

Impact!

The ABC-project ends today. After two-and-a-half years the final products are presented and we finished a research into the impact of the project.

The evaluation research shows that the ABC-products were highly appreciated and that most respondents – and especially the participants in the project – think that the products will keep being used after the project. Furthermore, the research shows that the idea to "score" schools on their antibullying quality is supported by a majority of the respondents, and again, even more by project participants.

In the last months of the project, we focused on organizing dissemination and discussion meetings on certification and on national and European policies. All of these were online die to the COVID-19 restrictions. But we still got considerable positive feedback.





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Impact!

How schools combat

bullying

Newsletter of the Anti-Bullying Certification project

https://www.gale.info/en/projects/ abc-project

31 May 2020

The evaluation research

The ABC-project did research into the evaluation of the self-assessment products and into the impact participants and others expected of the project. A total of 150 respondents filled in the surveys.

The evaluation research started in mid-2019 by distributing a quite elaborate questionnaire. We wanted to know a lot. However, it turned out most of the schools did not finish the work yet and there was criticism on the length of the questionnaires. The English partners dutifully filled in the questionnaires, but there were few responses from other countries. At the same time, the project experienced a crisis and had to be postponed until May 2020. We decided to edit the questionnaires to make them shorter, and to ask the partners in schools to fill them in after they finished the work - in April and May 2020.

25 questionnaires combined

To make the surveys less complicated and shorter, we made separate versions for students, teachers, national stakeholders, European stakeholders, and "other interested people". All the questionnaires were translated in four languages. We arranged the questionnaires in such a way that all the answers were coded as numbers, which make it possible to put all the statistics of all the 25 questionnaires into one file, which could be analysed.

150 respondents, 73% from the project

Of all the 170 participants in the project, 124 filled in the surveys, which means we reached an impressive 73% of all the participants. The other 27% were "other interested people" who wanted to comment on the project, but did not take part in it. 39% of the respondents were students, 25% were teachers, and 17% were organizations that support schools and politicians were part of the national and



European feedback committees of the project.

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International responses to antibullying policy in European schools

We conduct this short survey as partners in the European ABC project (Anti-Bullying Certification). In this project, we have developed a way for high schools to research and improve their anti-bullying policies. The project integrates diversity and the fight against discrimination.

Complete the survey before April 15, 2020. A report will be available at <u>https://www.gale.info/doc/projects/abc.project</u> in April 2020. We have made a summary of the project <u>https://www.gale.info/doc/project-abc/Summary%200f%20the%20ABCproject.pdf</u>, but it is not necessary to read it before answering this survey.

The survey has 20 questions and takes 15-20 minutes to complete. Most questions must be answered with a number. This makes it possible to compare those answers with respondents in other languages.

This survey is anonymous. Your answers and comments cannot be traced back to you

Any comments about this survey or questions about the project can be directed to the project coordinator Peter Dankmeijer (<u>p.dankmeijer@gale.info</u>).



Assessment of the products

As you know, the product developed four products to support the self-assessment: a manual for the procedure, surveys for students and teachers, workshops for students and teachers and a toolkit with interventions.

In the first evaluation, some people found the guide to be too long with 80 pages, while others found it not clear enough and wanted more information. In the final version the guide has 90 pages, but the extension mainly is due to more clear formatting and the addition of an elaborate bibliography. The addition of flowcharts which clarify the different steps in the procedure makes the guide much clearer.

All respondents taken together, 32% thought the student and teacher surveys were good, and half thought it was okay, which, taken together, is a large majority.



DUTCH STUDENT REVIEW OF THE SCHOOL POLICY WORKSHOP

68% of the students and teachers enjoyed the review workshops, while 25% was unsure about this and 7% disliked their workshop. It was difficult to analyse why the workshops did not scored that high. The manual for the workshops had a quite open format, and it was strongly promoted that each school would edit the format of the workshop to cater for their own needs. This may have led to very different kinds of workshops, some being more like a training, others being more like an assessment of the school of teachers or students, and others again being a mixed dialogue between teachers and

students. European stakeholders like ETUCE (the European federation of

teachers unions) and OBESSU (the European federation of student councils)

stressed that the value of the self-assessment is to get the independent voices of

