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AWARENESS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ON CYBER SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN YOUTH PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

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THE PROJECT

„**I can choose to say no. Empowering youth, especially girls, to stand up against cyber sexual and gender-based violence in intimate partner relationships**" is a project that contributes to ending cyber sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in adolescents' intimate partner relationships, by especially empowering girls and supporting them to stand up to violence. In order to reach this goal, the first project activity was to collect evidence on awareness of secondary school teachers and their attitudes/strategies to address cyber SGBV in youth partner relationships. The project is being deliverd by a partnership of the following organizations: The Autonomous Women's Centre (Serbia), Fundacion Privada Indera (Catalonia, Spain), Nők a Nőkért Együtt az Erőszak Ellen (Hungary) and CESI-Center for Education, Counselling and Research (Croatia). The lead partner is The Autonomous Women's Centre.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Croatia, violence in teen relationships is a problem that is poorly researched and completely "invisible" in the areas of public policy, legislation and occasionaly present in education system. Official data on violence in adolescent relationships is not available; the competent authorities maintain statistics on domestic violence, sexual violence and crimes committed by minors or committed against minors. The few social studies provide insight into the scale of the problem and point to the non-recognition of different forms of violence in relationships as well as the reluctance of adolescents to report violence.

Also, there is no set procedure identifying adolescents in violent relationships or sexually abused adolescents and there is no unique system for recording data on cases of abuse and neglect of children/young people[1], including violence in partner relationships of young people. Professionals who work with adolescents, or come into contact with them and who have knowledge that a young person is a victim of violence are obliged to report it. There are only protocols related to violence among children and youth that focus on peer violence[2] and the protocol for dealing with cases of sexual violence[3]. Violence in intimate relationships, including adolescent relationships, is a legally completely unregulated area.

Furthermore, there is no systematic approach to the prevention of violence in teen-dating relationships but rather prevention is related to sporadic implementation of programs in schools designed mostly by civil society organizations. School prevention programs designed by educational institutions are mostly focused on non-violent conflict resolution and prevention of peer violence. The organizations and institutions that young people turn for help in cases of violence in adolescent relationships report only a small number of such cases on an annual basis or do not have any cases, pointing out that they do not keep specific records on this form of violence (Bijelić, 2015). In the

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[1] Results of Balkan Epidemiological Study on Child Abuse and Neglect/BECAN/ .Rimac,I., Ajduković, M. i J. Ogresta (2012).

[2] Protokol o postupanju u slučajevima nasilja među djecom i mladima, 2004.

[3] Protokol o postupanju u slučaju seksualnog nasilja, 2014.

reports of several help lines and counselling services for youth[4] there is no specific data on adolescent relationship violence but rather peer violence or general abuse and violence.

Ombudsperson for Gender Equality points to the problem of partnership violence and repeatedly in the yearly reports forewarns that victims of partner violence do not have adequate legal protection (Pravobraniteljica za ravnopravnost spolova, 2020). The latest report of Ombudsperson for Children also referres to teen-dating violence as being serious problem that lacks appropriate interventions both in the form of prevention/educational activites and institutional response (Pravobraniteljica za djecu, 2020).

Years ago there was an initiative by both Ombudspersons for Children[5] and for Gender Equality[6] that violence in intimate relationships, including adolescent ones, should have been included in the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, but the proposal was not accepted.

Policy framework mainly refers only to domestic violence and specifies prevention and working with young people only in this context[7]. Croatia ratified Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, better known as Istanbul Convention, and the Convention entered into force in October 2018 but the implementation lags behind. Along with ratifying the Istanbul Convention, the parliament also adopted an interpretative statement which states that the purpose of the convention is protection of women against any form of violence, that its provisions do not contain any obligation to introduce *"gender ideology"* in Croatia's legal and education system[8]. Very recently, government adopted an *„Action plan for the prevention of violence in schools 2020-2024".* This action plan stated that prevention programmes should include prevention of gender-based violence and homophobic and transphobic violence and that it's essential to ensure that schools implement programmes aimed at prevention of gender-based violence, i.e. teen-dating violence. Additionally, reccomendation is to ensure education for the teachers on gender-based violence and homophobic and transphobic violence[9].

