls or in locker rooms
- Sexual comments or pictures posted online or spread digitally

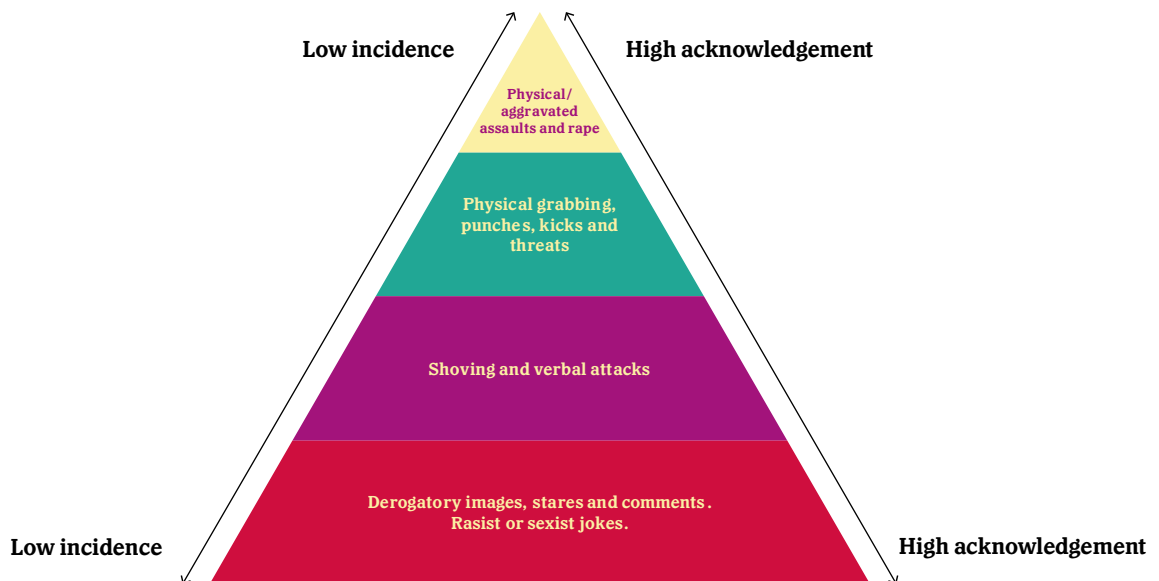
Power and control

Research has shown that sexual abuse essentially is about power and dominance, rather than sexuality. Sexual harassment in school can thus contribute to creating and maintaining a lack of equality between men/boys and women/girls. The fear of being exposed contributes to deteriorating women's and girls' quality of life and scope for action¹⁸. There are clear structures around men or boys who exercise power and control over women and girls, by exposing them to unwanted and derogatory actions. To be able to understand sexual harassment, we must therefore also address the subject of power.

Power and control in relation to sexual harassment is, for example, that people consider themselves entitled to subject someone else to

an unwanted sexual act that violates that person's dignity. This is as much about examining the concrete situation (the action itself) as it is about examining power relations within the group, as well as linking it to overall norms in society.

To understand the social life at school, and how children and young people act in their relationship-building towards each other, the concepts of norms and power can be used as analytical tools. Working preventively against sexual harassment in school means, for instance, actively challenging and working against limiting gender related norms. Unless challenged, there is a risk that those who break the norm is being punished in various ways – sexual harassment being one.



The pyramid of violence

The pyramid of violence is a model that illustrates the theoretical view on how different forms of sexual harassment are connected, how they relate to each other and what the consequences of normalization can mean. The pyramid shows how more acknowledged violence, and the less acknowledged violence are connected, and

that the rarer, but more severe, acts often have their roots in the more common and everyday acts. The further up in the pyramid, the less socially acceptable the behaviors are. Acts with high acknowledgement, which are not as common, have a high level of recognition and lead to much clearer reactions. Examples of highly acknowledged violence are assault, abuse, and

rape. What are listed as less acknowledged acts are, for example, derogatory images, glances, or sexist jokes. These acts are more common and can therefore more easily become a part of the normalization and the local school culture.