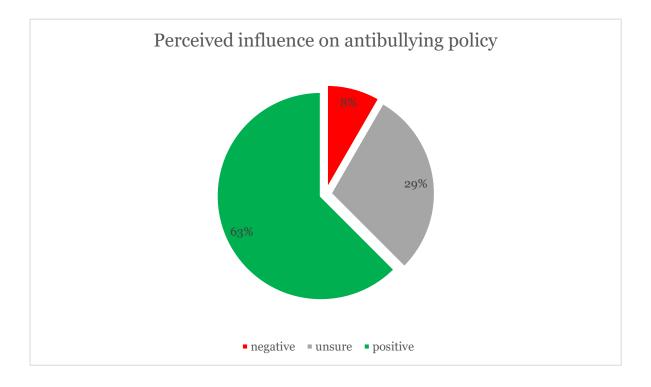




Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union teachers and students and warned to avoid teachers

influencing the voice of students too much. Although the procedure was set up to make these independent voices heard, it may be that the practical implementation of the workshops, this intention was blurred.

In the first evaluation, the toolkit was evaluated. It was recommended to add more practical tools for teachers. Another suggestion was to make the toolkit available as an online database. These recommendations were followed up by adding an item in the database on how to practically implement the tools and by offering a reading guide. The toolkit was also developed in Excel, which provides a basis to export the data to one online database. In the second part of the evaluation, we did not ask again about the toolkit because it was already finished.



Impact of the project

The project intended to have an impact on three levels: the school level, the national level and the European level. We will report on the impact of the national European levels in other articles in this newsletter. To measure the impact on the school level, we asked the respondents if they thought the project self-assessment had an impact on their school policy. 63% of the respondents thought it did, 29% was unsure and 8% thought it did not. The students were with 58% a little bit less positive than the teachers (73%).





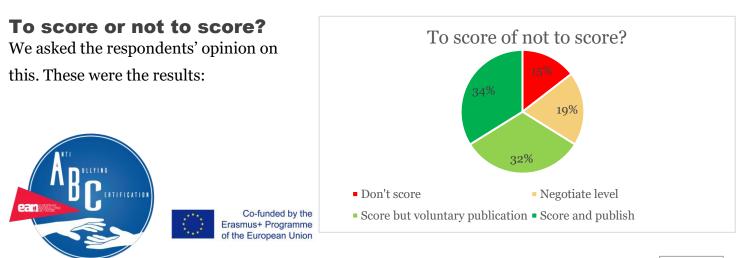
Thoughts about scoring

In the ABC-project we intended to help schools to get insight in the quality of their antibullying school policy. We discussed a lot whether and how we should "score" schools as a diagnostic tool, or as a formal external assessment. In the evaluation research we asked respondents how they viewed this. To our surprise, there was much more support for scoring that we expected.



The partnership has been discussing to what extent *scoring* a school stimulates a reflection and an improvement process. The partners had different perspectives on this. In the partnership we distinguished four possible choices: don't score at all, give a preliminary score but negotiate the final score with the school (as they can be seen as experts on their own situation), give an independent score but allow the school to publish it (to avoid the schools rejecting the project/self-assessment completely), or score the school independently and make publication mandatory.

For the work in the pilots, the partnership decided on the third option (give a score but allow the school not to publish). However, it was unclear whether this partnership choice was implemented in all participating schools.

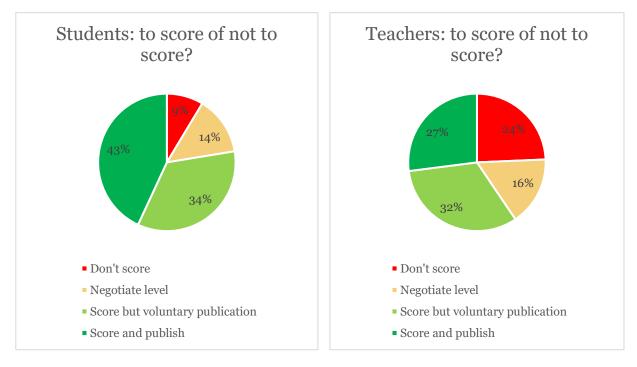


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As can be seen, the opinions are divided, although 85% does support *any type of scoring* and 37% prefers *independent scoring and publishing*.

The ABC-project and the option to score schools was discussed at several international conferences, and there we noticed that teachers and principals were often hesitant to "score" schools for a variety of reasons, while NGO stakeholders and politicians were often more interested in an assessment to make schools more accountable.