Research on violence in relationships

FRA survey's results for Croatia show that 21% of women reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by a partner or a non-partner since the age of 15 while 5% of women experienced it in the last 12 months. Emotional response to the most serious incident of physical and/or sexual

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[4] Brave Phone for Children (Hrabri telefon); Blue Phone (Plavi telefon)

[5] Izvješće o radu pravobraniteljice za djecu za 2013. godinu, RH Pravobranitelj za djecu, Zagreb, ožujak 2014: 44.

[6] Pravobraniteljica za ravnopravnost spolova, Izvješće o radu za 2017.godinu, Zagreb,ožujak 2018:121

[7] Nacionalna strategija zaštite od nasilja u obitelji za razdoblje od 2017. do 2022., rujan 2017.

[8] Some CSO's strongly condemned the introduction of interpretative statement claiming that it introduces the non-existent term of „gender ideology", **prevents the implementation of the Convention in practice and symbolically affirms the transphobic goals of the clerical right and anti-human rights actors in Croatia** (Zagreb Pride, 2018).

[9] Suggested programmes related to the prevention of gender based violence and homophobic and transphobic violence are the programmes of feminist and LGBT civil society organizations such as CESI, Women's Room and LORI.

violence by a partner since the age of 15 was fear (54%) and anger (53%) and the long term psychological consequences were feelings of vulnerability (49%) and anxiety (40%)[10].

Although FRA's results place Croatia within countries with the lowest percentages for experiencing these forms of violence in all 28 EU Member states, the results of national studies on adolescents provide a different picture of the situation with regard to the extent of IPV in adolescents' relationships.

A few Croatian studies show a high prevalence of teen-dating violence. CESI research from 2007 found that more than two-thirds of young people (70%) aged 16-19 had experienced violence in a relationship, with around half saying they had engaged in at least one form of violent behaviour towards a partner. The observed patterns indicate that the most common forms of dating violence are those by which young people try to dominate and control their partners - excessive jealousy, possessive and controlling behavior, accusations and emotional blackmails. Sexual violence and physical aggression are present to a lesser extent. Partner's excessive jealous behavior is the experience which characterized the relationships of more than half of respondents. In addition, a quarter of adolescents have experienced violent behaviors motivated by jealousy which are instrumental for establishing and maintaining control and dominance in a relationship. It is indicative that considerable proportion of adolescents do not recognize these behaviors as violent, while for some this is also true for sexual and physical forms of dating violence. Lack of awareness and ignorance of violent behaviors, as well as the belief that some forms of violence are a 'normal' part of every relationship, could lead to adolescents' tolerance of risky and violent relationships. While jealousy was recognized by most adolescents as the main reason for the perpetration of dating violence, at the same time, large number of respondents consider jealousy to be a way of showing love, and not the form of dominance and control in a relationship.

Identified risk factors related to victimization, but also to perpetration of emotional/psychological forms of teen dating violence include: lower self-respect, frequent alcohol consumption, witnessing/experiencing family violence, acceptance of traditional gender stereotypes, permissive attitudes towards the use of violence, communication problems in relationship, and influence of peers and media. It is also worth mentioning that about the half of adolescents reported being both the victim and the perpetrator of dating violence. In relation to sex/gender dimension of the problem, girls tend to be both the victims and perpetrators of emotional/psychological forms of dating violence in the significantly larger proportion, while boys tend to be exclusively perpetrators of sexual violence towards their partner in the significantly larger proportion. In addition, boys tend to approve of traditional and sexist attitudes about gender roles in the significantly larger proportion, as well as the attitudes which justify the use of violence in particular situations, and tend to be more ignorant about recognizing certain behaviors as the violent ones.

While both boys and girls experience dating violence, feelings and reactions stated by respondents as the consequences of partner's violent behavior clearly show that *teen dating violence is not a gender neutral problem*. For girls, the consequences are considerably more negative and more serious, and, for them, experienced violence results more in the feelings of hurt, sadness, insecurity, fear, shame, guilt, and uneasiness. Boys, on the other hand, reported that after the violent episode in a

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[10] FRA gender-based violence against women survey dataset, 2012.

relationship they were more indifferent and unconcerned, and that they found the violent situation 'to be funny'.

Fear, shame, lack of awareness, distrust, and the lack of relevant information and resources, are the main reasons why adolescents mainly try to solve the problem of dating violence by themselves, and rely on their own capacities and skills to eventually end the violent relationship, and most often do not decide to report violence to adults, nor seek help and advice outside a peer group (Hodžić, 2007).

