

Part of the Toolbox on

# **BULLYING AMONG MINORS**



**Effective  
prevention  
approaches**

“

This practical paper discusses evidence-based prevention strategies against bullying that can be applied on every level of a minor's life (individual, family, school and community level).

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**All the papers which make up the EUCPN toolbox on Bullying Among Minors are available for download at**

<https://eucpn.org/toolbox-bullying>

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# **PREFACE**

This practical paper is part of the EUCPN Toolbox on Bullying Among Minors written under the Slovenian Presidency of the EUCPN. It discusses evidence-based prevention strategies against bullying that can be applied on every level of a minor's life (individual, family, school and community level).

This is the second of three papers of the toolbox on Bullying Among Minors. A first paper provides a theoretical overview of bullying among minors while a third paper offers an overview of the participants of the 2021 European Crime Prevention Award. They are available for download at <https://eucpn.org/toolbox-bullying>.

# INTRODUCTION



Bullying is a complex and widespread social phenomenon that consists of repeated behaviour (physical, psychological, emotional or sexual) that negatively affects or victimises another person.<sup>1</sup> It is often caused by negative group dynamics in schools or communities and involves complicated interactions between several players.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it has long-lasting effects on the victims, perpetrators, bystanders and their surroundings.<sup>3</sup>

For this reason, bullying needs to be tackled through comprehensive prevention strategies that focus on risk- and protective factors at every level of a minor's life, i.e. the individual level, the family level, the school level, and the community level. At the individual level, cognitive behavioural therapy can help minors deal with psychological or social difficulties. Secondly, on a family level, several parenting training interventions can assist parents in improving their parenting skills, which can lead to a better child development. Thirdly, on a school level, the whole school approach can enhance a positive school climate by including all actors that are involved (i.e. teachers, school board, parents, and external partners). Finally, on a community level, a national multisector anti-bullying approach is needed to support the other levels in their efforts.

# 01 ANTI-BULLYING PREVENTION STRATEGIES

There has been an abundance of research on bullying and possible prevention programmes.<sup>4</sup> Many programmes are based on assumptions regarding bullying behaviour, instead of empirical evidence on why minors become perpetrators, victims or bystanders and why this behaviour occurs.<sup>5</sup>

It is essential to address bullying as a whole, rather than focussing on specific elements.<sup>6</sup> Several risk factors that are associated with bullying, such as deficits in social and cognitive skills, are quite broad and influence multiple dimensions of a person's life instead of predicting one specific outcome.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, interventions should focus on the accumulation of risk- and protective factors on individual, family and school level in combination with risk factors on a wider community level.<sup>8</sup> For this reason, the ecological framework will also be implemented in this second paper.<sup>9</sup> The discussed prevention strategies will be divided into four categories: individual, family, school, and community interventions.

Regardless of which level is targeted, all preventative interventions should be comprehensive, appropriately timed, use various (teaching) methods, be implemented by well-trained staff, provide opportunities for positive relationships, and be sociocultural relevant and evidence-based. Additionally, interventions should emphasise behavioural change, whether physically, verbally, sexually and emotionally. Furthermore, to ensure every group within society is represented, interventions should be gender-neutral and inclusive. They should also be tailored to specific linguistic and cultural settings, meaning they need to be adapted when transferred from a different setting.<sup>10</sup> Finally, it is important to carry out a needs assessment in order to identify the right intervention for the right target group, as well as to set up post-intervention evaluations and booster sessions.<sup>11</sup>

<b>Effective anti-bullying interventions</b>	
<b>Individual level</b>	<b>Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Aggression replacement therapy (ART)</li> <li>&gt; Reasoning and rehabilitation</li> <li>&gt; Moral reconation therapy</li> <li>&gt; Thinking for a change</li> </ul>
<b>Family level</b>	<b>Parenting (CBT) training</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Multi-Systemic-Therapy (MST)</li> <li>&gt; Incredible years</li> <li>&gt; Triple P</li> </ul>
<b>School level</b>	<b>Whole school approach &amp; life skills and social development programmes</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Whole school programmes (OBPP &amp; KiVa)</li> <li>&gt; Life skills and social development programmes (e.g. SNAP)</li> <li>&gt; Role of teachers and school management</li> </ul>
<b>Community level</b>	<b>National and multisector approach</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Anti-bullying policies or strategies</li> <li>&gt; Pro-social attitudes</li> </ul>