To find out if this trend was the same among our respondents, we compared the (95) students and teachers on one hand with the (25) stakeholders on the other hand. Surprisingly, students and teachers were actually more in favour of independent scoring (71%) than the respondents in general, while the national and international stakeholders were less likely to want to score (52%).



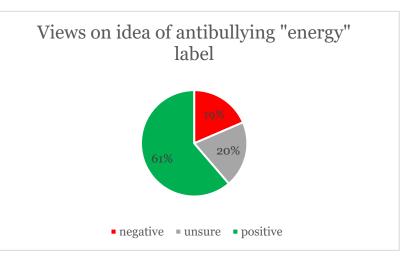
A European antibullying label?

One of the thoughts in the project team was to suggest the creation of a European antibullying label for schools. Such a label could look like the energy label which is now mandatory for apartments and

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energy-using apparatuses in Europe. This type of label has different levels, like A to D. We asked the respondents whether it would be a good idea to create a national or European label.





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There is 62% support for the establishment of a national or European antibullying label.

When we had a look at differences between stakeholders, students and teachers, we were surprised to find that teachers were (with 65%) a bit more in favour to establish a label, while unexpectedly the stakeholders were less than average eager to establish a label (48% for it and 36% against), with students voting exactly for it like the average (62%) but being slightly more unsure (29%) and much less against (9%).

We also asked comments on this idea. A summary of the comments:

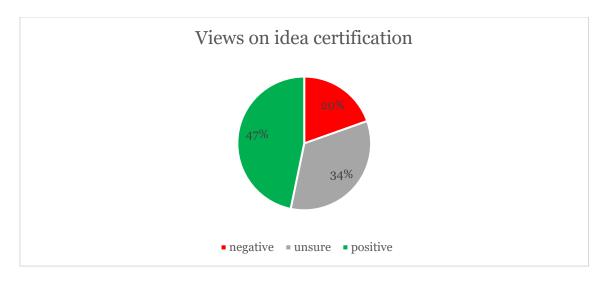
- Appreciation for the general idea
- The comparison with the European energy label is appreciated
- Appreciation that a label creates insight, goals for enhancement and transparency
- A label would require a clear objective and quantifiable standard to be able to score schools on a specific level; the current scoring method has not reached that objective quality yet; it was suggested to do a follow up project with a scientific partner to establish an even more reliable "standard"
- Different opinions on whether it would be feasible to establish a label in different countries (changeability of national policies)
- Doubt if a label would help create intrinsic motivation, or that it even may be disadvantageous for intrinsic motivation
- Worry that a public label would maintain or increase inequality because schools are part of their environment and economic context and can often not escape from this context

ISO-certification

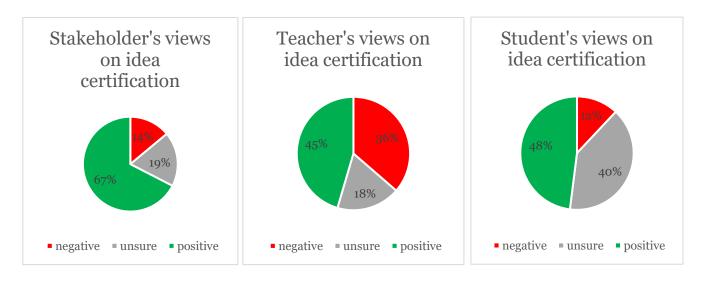
When we started the project, our idea was to "certify" schools, which implicitly referred to an ISOcertification. But during the project we discovered that the partners in the partnership were not able to develop a formal ISO-certification because only organizations that are a certified ISO-certification institute can formally do this. The difference between creating an "energy" label and ISO-certification is that the "energy" label would have four or more levels, while a typical ISO-certification would simply be a declaration that the school abides by required standards. We asked the respondents to score the idea of an ISO-certification.







The support for certification is a bit less (55%) than for an energy label with levels (62%). A somewhat larger number of respondents is unsure about this (28% doubt about certification, 20% doubt about label), while the number "against" is the same (17%).



When we look at the differences between stakeholders, students and teachers, it turns out that teachers are (with 36%) more negative about certification than the other groups, and students and stakeholders are more unsure (35% and 40%). As educational stakeholders, they at average are less enthusiastic about certification than the "other interested" respondents.