Another Croatian study showed that over 80% of high-school students reported experiencing or perpetrating some form of violent behaviour in a relationship. The most prevalent form of violence perpetrated was psychological (93,2%), then physical (51,3%) and sexual (25%). Also similar results regarding the experienced forms of violent behaviours were found. Girls in comparison to boys have more correct beliefs about quality relationships, are better in setting the boundaries in a relationship and are more likely to seek help when experiencing violence in a relationship (Ajduković et al.,2011).

In 2016, CESI conducted a small-scale research as a part of teen-dating violence prevention programme evaluation. Adolescents reported, 1/5 or 1/3 respectively, that they know at least one couple in which one partner abuses the other psychologically, physically or sexually. Additionally, around 1/5 of teenagers reported experiencing some form of abuse in a relationship (Bijelić, 2016).

In 2018, within „Love and Respect" project a research on violence in intimate partner relationships was conducted by an agency on a representative sample of young people aged 16-26. 70% of young people reported experiencing violent behaviours through longer time periods. The most common, is psychological violence that include controlling and possesive behaviours, jealousy and blackmails. Every fifth young person is being checked and controlled by a partner, insisting on knowing where is she/he and what she/he is doing. 17% of young people experienced repeatedly checking their mobile phone by a partner. 12% of youth experienced spreading lies about them by a partner. 6% reported experiencing unwanted touch and kisses from a partner and 3% were coerced into sex or other sexual activities. Moreover, 5% reported that they were, in spite of refusing, forced to send a partner nude photos of themselves or were photographed against their will (CESI, 2018).

Research on cyber sexual gender-based violence

Cyber gender-based violence is not a separate phenomenon to „real world" violence but rather a continuum of offline violence. This type of violence can be viewed as a violence facilitated by technology. There are some research in Croatian context that provide information on adolescents, cyber violence and sexual violence.

In 2019, Zagreb Child and Youth Protection Center has conducted a national research project *"Online Social Experiences and Mental Health of Youth"* on first and third grades high school students (1772 in total). Of all social networks, young people mostly use YouTube – 97.7%, followed by Instagram - 92.6%, WhatsApp – 88.7%, Snapchat – 63.2% and Facebook Messenger – 50.6%. **Instagram** is the social network where half of young people spend most of their time – about 50% of them, followed by YouTube – 20%, WhatsApp – 13.7%, Snapchat – 11.3%, Facebook messenger – 2.3%, and Facebook only 0.6% of adolescents. At least once:

- 58.6% of adolescents received messages of sexually explicit content,
- 52.4% of adolescents received sexually explicit photos or videos,
- 10.8% of adolescents received sexually explicit photos or videos of themselves,
- 19.7% of adolescents received sexually explicit photos or video of a partner,
- 50.5% of adolescents received sexually explicit photos or video of acquaintances

Every fourth adolescent received sexually explicit material most frequently via Snapchat or Instagram. Almost every tenth adolescent exchanged sexually explicit material under the influence of alcohol. After receiving sexually explicit material, the largest number of participants, almost 40% responded at least once. Almost half of adolescents (43.7%) never told the sender to stop regardless of how they felt. When adolescents are asked about sending, only 5.8% of them, more boys than girls, have at least once sent a sexually explicit message. Young people distinguish between sending and forwarding, so 17% of adolescents say they have forwarded a sexually explicit video or photo of an acquaintance without their consent.

Of all young people who said they sexted, 16.7% did it with only one person, 17% with three or more people, and 3.3% with someone completely anonymous**.** More than girls, **boys send sexually explicit content of others, themselves, partners and acquaintances, with or without consent of that person.** Nearly one in five adolescents sexted under persuasion or coercion. Persuasion is most often made by a partner, then by a friend, someone they like and know in person, someone they like and don't know in person. As the most common **reason for sexting,** participants suggest flirting with another person, feeling sexual arousal, increasing intimacy with another person, dating another person, feeling desirable, checking whether they look attractive, in exchange for a favor, hurting someone and in exchange for money or gifts. Most adolescents state that they feel comfortable while sexting – sexually aroused, happy, curious, attractive, satisfied, and from unpleasant emotions they state that they feel unsafe, shy, worried, confused, uneasy, tired, guilty and angry. **Boys often feel** euphoric, courageous, relaxed, attractive, playful, excited, calm, happy, satisfied, but also frustrated, exhausted, jealous, angry, sad, tired and lonely during sexting. **Girls** are more likely to **feel disgust.**

More than half of young people do not talk to anyone about sexting, about a third of young people talk to friends, 2.8% to parents, 2.2% to someone over the internet, and 0.3% to experts in school.