One explanation for this lies, in part, in the fact that we do not regard these acts as sexual harassment or a form of violence. By talking about more acts constituting sexual harassment, we also create a space to show how the different acts are connected and how they can develop and be aggravated. However, if no one speaks out or acts when milder actions take place, and thus allows behaviors to continue, the aggressor risks climbing higher up the pyramid.



**“Someone in my
class hit me on my butt
multiple times and I have
said stop, but they don’t
listen to me.”**

– Student in year 3-6



Hello Maria Stoor-Grenner, Expert in Bullying prevention at Folkhälsan in Finland!

What is the general attitude and discussion in Finland on sexual harassment among young people?

When it comes to schools and early education, we can see an interest to work preventively against sexual harassment. Sometimes, the problem is the lack of knowledge or time, and how comfortable you feel to talk about the issue. When you don't feel secure about the subject, it may be easier to invite experts to the schools, to talk to students. It is a good first step, but for the work to continue it is important that the whole school is committed, and that it becomes part of daily life to talk about sexual health and sexual harassments. And of course, early education and schools can't do this alone, we need to do this work both at home and on a society level.

For younger kids, we have begun talking about boundaries, but we don't have a national plan or curriculum that mention what early education and schools should do to raise knowledge about consent, boundaries, sexual harassment and so on.



Do you have an example of methods that Folkhälsan have against sexual harassment and bullying?

Teachers working with younger children felt that they didn't have tools or materials on how to talk about and prevent sexual harassment. So Folkhälsan decided to create Snippelisnopp, a material including topics such as the body, boundaries, feelings and communication. It is important using the right terms when naming body parts – so that if children are exposed to sexual harassment, they have the vocabulary for it. Feedback from schools and teachers is that the material is very easy to use, and we have also received feedback from families who are reading the material at home.

How has it been to participate in a Nordic network?

The networking and sharing research and methods between the countries have been valuable. The knowledge has also increased due to our seminars that we had during the year. Finally, we don't have to invent the wheel again when sharing experience and knowledge between our organizations. We have a lot to learn from each other!

Important factors when fighting sexual harassment

Consent and integrity

Something that characterizes sexual harassment is that behaviors, like other violations, are unwelcome to the one subjected. That something is unwanted, unwelcome and not mutual is the opposite of consent – that all parties give their approval. Consent is not only “NO means NO” – it means that anything else than YES means NO. Preventive and promotional work involving sexual harassment thus also includes addressing consent and integrity.

Promote, prevent, identify and react

In order to achieve a functioning, long-term systematic approach, it is important to find a good balance between the promoting, preventive, identifying and remedial parts. Often, too much time and efforts are put into the remedial and reactive work. But to reduce sexual harassment and change a local negative culture, resources and focus should be allocated to promotion, prevention and identifying efforts. In short: Invest in a good fire extinguisher but put most of your focus on preventing the fire from happening in the first place.

The importance of consensus

To fight a problem, everyone must agree on what the problem is, learn to recognize it, react to it and know what to do when it happens. At a school for example, it is important that everyone is familiar with the policy on bullying, including sexual harassment. All staff needs to agree on how one should act in different situations. Acting in a similar way in situations that arise is an important part of how students perceive their safety. Achieving consensus and a common ground on sexual harassment requires knowledge and communication, both within the staff group and with students.

Examining the local culture

Sexual harassment does not happen in a vacuum. It takes place within a context and is influenced by the prevailing local culture. Each context is unique, with its own conditions and local norms. To work preventively against sexual harassment, one needs to understand the local norms, as well as how these norms affect relationships between children and young people. Social relationships and groups are created, maintained and changed. Sexual harassment needs to be understood based on the individuals, the group's social interaction and society's norms. It is not just about looking at the individual events. It is also about understanding the social life at school as a whole. One way to work preventively around sexual harassment is therefore to actively focus on aspects that affect the school culture.