We conclude that while the majority of the respondents more or less favours some kind of scoring through a label or a certificate, more respondents favour a levelled label above an ISO-certification.

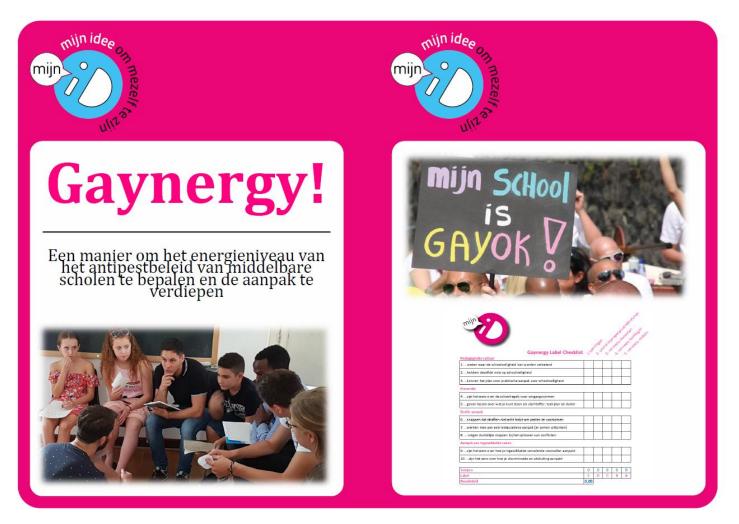
A "Gaynergy" label

In the Netherlands, the work on developing a proper label was taken a bit further. The national



expertise organization on gender an sexual diversity issues in schools Edu-Diverse has worked with GALE throughout the ABC-project. Edu-Diverse was

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union so inspired that it decided to make an LGBTIQ version of the self-assessment procedure. It was a long time wish of Edu-Diverse to combine a general review of antibullying policy with a more specific review of how schools deal with gender and sexual diversity.



The resulting product is called the "Gaynergy" label. It is modelled on the energy label from the ABCproject, but Edu-Diverse developed the establishment of the label further. In the ABC-project, the level of the school has to be decided in dialogue between students, teachers and the school management, but in the Gaynergy procedure, the surveys already contain questions that give a reliable assessment of the school commitment. Since the Gaynergy version is focusing on gender and the sexual diversity, the surveys and the student and teacher workshops also have more attention for these topics. The Gaynergy label maintains that a school antibullying policy cannot be fully effective when the often controversial issues like gender and sexual diversity are not incorporated properly. Furthermore, it maintains that when LGBTIQ issues are incorporated properly, it is more likely that the school is also more sensitive on other diversity issues other forms of diversity. In this sense, sensitivity for gender and sexual diversity could be seen as a litmus test for a holistic prosocial school policy.

The <u>Dutch version of the Gaynergy-label is already available on the GALE website</u>. An English version



is expected to become available in July.

ABC-lessons

The planned international project exchange in Brussels had to be cancelled because of the COVID-19 restrictions. Instead, GALE offered schools a digital program and online exchange.

The digital program GALE made, consisted of four interactive lessons, which covered the original program of the exchange in Brussels. The lessons focus on learning experiences from the ABC-project, on reviewing national policy, on learning how European decision-making works, and on making recommendations for European policy. The lessons remain available online to use: https://www.gale.info/en/projects/abc-project#lessons.

Arguments on scoring

In the lesson about lessons learned, the discussion focused on the six effective elements the project formulated for a good antibullying school policy and on the discussion about whether we should score

schools and if so, how. The key exercise in the lesson is to research and document opinions on scoring and compare the different opinions and arguments of students, teachers, principals, parents and politicians.

The students could use the statistical data and comments made on the evaluation surveys which had they been made available in a preliminary report.

1. To score or not	Yes no, because	
2. What do we based the score on?		
3. Score adequate or inadequate, or levels A-D?		
4. Internal or external?		

Reviewing national policy

The second lesson was focused on a review of national policies. A presentation gave a short summary of national policies in the partner countries, based on the reports partner organizations had made the



year before. The students were asked to look for more information online and to answer four critical questions about the policy. Based on this review, they

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Review your national policy

- 1. Does the national policy contain all the elements of national policy?
- 2. Do you think the national policy is excellent, good, adequate, or inadequate?
- 3. Why?
- 4. What could be improved?