40.7% of experts in schools are not familiar with the concept of sexting, and the same percentage of experts think that they are not familiar with it enough. 85% say that they have not encountered with sexting in their school. Four-fifths of experts say their 1st and 2nd grade students never confided in them with problem of sexting, and 88.9% of experts say their 3rd and 4th grade students never confided in them with the same problem.

Regarding extortion of sexually provocative material **(sextortion),** 1st and 2nd grade students didn't confide in 92.6% of experts, and 3rd and 4th grade students didn't confide in 96.3% of experts. Workshops and lectures on this topic were held in 44.4% of schools, a third of them in 3rd or 4th grade. **Almost all experts (92.3%) stated that they would like and need additional education for their daily work.**

PROBIOPS study (2018) conducted on 2235 high school students shows that young women spend more time on social media compared to young men and that young men are more prone to sexting

then young women. Average age of first encounter with sexually explicit content for boys is at 11.5 years of age and for girls is 12.5 years of age.

EU kids on–line, a research conducted in Croatia on 1017 children aged 9-17 showed that ¾ of young people aged 15-17 have easy access to Internet (Ciboci et al. 2020). Among this age group most used social media were Facebook (65,7%), Youtube (44,1%) and Instagram (42,4%). There is a gender difference observed: boys of that age group more often use Facebook while girls use Instagram. Every tenth young person aged 15-17 accepts all invites for friendships on social media. Every second young person of that age group communicated on the Internet with someone they haven't met in person. Every fourth young person in the previous year met in person with someone they met on-line. Two-thirds of youth aged 15-17 have seen sexual photos or films with nudity on the internet in the past year, despite having no intention of seeing such content.

In the European Union, 5% of women have experienced one or more forms of cyber stalking since the age of 15 (FRA, 2014:87). Cyber stalking in this case included stalking by means of email, text messages or over the internet. In addition, data from the 2014 FRA survey shows that 77 % of women who have experienced cyber harassment have also experienced at least one form of sexual or/and physical violence from an intimate partner; and 7 in 10 women (70 %) who have experienced cyber stalking, have also experienced at least one form of physical or/and sexual violence from an intimate partner.

Prevention programs

All schools are required to implement prevention programs and report their activities to the Ministry of Science and Education, and send their curricula to their units of regional self-government. Although the Ministry in charge collects data, they are not adequately documented or available to the public. The information on prevention programs implemented in secondary schools, which comprise as component or module violence in adolescent relationships/youth relationships, gender-based violence, violence in partner relationships are mostly available on the website of the school. In reality, prevention of gender-based violence in school environment is based on a sporadic implementation of programs in (some) schools.

Schools that implement programs for the prevention of violence in relationships usually carry out a program that was designed by civil society organizations and a small part of educational programs have been developed within the schools themselves. Some schools deal with issues of violence in adolescent relationships as part of other programs conducted in schools. Most schools implement violence prevention programs, the most common programs are aimed at peaceful conflict resolution and prevention of peer violence. Workshops and lectures are taught by school pedagogues/psychologists, trained teachers, students or civil society organizations' staff and are usually carried out in the third grade of secondary school.

Since 2012, the *Health Education* has been introduced in the curricula of primary and secondary schools. The implementation of the class is planned as part of the home room hours, and the number of classes per school year has been prescribed separately for each year of primary and secondary school up to 12 classes. The curriculum of health education consists of 4 modules of which one module relates to the prevention of violence, where content is mainly related to peer violence.

Monitoring and external evaluation of health education indicates the shortcomings of the content and implementation of the Health Education classes and the need for continuous professional empowerment of teachers (Muraja et al.2014; Pravobraniteljica za ravnopravnost spolova, 2016: 181).