**Table 1:** Effective anti-bullying interventions

## Individual interventions

Deficits in social, psychological and cognitive skills can increase the chances of bullying involvement, both as a victim or perpetrator as well as a bystander. These deficits include poor conflict resolution or communication skills, anti-social personality traits or moral disengagement.<sup>12</sup> An effective intervention to address these risk factors at the individual level is **cognitive behavioural therapy** (CBT). CBT is used to address a wide range of psychological issues. It focuses on negative thoughts and behaviours that could increase the chance of someone displaying anti-social behaviour. These negative thoughts and behaviours include tendencies to be overly cautious, misinterpret comments as provocative and seeking revenge. The aim of CBT is to make minors aware of these cognitive deficits and thought patterns and help them thrive by managing these. For instance, by teaching problem-solving skills or helping them understand other people's motivations and behaviours. This can have a positive influence on minor's interpersonal relationships as well as on their online behaviour towards peers.<sup>13</sup>

Teaching problem-solving skills or helping them understand other people's motivations and behaviours can have a positive influence on minor's interpersonal relationships as well as on their online behaviour towards peers.

CBT can be implemented as an indicated intervention targeting certain minors who are already involved in bullying situations (both as victim, perpetrator or bystander). CBT can also be aimed at the entire school population, which can reduce possible risks associated with targeting specific individuals.

It has been demonstrated that CBT leads to reductions in anti-social behaviours and conduct disorders within minors. By implementing certain adjustments to ensure the intervention is age-appropriate, it can be administered to both young

children and adolescents.<sup>14</sup> Yet, it is also a quite expensive intervention, due to the need for a trained practitioner. The final costs will depend on whether CBT is implemented as an individual- or group intervention.<sup>15</sup>

The following sections will discuss four relevant examples of interventions that predominantly use CBT techniques: (1) aggression replacement training, (2) reasoning and rehabilitation, (3) moral reconnection therapy, and (4) thinking for a change. Moreover, other effective interventions, such as parenting or anti-bullying programmes, often also include CBT principles to guide their activities.

### **Aggression replacement training (ART)**

Aggression replacement training aims to reduce anti-social behaviours by teaching desirable behaviours. It consists of three aspects: a behavioural, affective and cognitive component. Firstly, skill streaming (the behavioural component) centres on the development of pro-social behaviours through exercises, role playing and performance feedback. Secondly, anger control training (the affective component) focusses on self-control by facing minors with anger-provoking experiences, making them identify anger triggers and apply self-control techniques. Finally, moral reasoning (the cognitive component) aims to develop moral and mature reasoning by discussing moral dilemmas.<sup>16</sup>

ART runs for several weeks with an average of three group sessions a week. It can be administered by a variety of trained professionals (e.g. teachers, social workers, counsellors, and probation officers).<sup>17</sup>

### **Reasoning and rehabilitation (R&R) project**

Reasoning and Rehabilitation aims to reduce cognitive deficits and impulsiveness in minors. It attempts to help them consider the consequences of their behaviour before acting by teaching problem-solving skills, social skills, critical reasoning, and creative thinking. This is implemented through various activities, such as role playing and learning- and creative thinking exercises.<sup>18</sup>

The intervention consists of two-hour sessions, delivered two to four times a week, for 36 weeks. It takes place in small groups (six up to twelve people).<sup>19</sup> The (reproducible) resources required for trainers are a handbook, workbook, and complementary materials.