Arguments and recommendations could be shared on the online forum on the GALE website and on the Facebook page "How schools combat bullying".

Learning about European decision-making

The first lesson was about how countries in Europe cooperate and how to make decisions. In the presentation it was explained how all

member states have to agree on proposals. In addition the concept of "subsidiarity" was explained. This means that decisions should be taken on the lowest level possible. The content of education falls under the subsidiarity principle, but safety is a European level concern. This leads to the conclusion which the project partnership and EAN formulated in their assessment of European antibullying policy - that recommendations should focus on securing safety in schools, especially where schools

and national governments cannot do this.

Then the students were presented with three dilemmas for making adequate policy on antibullying on the European level, and they were asked to think about how to deal with is dilemmas.

In the final lesson, the students were

Tough questions

Think of your opinion about these questions:

- 1. School bullying is a serious problem in the Union. How would be we deal with this in the view of the subsidiarity principle?
- 2. Can we establish a European antibullying energy label to make visible what the quality of antibullying policy in schools is?
- 3. Can we make this label, or at least some of the general guidelines for antibullying policy mandatory for all European countries to implement in their legislation?





recommendations the project partnership and EAN formulated and we offered

a short video clip explaining why we made these recommendations.

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asked to think about recommendations for European policy. We presented them the six





Spreading the word

The ABC-project planned to promote the self-assessment procedure across Europe and of course especially in the partner countries. Most of this "dissemination" was online, but part was planned as national conferences and a European conference.

Our Greek partner "The Smile of the Child" already organized their conference in the end of the 2019, and it was a great success, even involving the government.

The other partners planned to have their meetings in April and May 2020, but the COVID-19 restrictions force them to organize online meetings rather than real life meetings.



THE GREEK CONFERENCE

These meetings were quite a success in Italy and the UK, but failed to be successful in Spain and the Netherlands. This is partly due to how busy the schools where with catching up lessons, but also because of local political situations. In Spain, school policies are largely devolved to the level of autonomous regions and these are completely preoccupied with fighting the COVID-19 virus right now. In the Netherlands, GALE was confronted by an almost unanimous opposition to improving the national antibullying policy, which will describe in another article.

The online dissemination of the project was quite a success. We planned to reach about 900,000 people online, and at this time we are already over 1,125,000 while most of the efforts of the partners in the last six months have not been counted yet. In the last month of the project, the lessons learned





<u>project#videos</u>).

videos on these issues (https://www.gale.info/en/projects/abc-

and European and Dutch recommendations were animated by posting 5 short

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WHEN IS AN ANTI-BULLYING POLICY HIGH QUALITY?

OutBuro.com



When is an Anti-Bullying Policy High Quality?

🗰 May 11, 2020 (updated May 11, 2020) Published by Peter Dankmeijer

Over the years 2018-2020, a European partnership of 16 organizations (7 NGOs and 9 schools) worked together on an antibullying project which aimed to develop a method high schools can use to review their antibullying policy and to plan improvements. The project was called the "Anti-Bullying Certification" project (ABC, https://www.gale.info /en/projects/abc-project) because the original aim was to develop a certificate for good antibullying policy.

The US website for LGBT professionals (Outbüro) saw some of the posts about the ABC-project, and asked the GALE director to write a series of articles about findings and impact of the ABC project, with a specific view of the consequences for LGBT students. The series of three articles were published in early May 2020 and reached an estimated 36,000 people in the US and worldwide.



BY: **PETER DANKMEIJER** DIRECTOR: GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR LGBT EDUCATION







Dutch policy

The discussion about national antibullying policy in the Netherlands turned out to be awkward. GALE, in cooperation with the local expertise organization Edu-Diverse, wrote a substantial analysis of the Dutch situation. However, it turned out that hardly any of the national organizations or any politician were willing to discuss the recommendations, even though the analysis showed that the implementation of the antibullying legislation is far from optimal.



PETER DANKMEIJER PRESENTING THE DUTCH POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON VIDEO

The analysis

The analysis of the Dutch situation showed how recent legislation came about. In 2015, a national antibullying legislation was adopted for the first time, after a series of well-publicized suicides of teenagers who indicated that the reason for their suicide was bullying.