Hotspots and hostile environment

The term “hotspots” is often used to describe unsafe places. It refers to places or environments where people feel more vulnerable, or where incidents are more frequent. In school, students know or believe that negative things might occur in these places and therefore often avoid them. Researchers Gillander Gådin and Stein¹⁹ use the term “Hostile environments”. The concept is a way of describing the school's social environment (the school culture) when the feeling of insecurity has become so serious that it affects the individuals' ability to feel safe or to participate fully. Hostile environments include places where you may not have been exposed yourself, but have heard that behaviors may occur, or for some other reason believe that there is a risk of exposure. The preventive work on sexual harassment needs to include a plan to identify these places and how to counteract normalization.

The normalizing of behaviors

There are several factors that increase the risk of sexual harassment being normalized in school. One factor is a high prevalence of sexual harassment, which can amount to an even greater increase or intensification of harassment. Other factors include sexual harassment being a behavior that is expected and taken for granted, that the threshold for behaviors constituting sexual harassment is changed in a way that less behaviors are considered sexual harassment, and that harassment is normalized throughout the whole organization²⁰. Research shows that sexual harassment creates a poor study environment, and that sexual harassment also affects students who are not directly exposed to the acts²¹. A school whose staff does not respond to sexual violations thus shows that sexual harassment is accepted, as long as the victims are not visibly affected. In environments where sexual harassment is ongoing, these behaviors can ultimately be considered normal.



Hello Jurgita Smiltė Jasiulionė, psychologist and educator at Child Line in Lithuania!

What is the general attitude and discussion in Lithuania on sexual harassment among young people?

Young people have much more awareness about sexual harassment. When we visit schools and ask students about experience of bullying and different forms of violence, including sexual harassment, older students can talk and give examples of harassments. Especially girls share experiences of being subjected to sexual harassment. Maybe it's a bigger stigma for boys to talk about?

On the other hand, after #metoo the discussion about sexual harassment opened up among younger people, especially online. But when they address sexual harassment in school, the reaction from adults in school is more: "you must have misunderstood the situation or the behavior, or it was just flirting, or it is hormones". And this is a problem, because then it becomes normalized.

→

What are the needs in Lithuanian schools when it comes to bullying and sexual harassment?

There is a bit of a difference when schools talk about bullying compared to sexual harassment. School staff acknowledge the problem with bullying nowadays. But when we talk about sexual harassment, usually staff and teachers say: “but we don’t have any problems with sexual harassment among students”. I think we need to understand what sexual harassment is and that it is a form of degrading treatment and bullying.

Do you have positive examples from collaboration with schools on bullying prevention?

A positive experience is working with a bullying prevention program – the Friends Program – over a few years and to have the possibility to have different interventions. Also to give seminars, have discussions and reflections with teachers on how different forms of violence and bullying effect the school environment and climate over a longer time.

Legislation

Legislation is one way to promote change in society. A strong political leadership and robust legal and policy framework to address bullying, school violence and violence against children in general is vital, and is one of the components recommended by the Scientific Committee on preventing and addressing school bullying and cyberbullying in connection to the International Conference on School Bullying in 2020²². The context, prerequisites and legislation vary in the countries of the project partners when it comes to sexual harassment and bullying.

Sweden

Sweden has several laws to strengthen the rights of children, connected to sexual harassment.

The Discrimination Act applies within the education system. Paragraph 7 states:

“If an education provider becomes aware that a child or pupil, student or students who participate in or apply for the education provider’s activities consider themselves to have been subjected to harassment or sexual harassment in connection with school activity, the education provider is obliged to investigate the circumstances surrounding the reported harassment and where appropriate, take the measures that may reasonably be required to prevent future harassment”.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child became Swedish law in 2020, and thus strengthened the rights for children. The convention states that:

“Children shall be protected against all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, abuse or exploitation, including sexual abuse”.