## **Moral reconnection therapy (MRT)**

MRT concentrates on moral reasoning and conscious decision-making. It teaches minors to correctly analyse common situations in order to react in a socially desired manner. Through weekly (group) exercises, minors can reconsider how they think about moral issues and make judgments, by discussing exercises from the workbook. The programme also provides vocational training.<sup>20</sup>

MRT brings about a decrease in disciplinary sanctions and positive personality changes. The types of training offered are Basic MRT, Advanced MRT, Domestic Violence, and Trauma, and all trainers must be MRT-Certified facilitators.<sup>21</sup>

## **Thinking for a Change (T4C)**

Thinking for a Change is a CBT programme that aims to change criminogenic thinking in both minors and adults who have already committed an offence. It specifically focuses on conflict-solving skills, understanding personal thinking patterns, and how to respond to personal and other people's feelings. This is done through cognitive restructuring in the form of lessons relating to active listening, new thinking, and understanding the feelings of others.<sup>22</sup>

T4C consists of about 25 group sessions, or more when needed, during which exercises are completed and homework can be discussed. It is designed to be administered in small groups of up to 12 people in order to improve peer-relations and discussions.<sup>23</sup> T4C can reduce recidivism and have a positive effect on a person's problem-solving skills.<sup>24</sup>

## Family interventions

Inadequate parenting skills or parental support can have a negative effect on a minor's emotional, social, and cognitive development. Damaging parental discipline and poor child-rearing techniques can create a negative family environment in which a minor feels unsafe or misunderstood. This, in turn, increases the chance of a minor ending up in anti-social peer groups that display bullying behaviours. It is therefore crucial to also implement interventions that focus on effective parental strategies. This can create a positive effect on a minor's personal development and the general school- or even community climate.<sup>25</sup>

For this reason, **parenting (CBT) training** is considered an effective intervention on the family level. It aims to improve parenting skills and awareness of a child's development in order to foster a positive parent-child relationship and reduce (behavioural) problems with their children. Addressing these issues can create a stronger family bond and has positive behavioural effects, which in turn can result in positive social relationships and improved school climate. Parenting training techniques include group discussions on experiences and effective strategies, demonstrations of positive interactions, role-play exercises, and homework between sessions.<sup>26</sup> Parenting programmes should also introduce technology use. This will strengthen adults' knowledge of the online world, which makes it easier for them to monitor their children's technology use and recognise possible signs of cyberbullying. Furthermore, parents in their turn can teach their children about safe ICT and internet use, such as not sharing personal information online or how to respond to intimidating messages.<sup>27</sup>

Parenting training aims to improve parenting skills and awareness of a child's development in order to foster a positive parent-child relationship and reduce (behavioural) problems with their children. Addressing these issues can create a stronger family bond and has positive behavioural effects, which in turn can result in positive social relationships and improved school climate.

These interventions target parents or families with both young children (e.g. toddlers) or school-age children (e.g. young children and adolescents). Yet in many cases, the earlier these programmes are administered (preferably during early school years), the better.<sup>28</sup>

The implementation of these interventions should be handled with care. They might come across as quite overwhelming for certain families, making them hesitant to participate or commit.<sup>29</sup> It is important to tailor standardised programmes with models for subpopulations that have specific needs (e.g. families from an ethnic minority or dealing with a disability). In these cases, programmes can be adapted by using simpler language or through addressing cultural parenting differences.<sup>30</sup> Another example is families dealing with high levels of stress. They might require additional support, e.g. through stress-coping techniques or access to public assistance resources, before they are able to commit to these interventions.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, these targeted interventions might create a feeling of stigmatisation within the involved families. Parents attending such programmes have reported feelings of stigma, particularly regarding being judged as bad parents. It is therefore important to address such concerns before the programme starts, and combine this with providing support and emphasising parents' strengths during programme participation.<sup>32</sup>

Another solution to make parenting programmes more accessible is home visits. These home visits are structured interventions where practitioners provide families with support to improve overall parenting skills and provide resources that help the minors with their cognitive, social, and emotional development.<sup>33</sup>