Newly introduced national curriculum of **Health education** (starting from school year 2019/2020) does not mention gender based violence (nor any other issue that is related to gender, i.e. gender roles, gender stereotypes, gender equality, etc.). This curriculum addresses violence in general, mainly referring to peer violence (i.e. recognition of violence in real life and in virtual reality, helping the victim, conflict resolution). In the 1st and 2nd grade of elementary school the curriculum refers to the issue of sexual violence through acceptable and unacceptable touch, however stating that this issue should be taught if the teacher considers it relevant for the class.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology used consisted of quantitative methods in the collection of evidences. Questionnaire was developed with the goal of collecting evidence on awareness of secondary school students on their attitudes and strategies to address cyber SGBV in youth partner relationships. In order to measure awareness and attitudes in a more interesting way, a format and layout is chosen that is part of young people's daily communication. Questions included screenshots of WhatsApp conversations, picturing different situations for them to react, comment as members of a group chat or as friends being asked for advice. However, we are aware that the questionnaire design and questions in the form of imaginary situations (i.e. WhatsApp conversations) has a certain limitations in measuring complex issue of cyber SGBV. Therefore, the additional research on the gender dimension of this issue is needed.

Besides demographic information, the questionnaire covered the following topics:

- Level of awareness and normalization of GBV among youth and in the virtual environment
- Students' experiences of different forms of cyber GBV
- Possible strategies (i.e.how would they react if it happend to them; or what would be their response/reaction as observers/bystanders)

A questionnaire contained a combination of open and closed questions. The filling out of the questionnaire lasted approximately 15 minutes. It was administered on-line using Survey Monkey. Data were collected from 23rd of January until 24th of February 2020. Throughout the years CESI has established a network of around 80 educators in institutions of formal education, mostly high-schools, all over Croatia. Our network was used in the recruitment process. An invitation to participate in the project and in the research was sent to several high-schools. 16 high-schools expressed interest in participating in the project and their students were also invited to participate in the research.The instruction were that each teacher during home-room class asks students to fill in the questionnaire (i.e. just one class, approx 25-30 students). Instead of envisaged sample of 200 students, we collected information from 458 students which signal a huge interest for the topic.

The interpretative framework of this analysis emphasizes the active role of traditional gender relations, embodied in gender inequality that is supporting gender-based violence. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS software package. Univariate analysis determining frequencies and percentages of answers were conducted[11]. We did not encounter any difficulties in recruitment process nor in the implementation of the research.

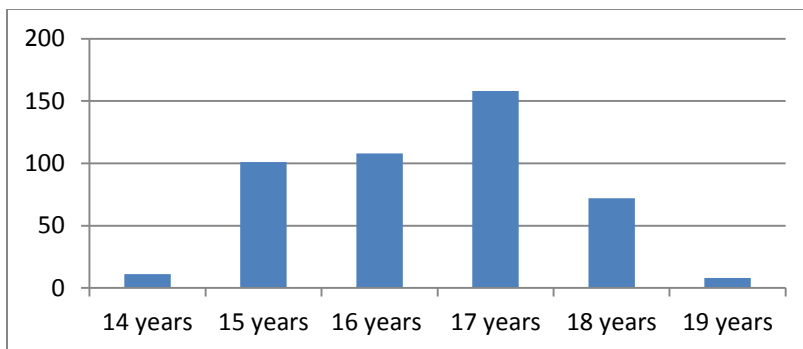## 3. RESULTS

3.1. Demographic characteristics of the sample

The sample structure (N=458) across gender and age was as follows: 73.6% females and 26.4% males *(Graph 1).*
Graph 1.
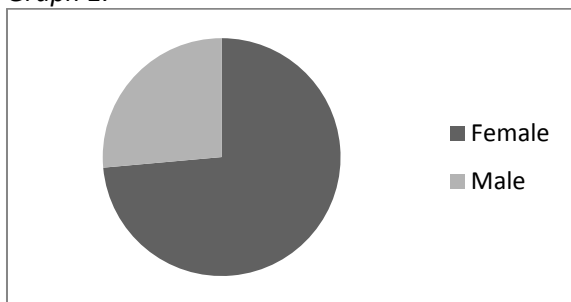
Majority of respondents were 17 years of age (34.5%), then 16 (23.6%), 15 (22%) and 18 years of age (15.7%) while minority were 14 (2.4%) and 19 years of age (1.8%). *(Graph 2).*

Graph 2.