The Education Act regulates the obligation of the education provider, school staff and principal to report, investigate and remediate degrading treatment and sexual harassment when they get information that a student has been exposed in connection to school.

The Sexual offence legislation was changed in 2018 and is now based on consent. A rape or sexual abuse conviction does no longer require the use of violence or threats by the perpetrator, or that a victim’s particularly vulnerable situation was exploited. It is enough that one of the parties did not participate voluntarily. The introduction of sexual consent legislation is based on the premise that all sex must be voluntary.

Finland

To combat sexual violence faced by children and young people the Finnish government and authorities have taken several decisions and effected operational programs to promote preventive work.

The Basic Education Act (and other school legislation acts) states that students have the right to a safe learning environment. A safe learning environment is comprised of psychological, social and physical factors. The obligation to intervene in sexual harassment is statutory. An action plan to prevent and intervene in bullying is also mandatory for early educational settings.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has been law in Finland since 1991.

The Pupil and Student Welfare Act obliges educational institutions to prepare a plan for protecting students from violence, bullying and harassment.

The Act on Equality between Women and Men states that sexual harassment constitutes discrimination and is prohibited.

The Non-Discrimination Act, discrimination on grounds listed in the Act is prohibited, including origin, sexual orientation, language, religion, disability or state of health.

Iceland

Sexual harassment and bullying are forbidden in Iceland by legislation, both regarding children and adults. The legislation does not have a specific name as sexual harassment and bullying are mentioned in more than one place of our overall legislation.

It is addressed in the act on primary and lower secondary schools and also in the curriculum. It is also to be found in the act on Equal status and Equal rights irrespective of gender, in the Act on Environment, Hygiene and Safety at Work. There are also several regulations linked to those acts.

Employers, principals and those who work with people in sports or other leisure activities have the obligation to react and contact police in sexual harassment cases. Every organization must have a plan how to avoid sexual harassment and bullying and how to handle these sensitive cases if they come up.

Lithuania

The National Education Act of Republic of Lithuania defines bullying in schools. It is indicated that every school has an obligation to act when bullying (defined as intended and repeated degrading treatment) occurs. It is compulsory for every person working in school to take action according to school's policies. All schools are also obliged to implement at least one prevention program at a time. In practice, specifically designed bullying prevention programs are hardly affordable because they are not available for schools for free.

The law on Equal Opportunities for women and men, Lithuanian Criminal Code as well as **Labor Code** covers sexual harassment. According to the Criminal Code a person over 14 years can be considered a victim of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment against younger minors is qualified as Child abuse, as it is not specifically defined in Laws regarding children. Child rights protection departments at municipalities are obliged to report to the Law Enforcement authorities of any suspected sexual harassment. In practice sexual harassment is reported very seldom. Children mostly do not report it to school staff, only peers and sometimes parents.





Hello Bryndís Jónsdóttir, project manager at Home and School in Iceland!

What is the general attitude and discussion in Iceland on sexual harassment among young people?

There is a huge wake up regarding sexual harassment in Iceland now, and young women are leading the discussion. We have groups of young female activists fighting sexual harassment and young women and men coming forward with their stories on different platforms. The younger generation is definitely leading this and showing so much courage and bravery. We can sense that all of this is empowering, especially young girls and women. They become more aware of their rights and gain knowledge on what is harassment, abuse of power and bullying.



What are the needs in Iceland when it comes to bullying and sexual harassment?