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## Home-Start Programme

The Home-Start programme is an example of an effective home visit intervention that supports vulnerable or struggling families with young children (aged zero to five). It focuses on families with little parenting experience, that experience high levels of stress or lack a proper support network. This intervention is implemented by volunteers with child care experience who provide both emotional and practical support and emphasise the pleasures of having a family. The Home-Start programme has been implemented in several countries all over Europe (e.g. Denmark, Hungary, France, Greece, Ireland).<sup>34</sup>

For more information on the Home-Start programme, visit <https://homestartworldwide.org/>

This intervention can be applied to families with children of any age, yet these visits are typically delivered to families with young children. Even families that are expecting a child can already benefit from home visits. Delivering this intervention at home is often quite beneficial since parents do not have to arrange transportation or a babysitter.<sup>35</sup>

Home visits can differ in terms of service, duration and intensity, depending on the family that is participating. Some visits might be more care-orientated while others focus more on strengthening parenting skills. They may include various types of activities, such as stimulating verbal techniques and parent-child interactions through the use of games, toys and books, or educating parents about child development through accessing government resources or counselling.<sup>36</sup>

Three examples of parenting training interventions are Multi-Systemic-Therapy (MST), Incredible Years and the Triple P programme; and will be discussed in the following sections.

## **Multi-Systemic-Therapy (MST)**

Multi-Systemic-Therapy (MST) is an intervention aimed at parents and adolescents that are at risk of displaying anti-social behaviour. It provides both individual and family therapy in order to improve the family's cohesion and the adolescent's behaviour. It shows strong evidence of long-term effectiveness regarding positive child outcomes (e.g. less anti-social behaviour and less truancy) and a positive (family) environment.<sup>37</sup>

It considers parents as the primary agents of change; therefore MST emphasises improving parenting skills and the quality of the parent-child relationship. It identifies specific strategies that work for the family and the minor, but also establishes contact with their network (i.e. school and community) to deliver sustainable support. Secondly, MST helps families take responsibility for their behaviour and focus on conflict resolving skills.<sup>38</sup>

MST is delivered by a therapist or a trained practitioner who is permanently available for the family in case of issues or questions, making it a reasonably expensive intervention. The frequency of sessions varies between three days a week to daily sessions, depending on the needs of each family. The implemented activities include: therapy sessions, role play exercises, individual parent training, and safety planning.<sup>39</sup>

## **Incredible Years**

The Incredible Years parenting programme teaches parents how to recognise their child's emotional or behavioural struggles through positive parenting. It is aimed at parents of young children (up to the age of 12) that are at risk of developing behavioural issues. The programme's goal is to promote children's social, emotional, and academic skills through the use of incentives to strengthen pro-social behaviour, improving parent-child interactions and applying gentle but consistent consequences for anti-social behaviour.<sup>40</sup>

It consists of eight to twelve weeks of two-hour sessions that are delivered two to three times a week. Activities include role play and modelling exercises, analysing and discussing videos or personal experiences, and practising skills through homework. Instructors are well trained and provided with course materials and self-evaluation surveys for themselves and participating parents.<sup>41</sup>

Incredible Years has already been implemented in several Member States, such as Denmark, Ireland, France and Portugal.<sup>42</sup>

## Triple P

Triple P, or Positive Parenting Programme, is a multilevel parenting programme that aims to strengthen parenting skills, prevent behavioural and emotional issues with minors, and create a positive family environment. It includes cognitive behavioural and developmental therapy as well as social learning strategies in order to teach parents adequate parenting skills and improve their confidence.<sup>43</sup>

This intervention is flexible and focuses on various aspects. It is intended for parents with children up to 12 years old, however Triple P Teen applies to families with adolescents. Another example is Triple P Online, which is a web-based intervention aimed at families that are unable to access the in-person programme (e.g. full-time working parents). There are also more specific programmes that focus on specific families, such as with a disability (Stepping Stones). Furthermore, the intensity can vary from 'light-touch' parenting help up to targeted sessions for at-risk families.<sup>44</sup>