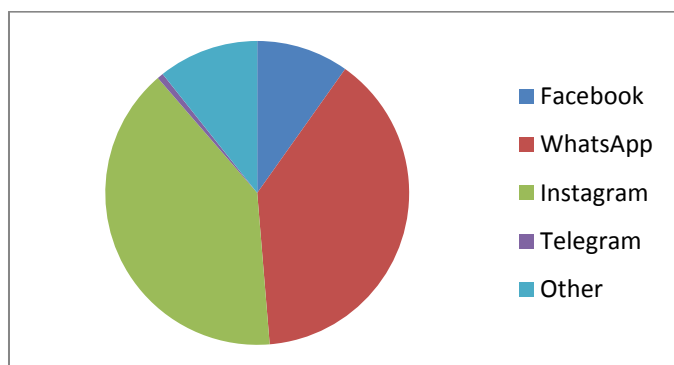53.3% of students live in a city while 46.7% live in a small town or village.
Most commonly used application among youth for contacting or chatting with friends is Instagram (40%); WhatsApp (38.9%); Other (10.7%); Facebook (9.8%) and Telegram (0.6%)*.* In this „other"

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category the responses were the following: Messinger, Snapchat, Twitter, Viber, Discord and Twitch *(Graph 3).*

Graph 3.

3.2. General awareness of gender-based violence among youth

Students were asked to rate the behaviours that included different forms of gender-based abuse or violence. Majority of young people consider unacceptable the following behaviours: boys barging into girls' changing rooms and taking pictures of them for fun; mocking someone because of being gay, or because of promoting non-violence online; or commenting someone's appearance as looking gay or not in accordance of one's gender.

When it comes to the behaviour related to non-conforming to stereotypical gender roles then the situation is slightly different. Around 1/3 of young people (29.9%) think that commenting a girl that has a „reputation" i.e behaviour that is not in accordance with a female stereotypical gender role is acceptable while on the other hand 1/3 of them think that is not acceptable (34.5%). More boys consider this as acceptable behaviour while more girls consider it as unacceptable *(Table 1.).*

Table 1.

Behaviours		Totally unacceptable %	Not Ok %	Not sure %	Kind of OK %	Ok and normal %
Commenting with friends a girl that has a "reputation".	Boys	9.1	16.5	32.2	26.4	14.9
	Girls	8.9	28.2	36.2	19.6	5.6
Saying things like "you look so gay on this picture" or "look at her she looks like a boy".	Boys	24.8	33.9	15.7	17.4	8.3
	Girls	43.3	42.4	6.5	6.2	1.2
Mocking online someone because	Boys	41.3	32.2	9.9	7.4	9.1

he/she is gay/lesbian/bisexual.	Girls	76	19.6	1.5	1.5	1.2
Mocking someone because they posted something that is saying no to abuse and violence.	Boys	43	38.8	11.6	1.7	5
	Girls	65.6	23.1	5.9	0.9	3.6
Boys entering girls' changing rooms in schools and taking photos of them for fun.	Boys	55.4	28.1	4.1	5	7.4
	Girls	87.8	10.4	0.6	0.9	0

Vast majority of students consider *sextortion* as unacceptable behaviour. 91.7% of students think that it's unacceptable if a person starts threatening their ex-partner after the break-up with the purpose of extorting sexual favours from the victim. 5.5% of students are undecided on this matter while 2.8% consider it to be acceptable behaviour. According to students' gender, 94.6% of girls and 83.4% of boys consider sextortion as unacceptable behaviour.

Constant messaging as a form of control in a intimate relationship where a person expects that partner has to be available all the time and answer to all requests immediately, 40.4% of young people do not consider it as violent behaviour compared to 23.8% of them who think it is violent behaviour. On the other hand, around a third of young people (35.8%) cannot asses if this behaviour is violent. More girls (26.7%) then boys (15.7%) consider excessive messaging being a violent behaviour. On the other hand, 57.9% of boys and 34.1% of girls do not consider it as a violent behaviour.

Majority of young people consider exchange of passwords with the partner as not OK (58.9%) while for 19% of them it' OK and 22% of them are undecided on the issue. According to gender, 2/3 of boys and 2/3 of girls think it's not OK to exchange passwords (e.g. related to e-mails or social media accounts) with the partner.

3.3. Experiences of cyber SGBV

Table 2. shows direct experiences related to cyber SGBV. A higher share of girls in comparison to boys reported having experienced online sexual comments related to their bodies (71.8% vs. 50.4% respectively) and being blackmailed that someone is going to post online private information/photo/video of them if they don't do something sexual in return (8.6% vs. 5.8% respectively).