Unfortunately, there is definitely a lack of knowledge in schools when it comes to preventing bullying and sexual harassment. It is mandatory to have a bullying prevention plan in every school, but it is not active in many schools so many of them end up being reactive instead of proactive. We get a lot of calls from parents who have reached a dead end with their children because of bullying and feel that they have no options left. Sadly, they often come to us when things have become almost impossible to solve. Sexual harassment is mainly a problem online in primary schools and lower secondary schools. However sexual harassment is something that needs to be addressed in all age groups. Young girls are being coerced by their peers or older men to send nude photos and even offered payments for doing so. Those who are being bullied or sexually harassed in the smaller towns often have no resources to deal with those problems because of the close-knit communities and the perpetrators sometimes being connected to school authorities or other persons of power in the community.

What would be the "dream project" for your organization to prevent sexual harassment among young people?

Hopefully the dream project can become a reality! Our board has agreed to plan a conference focusing on bullying and sexual harassment led by students aged 13-18. They will decide which matters they want addressed and we will help them find the right people. Let young people be the part of the solutions! Very often we adults address and talk about the challenges and problems, and yes, it's important also, but more important is to talk *with* the children and young people and listen to them – instead of talking about children and young people.

**“I would say that
there is too little time
put on touching upon
and drawing attention to
[sexual harassment].
It still feels shameful
to confess that you’ve
been exposed to
something.”**

— Student in Upper Secondary High School



Methods and resources

The project partners consist of the leading anti-bullying organizations in Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Lithuania. All partners are well-established in the field of bullying and have the willingness to bring in new knowledge, while also having channels out to the target groups. We have been sharing experiences and challenges in network meetings as well as translated and shared concrete research-based methods between each other.

Friends

Friends is an NGO that provides adults with research-based tools, to prevent bullying among children and young people. Friends develops, implements, and disseminates knowledge about bullying, degrading treatment and discrimination, nationally as well as internationally. This is done by being active within four areas – research, training, advice and advocacy – that, in combination, contribute to the goal of not letting one single child be subjected to bullying.

Collegial learning

Collegial learning is a model for teachers where they with the support of each other can develop their knowledge. They reflect both individually and collectively on their teaching and what is happening in the classroom, test new methods and then follow up and evaluate afterwards. The purpose is to create a forum for critical reflection and to increase consensus regarding the systematic prevention efforts at the school. One collegial learning course that Friends provides is on sexual harassment and perspectives on what it can mean in teaching. The focus is specifically on the grounds of discrimination, gender, transgender identity/expression and sexual orientation.

Survey on sexual harassment

In 2014 Friends added questions about sexual harassment to the regular surveys for mapping bullying in schools and online, asking students about their exposure to sexual harassment. The problem was that students under-reported sexual harassment. In many cases, they were

uncertain if actions they had been exposed to really was sexual harassment. Friends in collaboration with two Swedish researchers, Katja Gillander Gådin and Helene Zetterström Dahlgvist, thus developed a new mapping tool for sexual harassment. In the digital survey, administrated by schools, students between 12 and 16 years are asked about non-consent experiences. The aim is to get a more comprehensible narrative from the results that shows the complexity of student's experiences of sexual harassment.

Conference: Sexual harassment and bullying

In connection to the World Anti-Bullying Forum 2021 in Stockholm, Friends organized a pre-conference about sexual harassment and bullying. The conference was a part of Research-based knowledge against sexual harassment and bullying among children and young people funded by Nordic gender equality fund. The full conference can be [seen here](#).

Speakers were:

- Professor Dorothy Espelage
- Elisabeth Dahlin, The children ombudsman, Sweden
- Hilde Enger Arntsen, The ombud for children and young people in Viken, Norway
- Guðríður Bolladóttir, Senior Legal Advisor, Ombudsman for Children, Iceland
- Professor Katja Gillander Gådin
- Representatives from Friends, Folkhälsan, Child Line and Home and School
- Joanna Herat, UNESCO
- Olle Pallin-Cox, Youth 2030





Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (MLL)

Mannerheim League for Child Welfare is a Finnish non-governmental organization founded in 1920, that promotes the well-being of children, young people and families with children and increases respect for childhood and seeks to make it more visible. MLL sees to that children's views are taken into account in public decision-making. This can be attributed to the construction of a comprehensive counseling system in Finland. The Mannerheim League is the largest child welfare organization in Finland and works with numerous organizations, businesses and networks in Finland and abroad.