Triple P activities include group sessions, individual consultations, seminars and online self-help sessions. These activities are delivered by trained practitioners from different fields (e.g. social workers, teachers, nurses or police officers).<sup>45</sup>

## School interventions

A school climate can turn negative for various reasons. For instance, unmotivated school staff might allow for a school environment to become negative or unsafe due to incapable staff or a lack of teacher support; which consequently allows for bullying to occur and go unpunished. Therefore, implementing a **whole school approach** is essential to tackle and prevent bullying. The whole school approach focuses on two aspects: working in depth and changing organisational structures, as well as focusing on the extent of the issue by including all the players, as well as bystanders, involved in bullying (e.g. students, teachers and parents).<sup>46</sup>

The school staff (teachers, the and other school-related staff) play an essential role in implementing whole school approach-interventions. In order to improve their involvement, teachers should receive qualitative education and support in improving how they are perceived. Educating teachers can make them more aware of the severity of the issue and help them in recognising the specific language, signs or practices used when bullying. Specifically regarding cyberbullying, some teachers require additional training in order to remain acquainted with the rapidly changing online world and effectively address cyber-related bullying situations.<sup>47</sup> They likewise should learn how to effectively intervene in bullying situations. Classroom meetings are a good example of maintaining discipline while listening to the students' opinions and simultaneously creating a supportive social environment.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, improving how teachers are perceived in general might improve their standing in a classroom and give them more confidence to take charge and intervene in bullying situations.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, teachers can educate minors on the danger of bullying, the possible consequences, and general children's rights.<sup>50</sup> Minors have the right to express their views on any matter that affects them, such as personal development, education and protecting their private life against issues such as bullying.<sup>51</sup> Teaching children's rights can help minors understand the meaning of these rights and how they aim to safeguard human relations. It can also help them to develop pro-social attitudes such as tolerance and understanding. When teaching children's rights, it is vital to embed these lessons in an inclusive human rights education that can be adapted to different social and educational settings.<sup>52</sup>

In addition, the school management and supporting staff must also be willing to create a positive school climate, for instance through promoting anti-bullying policies while also encouraging healthy child development and academic

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achievement. School boards might need additional encouragement to implement extensive anti-bullying interventions since some are hesitant in implementing certain interventions out of fear of reputation damage.<sup>53</sup> This can be improved by implementing certain structural indicators that create targets for schools to achieve. They can set up effective bullying procedures instead of imposing punitive sanctions. For instance, an accessible reporting procedure for students that is also user-friendly for teachers, or an annual report or self-evaluation tool to gather and evaluate all incidents. Similarly, to target cyberbullying, schools can set up procedures and policies regarding internet use and promote positive online behaviour.<sup>54</sup> The school management can also set up partnerships with other stakeholders, such as (national or regional) governments, local authorities, national human rights institutions, and parent- or student associations. These partnerships can give rise to campaigns, workshops, sessions, forums or a common code of conduct against bullying.<sup>55</sup> Having a partnership with local police department, for instance, could narrow the perceived distance between minors and the police, which can help overcome present stereotypes and provide additional social guardianship in a school and community.<sup>56</sup>

Two important examples of whole school anti-bullying programmes are Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme (OBPP) and KiVa.

## **Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme (OBPP)**

The OBPP is a whole-school approach intervention that combines individual, classroom and school-wide components. It creates various positive outcomes for minors including reduced reports of bullying (both perpetration and victimisation) and other anti-social behaviour, improved personal well-being and satisfaction with the school climate.<sup>57</sup> It generally lasts for a period of 12 to 18 months and is delivered by teachers supported by the Olweus Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee (BPCC) which serves as a leadership team for programme implementation. OBPP can be implemented for all age groups. All students participate in the general programme and additional individual interventions are provided for perpetrators and victims.<sup>58</sup>

