



## School Policy Recommendations - Bulgaria

The following recommendations based on the key findings and challenges in Hungary, Malta and Bulgaria provide guidance for concrete actions to combat bullying and build schools' capacities to maintain and create a culture of peace, cooperation and kindness.

**In Bulgaria specifically, a general whole school approach** based on the following eight key areas of action should be encouraged:

1. Take into account **context-specific characteristics** and investigate a context-specific definition of bullying in order to develop deeper knowledge on how such a phenomenon is perceived and known in schools.
  - **Adapt tools and instruments according to specific needs** of each school.
  - It is important each school to apply a **self-evaluation process** and develop knowledge on how such a phenomenon is perceived and what types of bullying are identified among students and teachers.
  - Bullying often originates from **differences existing among children** and young people. These differences may cause a condition of inequality and the school authorities need to be aware about vulnerabilities of specific group of students and to take measures to protect them and minimize risks of bullying, marginalization and isolation.
2. **Standardize tools, procedures and establish a comprehensive system to tackle bullying.**
  - It is important to **equip schools' staff with methodology and practical tools** in order to combat bullying against children through the developing and the implementation of anti-bullying policies and practices.
  - In all countries, the project introduced instruments to analyse the school situation and identify the school needs. By addressing the specific need to combat bullying against children, the project revealed the importance of developing and implementing **anti-bullying policies and practices to tackle the problem**.
  - By preparing a **comprehensive Model program with tools and procedures to address bullying** the project responded to the need of knowledge and instruments to deal with school bullying and aggression.
3. **Enhance understanding and recognition** of bullying at school.



- **Encourage students' participatory process** to tackle and address bullying. Participation of students is fundamental in order to encourage developing identity, ownership and belonging.
- Child participation encourages a **non-punitive approach** aimed at pushing students to be responsible for themselves, for their actions and relationships with others.

4. Perform an **individualized and customized approach** focusing on the **specific needs of children and young people** going through a particular stage of personal growth and acknowledge the need for targeted treatments that take into account any psychological vulnerability.

- According to this approach, **set of tools should be available** for schools and teamwork should be encouraged including families and parents. This teamwork should share knowledge about the story of each boy/girl involved, his/her educational path and life goals.
- Particularly, a **positive restorative process** could be implemented within a school context. It includes a **child rights approach** where the needs of all children involved are taken into account. It focuses on **relationships of trust and mutual respect** between teachers and children.
- **Teaching children conflict resolution skills** at very early age. Introduce primary, secondary and high school conflict resolution programs where children acquire understanding of differences between people and develop skills to manage disputes, conflicts and changes.



5. **Build capacity and promote the wellbeing of teachers and staff**

- Provide staff and **teachers psychological support and tools to deal with a huge range of cases of school violence** and bullying.
- Promote a **multidisciplinary approach** including different professional figures (educators, administrators, psychologist, etc.) and stakeholders.
- Set in place **professional training for teachers in methodologies such as restorative practice, conflict resolution skills, mediation, and others.**
- **Promote an education process that involves family and parents** of children and young people.
- **Engage parents in school governance** and especially in building safe school environment;
- **Receive parents input** when developing anti-bullying policy and practice;
- Include parents in various support program for vulnerable children and children with challenging behavior;

6. **Encourage expansion of safe space at school**, considered both in terms of physical space and relational spaces.

- **Promote** relationship of mutual trust among teaching and non-teaching staff and students.
- Actions against bullying need to **target especially most vulnerable children and young people** i.e. migrant or minority children, children with disabilities or other vulnerabilities

who are experiencing exclusion, prejudices and those who are at risk from stigma inside a specific culture.

- Provide technological support where necessary to ensure safe space for children /cameras in schools yards; hot line for child counseling; phone lines and apps for reporting cases of bullying and others.

**7. Install an action plan** focused on bullying and targeting the needs of each school.

The proposed plan can include:

- a) roles and responsibilities of the teachers, staff and children;
- b) principles and procedures to prevent, detect and manage bullying;
- c) monitoring and policy infringement procedures.

The action plan should include class and out-of-class activities and activities at the level of the whole school and community levels.