MLL YouthNet:

MLL YouthNet is a platform for young people. MLL YouthNet website and its social media channels provides a platform for the online youth participation activities. In YouthNet young people can find awareness information and tools, express publicly their views and productions, reach the helpline services and share peer support in different themes. Hanna Iso-Metsälä is an expert in on the platform. The platform is utilized to get a youth perspective for awareness raising about themes that are actual for young people, like social relations, bullying, sexual harassment, media, puberty, sexuality, parents' divorce, hobbies, school, work and everyday life skills.

MLL Parents Net:

The Parents Net is a platform that provides information and support to parents in everyday life with children. The aim is to increase parents' knowledge of, for example, the different themes of media education and to provide parents with tools on how to talk to a child about bullying and harassment, and how to teach the child to identify different risks related to media use. The Parents Net have resources for parents, like Safely in Digital Environments.

MLL Child and Youth Helpline

Mannerheim Child Welfare League Children's and Young People's telephone is a national telephone system established in 1980, free, Finnish-speaking helpline for all children and young people. The phone is on call every day of the year, number 116 111. The service number is pan-European for children's helpers telephone number, which is common in all European countries. The helpline can be accessed via phone, chat and through a digital message service. In MLL Child and Youth Helpline chats, the most common theme related topic was sexual harassment or abuse, which was particularly heard in the contacts of girls aged 12 to 17.

Folkhälsan

Folkhälsan is a non-profit social and health organization, working to provide well-being and quality of life in the Swedish speaking areas of Finland. The organization carries out scientific research and provides social welfare and health care services, as well as information and counselling. Folkhälsan's health promotion among children and young people includes support for professionals in schools, early education and in sports in order for them to stay active and involved in the preventive work towards a good, healthy and socially safe school, daycare and sport environment. Folkhälsan offers training in how to prevent and intervene in bullying, as well as networks for school and early education professionals. The team called "Safe relationships" works with bullying prevention, sexual health and gender equality in early education, schools and sport clubs.

Snippelisnopp

Snippelisnopp is a material on sexuality education for 7–12-yearold's, including topics as safety skills and sexual harassment. The material offers tools to talk about different aspects of sexuality and contains 20 chapters on different themes. Each chapter has a brief introduction to the topic, links to sites with more information

and exercises one can use with the students. Communication, reflection, feelings and boundaries are in focus throughout the material.

Safety box in sports

The safety box is a material for sports clubs filled with methods and materials to foster good relationships and to prevent, discover and intervene in bullying. The content of the box is developed through a collaboration between Folkhälsan and Friends. One of the materials are discussion cards with different cases for coaches and adults in sports to discuss. One case is about sexual harassment between athletes and how adults should act to prevent this from happening.

What if

The material What if (Tänk om) includes several stories written by young persons that are a part of minorities, break norms or challenge the norms and have experienced discrimination. The purpose with the discussion material is to raise awareness and to inspire to work towards inclusive and equal activities. The main target group is school staff, professionals who work with young persons and children, students and pupils.

Home and School

Home and School – the National Parents Association is a non-governmental organization that operates without any affiliation to political parties or religious organizations. Parents and legal guardians can become members of Home and school and other parties can become supporting members. The organization offers advice and support to parents and other parents' associations and publishes an annual magazine and various types of educational resources on upbringing, education and parental cooperation.

SAFT

Home and School hosts Iceland's Safer Internet Center and its SAFT project (Safety, Awareness,

Facts and Tools) that aims at raising awareness on safe and positive internet use among children and young people in Iceland. The organization goal is to strive for better conditions of education and upbringing for children and teenagers.