However, during the political discussion about the legislation, it became quickly clear that the national association of school boards was radically against any measures that would force schools to do specific things. Two hot

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issues were the monitoring of schools and effectiveness

of school policy. Politicians came with suggestions to create a national school safety monitoring system. All schools would have to use the same bullying incidents reporting system, and the results should be public and nationally available. The politician came up with the idea that schools should be obliged to use a scientifically validated antibullying program. Schools, but also experts, were against these political proposals. The proposed monitoring system of bullying incidents was opposed by schools because it would damage the image of schools, but also by experts because just reporting bullying *incidents* is much less reliable than doing more reliable survey research on school safety. The government asked the National Youth Institute to create a database of effective antibullying interventions, but it soon turned out that strict scientific criteria (research based on double-blind experimental pilots) was hardly available, and the youth institute only found one program that was deemed effective according to such strict criteria. And that particular programme, KiVa, was only available for elementary schools at the time.

The Dutch School Safety Act

In the School Safety Act, which was adopted late 2015, these elements were left out and the legislation was reduced to three demands:

- 1. The school should do research (but could decide themselves what type of research)
- 2. The school should have a safety coordinator (but there was no detailed description of the job)
- 3. The school should have a safety plan (but there were no criteria for the quality of the plan)

To replace the political demands for transparency and effectiveness of school policies, the national association of school boards promised to make an action plan to support schools with the implementation of the legislation. In 2016, a first action plan was launched and



the campaign lasted until the end of the 2017. It 2018, discussion started to develop a second action plan, but for unclear reasons this never came to fruition. In the review by GALE and Edu-Diverse,





different stakeholders gave different views on this.

Edu-Diverse and GALE also extensively researched other legislation that might be relevant, but found that all legislation was made with

a "neoliberal" view that offers schools maximum autonomy to decide themselves, and with limited possibilities for the Inspectorate to check the policy or for students, teachers or parents to complain *and* be assured that complaints will be dealt with adequately.

Recommendations for Dutch policy

Based on this analysis, five recommendations were formulated. The first one was to resurrect the idea to have a second action plan. The second recommendation was for politicians to monitor the progress of the implementation of the legislation, and to put more political pressure on the Ministry of Education to assure that schools implement the Safe Schools Act with quality rather than just nominally.

The national school inspectorate already had indicated several times that the type of legislation covering their mandate was not enough for them to guide schools to deliver quality. So the third recommendation was to enhance their supervision, like already is being done in other countries with more effective antibullying legislation.

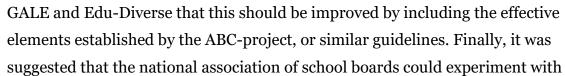
The fourth recommendation is to improve Windows of Accountability. This is a website made by the national association of school boards where schools can show how they deliver quality in a range of areas. One "window"



GALE, May 2020

is devoted to how schools deliver quality on school safety. However, the tools and guidelines in this window are rather marginal. The window offers a safety survey, but not a tool how to interpret the findings and use the facts to enhance school safety policy. It offers some suggestions for procedures, but it does not refer to what measures can be expected to have a high impact. It was suggested by





self-assessment or formal certification of schools and use the expertise of the ABC-project in this.

When GALE and Edu-Diverse offered the analysis and the recommendations to national institutions,

the feedback was extremely poor. The National Youth Institute gave feedback and agreed with most of the recommendations, but the inspectorate, politicians, the national institute for school safety and the national association of school boards refused to give public feedback, or to take part in a public discussion. In private communications, the national association of school boards made clear that it did not agree with any of the recommendations, because there were too "negative" in tone. The association was happy with the low numbers of bullying in the Netherlands, the association trusted the capacity of schools to make their own choices, and did not see a need for further action plans or improvement of their quality guidelines.



LOGO OF THE "WINDOW SAFETY" OF THE WEBSITE "WINDOWS OF **ACCOUNTABILITY**"

Unwillingness to improve policy

Although GALE and Edu-Diverse intensively approached the entire field of professionals involved in school safety policy, and also engaged the general populace in the discussion online, there extremely few responses. Opposed of the GALE director about a personal concern about taking social distance because of COVID-19 got considerable more attention and responses than any of the items about antibullying. Our conclusion is that - despite the considerable efforts to initiate a discussion - it is

currently not the time to enhance the quality of antibullying policy in the Netherlands. We are profoundly disappointed in this.