This intervention has a wide variety of components and activities. On a school level, it calls for refining the school's supervisory system (for instance by introducing/improving clear school anti-bullying rules, a conduct committee, staff trainings and staff discussion groups. Furthermore, a BPCC is established, the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (OBQ) will be administered, and parents will be involved in these activities. On a classroom level, regular class meetings will be held as well as meetings with the parents. On an individual level, student activities will be supervised and teachers will immediately intervene when bullying occurs. In order to ensure long term effects, an individual interventions will be established for students involved in bullying, as well as meetings together with their families. Finally, on a community level, community actors will be involved in the BPCC, as well as anti-bullying messages and best practices being distributed throughout the community.<sup>59</sup>

## **KiVa**

KiVa (*Kiusaamista Vastaan* or 'against bullying') is another example of an effective and sustainable anti-bullying programme. It focuses on general prevention, changing negative bystander responses, addressing individual cases and constant monitoring of any changes in schools over time. This is implemented using several professionally prepared materials and activities, such as disciplinary methods (e.g. improved teacher supervision, classroom rules and teacher training) and whole-school anti-bullying policies (e.g. anti-bullying classes and discussions, school conferences, parental involvement through newsletters, Kiva videos and games).

Besides general activities, there are also specific individual procedures to tackle severe bullying cases and a specialised focus on the internet and social media environments.<sup>60</sup>

KiVa is implemented by certified trainers. They introduce the KiVa approach to the entire school team and organise a three-day deep level training for long-term support towards the team. The KiVa team is a small group of teachers that co-ordinates the implementation process. They also take care of the cyberbullying incidents that occur. The KiVa approach is effective on the long term when the programme remains consistently implemented. Therefore, it provides automatic feedback on annual student and staff surveys. This allows schools to observe bullying prevalence and indicate any improvements or achievements.<sup>61</sup>

An important aspect to consider is the individualistic undertone that is often present in these whole-school approaches. Both OBPP and KiVa mainly focus on individual characteristics and group dynamics that create bullying situations. A whole-school approach should, however, look beyond individual characteristics and inter-personal conflicts and take into account the existing social tensions that exist on a macro-level. It should aim to remove or reduce any social tensions that are present in schools and help minors, teachers, etc. to look further and create a positive school climate.<sup>62</sup>

## **Life skills and social development programmes**

Life skills and social development programmes can be included in the whole-school approach. These interventions are designed to help minors with essential life and social skills that can help them in later life. These life skills include anger management, conflict resolution, empathy, effective communication and social skills.<sup>63</sup> They can be delivered through many types of interventions, including whole school programmes. The activities include role playing, relaxation techniques and video demonstrations combined with adequate teacher supervision. The intensity of life skills and social development programmes can vary from low to intensive regarding the severity of the situation.<sup>64</sup>

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## **Stop Now And Plan (SNAP)**

An example of a social skills training programme for minors is Stop Now And Plan (SNAP). SNAP is an evidence-based, international, multimodal and gender-specific programme that aims to improve behavioural and emotional regulation, self-control and problem-solving skills. It uses therapeutic interventions to teach children about their behavioural triggers and thought patterns and helps them achieve a better emotional and cognitive awareness. It is an intervention that can easily be implemented in schools and communities.<sup>65</sup>

For more information on SNAP, visit [www.childdevelop.ca/snap/](http://www.childdevelop.ca/snap/)



## Community strategies

Minors growing up or living in a vulnerable, unsafe and disorganised community, are at increased risk of being involved in bullying situations. These communities often have less social guardianship such as neighbours or peer-surveilling of anti-social behaviour, which allows anti-social behaviour to occur and causes feelings of alienation or exclusion to increase. For this reason, governments should support these communities, as well as minors, their families, and schools by implementing a national and multisector approach against bullying that includes various sectors (e.g. justice, health, education and social).<sup>66</sup>