Experts

Home and School as an organization work closely with other organizations and experts who provides material and education in this field. In a special project in 2018/2019 a specialist in sex education went around the country with educational sessions focusing on porn, body images and online behavior and bullying. This was aimed at teenagers aged 13-15.

Child Line

Child Line provides free and anonymous emotional support and help by phone and on-line to children and teenagers in Lithuania since 1997. Child Line consultants listen to the children's stories and try to find ways together to solve their difficulties, to encourage them to share their worries with the people they trust. Child Line consists of three departments in Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda, where volunteers answer calls and messages. Child Line is also a member of Safer Internet consortium in Lithuania and is associated with INSAFE network and serves as the national helpline where children and teenagers can get help when difficult situations occur while using internet.

Without bullying

The campaign Without bullying (Be patyčių) was initiated by Child line in 2004 and is implemented to this day. The campaign aims to promote friendly relationships among children and adults in schools and facilitate development of safe schools without bullying and violence. The activities of the campaign are implemented at various levels: society, school, family, and individual level as the best possibility to reach the audience and make a change in the society. Main activities of the campaign

are raising awareness of the society about bullying; educational activities and material for school staff, students, and parents; cooperation with local authorities and NGO in a field of bullying prevention; cooperation with foreign partners and initiatives adapting effective practice of bullying prevention in Lithuania.

Friends Program

The Friends program is a three-year bullying prevention program, that implements a systematic approach in schools. Child Line addresses the issue of sexual harassment by implementing Friends bullying prevention program in schools. Sexual harassment is thoroughly discussed during the trainings for school staff about tackling degrading treatment: how to identify what behavior is sexual harassment and how to address this issue in different levels: individual, group (class) and organizational level.

**“I’ve experienced
[another student at
school] groping me.
Someone has said
weird thing to me. Two
[students] have shown
me their private part
and it made me feel
really uneasy.”**

— Student in year 3-6





Hello Paula Aalto, Program manager and Media education specialist at Mannerheim Leauge in Finland!

What is the situation in Finland on sexual harassment among young people?

The latest school health survey, which is answered annually by some 250,000 children and young people, highlighted the increasing number of sexual harassment and violence experienced by girls in particular. It is not a taboo subject and there has been a lot of public debate about it. However, perhaps the concern is more about what will be done about it. No measures or methods have yet been seen to solve this problem in the future. On the positive side, children and young people are consulted on this issue.



Are there sufficient means in Finland to work against sexual harassment based on legislation?

The law should also look at harassment more broadly. For example, it would be a good idea to consider the decriminalisation of sending inappropriate images as part of harassment. The law should also look at harassment more broadly. For example, it would be a good idea to consider the decriminalisation of sending inappropriate images as part of harassment.

What are the needs in Finland when it comes to preventing bullying and sexual harassment?

Information is needed to identify the harassment. This should be incorporated into the education and qualifications of adults working with children. Sexual education should be added to early childhood education and care, and curricula should include anti-harassment measures. In society, more extensive communication on the various forms of harassment and the consequences of criminal law. Anti-bullying work in Finland has been going on for a long time. However, bullying is a multifaceted phenomenon and is challenged by digitalization, as new forms and opportunities of bullying are emerging all the time.

**“A guy in my class
groped me and other
girls and we told him to
stop but he continued
as a joke.”**

– Student in year 6-9

A question of rights

The basis of this project are the rights of children. Bullying, including sexual harassment, is a violation of children's fundamental rights. All adults with children in their vicinity must act in the best interests of the child and ensure that every child's rights are met. The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that bullying is a serious form of violence against children and that every child has the right to a life completely free from violence. Children's rights are universal and equal, that means that they apply to all children.

To ensure these rights we initiated this project. The goal is to strengthen the use of research-based knowledge about sexual harassment within our organizations, as well as our target groups. The long-term goal is increased responsible and action among adults working with and for children and young people.

Children are rights holders and adults are duty-bearers.

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