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DUTCH STUDENTS AND TEACHERS DISCUSSING ANTIBULLYING POLICY

European policy

The project made a review of European policy and formulated six recommendations. In the evaluation research, we asked European respondents and other interested people what they fought about the recommendations. Most of them were positive.

The partnership made a review of European policy. This revealed that the European Union (27 States) and the Council of Europe (47 States) both are in favour of combating violence and conflict and intend to promote inclusion.

In late 2019, the project proposed six recommendations for further European policy.

In the evaluation research, we explored how the respondents reviewed these recommendations.

We asked 8 European stakeholders and 25 other

"interested" respondents their



ABC-Recommendations for EU policy

- 1. Review what has been done before
- 2. Consider is EU guidelines are possible
- 3. Open tender for annual EU campaign
- 4. Set up a Clearing house
- 5. Make a European map of country policies
- 6. Formulate European vision on bullying and democracy

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opinion on our policy suggestions. The "interested persons" voted in large majorities for all the recommendations. Here we report on the 8 representatives who represented European umbrella organizations, because they are the potential influencers of European policy.

Review of funded projects

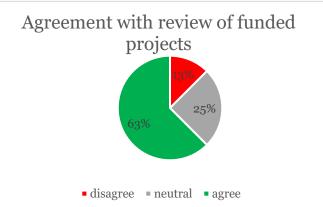
The first recommendation is that the European Union could do a review of funded projects on antibullying. This could help focus future

antibullying projects and develop a more focused European program.

There is a majority for this recommendation,

with 25% of the stakeholders remaining neutral and 13% against.

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European level guidelines

The second recommendation is that the European Union could consider if European level guidelines for social safety and inclusion in schools would be possible.

This is the recommendation which is most in line with a sustainability goal of the ABCproject: is the European Union willing to consider any kind of guidelines in the area of bullying? The review of European policy showed that this is contentious; half of the professional stakeholders agrees with it, while 38% disagrees.



European antibullying campaign

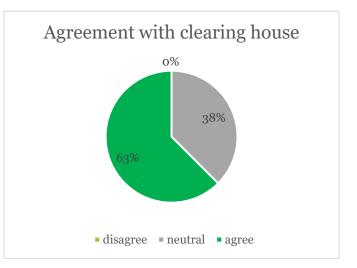
The European Union could consider making it a priority to open a tender for an ongoing European antibullying campaign. The recommendation to regularly do a European antibullying campaign, including an annual antibullying day, is an old wish of the European Antibullying Network (EAN). Half the respondents is for this, but half remains neutral.

Clearing house

Part of such a campaign could be the development of a clearing house of projects and methods.

A majority agrees with the recommendation to set up a European clearing house for projects and methods, but over 1/3 is neutral.







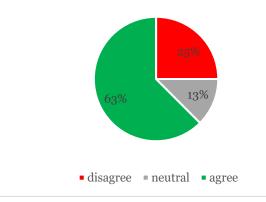


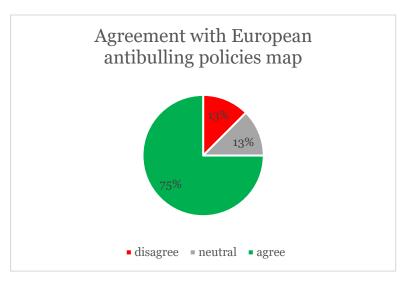
European country policy map

Another part of such a campaign could be the development of a European "map" of national antibullying policies and related best practices.

Of all our recommendations, this one has most support with 75%.

Agreement with developing a coherent European view on the relation between bullying, hate speech and poor democracy





Coherent view on antibullying and democracy

The last recommendation is that the international development to legitimize ideological and political hate speech should be recognized as a serious threat to antibullying and to democracy. The EU should consider developing a coherent view antibullying and democracy.

A majority of the respondents agrees that it should be recommended to clarify the European point of view on how bullying hate

speech and poor democracy are intrinsically linked to each other. 2 stakeholders disagree and 1 is neutral.

Summarizing these responses, we conclude that the respondents generally support the six recommendations, with European stakeholders being less supportive on some of the recommendations, and notably on the one to create EU-guidelines on antibullying. In the comments on other questions, the European professional stakeholders stress that it is important to make sure that any tool or recommendation directly benefits the schools.





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