The UN General Assembly resolution 69/158 encourages countries to take necessary measures to (1) protect minors from bullying and provide support for those already involved in it, (2) to promote and invest in education that teaches respect and tolerance, (3) to gather data on bullying situations and prevalence that can improve effective policies, and (4) to raise public awareness regarding the phenomenon. Governments should support schools, associations, and communities in their endeavours to prevent bullying. Providing a national anti-bullying strategy or policy would help them in their preventative efforts. Governments can help with setting up codes of conduct in schools, provide adequate education and further trainings for teachers, conduct annual school surveys, create a school inspection system, and create and/or expand family support centres in communities where both parents and minors can find support and assistance.<sup>67</sup>

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## Contextual Safeguarding in Working Together

The UK has a long history in promoting and safeguarding children's welfare, starting with Children Acts in 1989 and 2004. The Contextual Safeguarding in Working Together statutory guidance continues to make progress by stating that minors are at risk of victimisation in every aspect of their lives (e.g. schools, within peer groups, during extracurricular activities or online). Therefore, it is necessary to assess the children in these situations and the wider environmental factors that might contribute to this victimisation. The statutory guidance emphasises the importance of setting up interventions and partnerships that address wider environmental factors while still considering the child's individual needs and vulnerabilities. The statutory guidance applies to all organisations and agencies that perform roles relating to children. This entails that it implies to all schools and to all children up to the age of 18 years<sup>68</sup>, which makes it a relevant example of an anti-bullying policy.

Having a national anti-bullying strategy might also reduce feelings of stigmatisation within a community or school since it targets society as a whole. When every school is submitted to school inspections or school evaluations, certain schools will not feel specifically that they are under particular scrutiny. Consequently, if every community had a type of family support centre, it would become acceptable to attend its trainings and receive support.<sup>69</sup>

Moreover, governments can **positively influence the social perceptions** of a country's population. Expressing certain attitudes or implementing specific policies can affect people's attitudes on a micro level (i.e. within schools or communities).

For instance, implementing strict migration policies can cause more negative attitudes towards migration in a population and might create more intolerance towards migrants, which may result in more identity-based bullying behaviour. It is imperative for governments to express general pro-social attitudes and policies in order to promote these on a micro-level.<sup>70</sup>

Another example is parental leave for both parents, which promotes positive child development since it increases the amount of time parents can spend with their child(ren). Specifically, ensuring a positive parent-child attachment in the first year of life can improve later-life outcomes (e.g. educational achievement) due to adequate supervision and communication strategies within the family.<sup>71</sup> Even though paid parental leave for both parents can be very beneficial, the duration of parental leave differs across Europe, which illustrates the lack of consensus regarding the importance of parental support for young children.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, there is still little to almost no parental leave for men in various countries. Therefore, countries should not only introduce sufficient parental leave for both parents, but also express more positive attitudes towards it in order to change any negative or hesitant public perceptions.<sup>73</sup>

# CONCLUSION

Bullying among minors is a complex, social issue that requires comprehensive prevention strategies in order to prevent and tackle it. These concern interventions on every level of a minor's life: individual level, family level, school level and community level.

On an individual level, cognitive behavioural therapy can help minors to self-regulate their emotions and behaviour. On a family level, parenting training can be provided to improve parenting skills and ameliorate the parent-child relationship. On a school level, it is important to involve all school staff to create a positive school environment in which minors feel safe and appreciated. Finally, on a community level, it is important for governments to support schools and communities by implementing a multisector anti-bullying strategy that provides an example and guidance for communities.

It is, however, important to emphasise that all levels and actors need to be involved. Providing support for individuals or families has little effect when violent school environments or communities continue to minimise bullying or allow it to occur. Therefore, governments should take the lead in countering this issue, implementing necessary policies and conveying positive attitudes in order to help create an anti-bullying community.

# ENDNOTES

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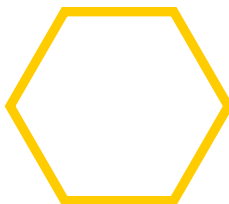


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