A higher share of boys compared to girls experienced the following: posting online hurtful picture/video/webpage of them or fake account under their name (24.8% vs. 18.7% respectively); posting (without consent) an intimate photo/video of them that they sent a

person privately (14.1% vs. 6.9% respectively); online threats related to physical safety (43.8% vs. 24.9% respectively): and asking to watch online porn or participate in acts inspired by online porn (19.8% vs. 9.8% respectively).

Table 2.

Did it ever happen to you?		Never %	Once %	Few times %	Frequently %
Someone commented online/or through chat you/your body in a sexual way (both positively and negatively)	Boys	49.6	6.6	28.9	14.9
	Girls	28.2	12.2	42.7	16.9
Someone posted online hurtful picture/video/webpage of you or created a fake account under your name	Boys	75.2	17.4	6.6	0.8
	Girls	81.3	12.5	5.6	0.6
Someone blackmailed you that they will post private information/photo/video of you online if you don't do something sexual in return (e.g. send sexually explicit photos; have sex with them, etc.)	Boys	94.2	0.8	3.3	1.7
	Girls	91.4	6.2	2.1	0.3
Someone posted intimate photo/video of you that you sent him/her privately without your consent (with or without visible body parts)	Boys	86	5	7.4	1.7
	Girls	93.2	4.2	2.7	0
Someone threatened you online via e-mail,chat, comments sections (threats related to your physical safety)	Boys	56.2	18.2	18.2	7.4
	Girls	75.1	15.4	8.9	0.6
Someone asked you to watch online porn or participate in acts inspired by online porn	Boys	80.2	6.6	9.1	4.1
	Girls	90.2	6.5	3	0.3

When asked if they have ever send a message to someone that they haven't met in person with a photo of their intimate body parts, 4.4% of students replied they did because they wanted to and 3.3% said they did because that person was asking for it. More boys responded that they did it because they wanted to (9.1%) or because the person was asking for it (5.8%). 2.7% of girls said they did it because they wanted to and 2.4% did it because the person was asking for it.

When it comes to doing the same thing with a partner or ex-partner the situation is the following: 11.6% of students responded that they send a message to a partner that contained a photo of their intimate body parts because they wanted to. 2.2% of them said they did it because a partner was asking for it while 0.4% responded that they did it because they were told by friends that everybody does that while dating. According to gender, 13.2% of boys and 11% of girls responded they did it

because they wanted to while 3.3% of boys and 1.8% of girls said they did it because their boyfriend/girlfriend was asking for it.

Most students reported receiving a few times unwanted message with someone's body parts. 31.2% of girls and 24.8% of boys received such a message a few times; 13.2% boys and 19.3% of girls received it once while 7.4% of girls and 3.3% of boys reported receiving it frequently.

Some young people reported sharing passwords with their partner or ex-partner. 14.4% of them shared password with a male partner/ex-partner and 5% shared it with a female partner/ex-partner. Those who shared the password with a partner (N=89), an 11.2% of them reported that partner made changes on the given on-line platform without their knowledge.

When asked if they had to change a profile picture because a partner was asking for it 5.5% of young people reported having done it because their male partner was asking for it while 2.8% reported that a female partner was asking it.

Those who experienced the above mentioned abusive events *more then once* (i.e. few times or frequently) were asked about the *perpetrators* and their *own emotional state*.
There were 13.7% (N=63) of students experienced more then once online threats via e-mail, chat, comments sections (threats related to physical safety). The perpetrators were different people (73%); or same male persons/partners/ex partners (15.9%); or same female persons/partners/ex partners (6.3%). In this situation, 49.2% of them reported the feelings of indifference *(no big deal, I don't care); or* fear and powerlessness (28.5%) or other feelings (17.4%). For 6.4% young people the threat included sexual threats such as rape. 12 girls (3.6%) and 5 boys (4.1%) reported being threatened with sexual violence.

There were 6.11% (N=28) of young people that experienced more then once posting an online hurtful picture/video/webpage of them or creating a fake account under their name and they reported that the perpetrators were different people (71.4%); or same male person (14.3%); or same male partner/ex partner (7.1%); and same female partner/ex partner (7.1%). 50% of them reported the feelings of indifference *(no big deal, I don't care);* fear and powerlessness (32%) and fellings of anger and furiousnes (17.8%).

There were 5.9% (N=27) of students experienced more then once someone asking them to watch online porn or participate in acts inspired by online porn. The perpetrators were different people (55.5%); or same male persons/partners/ex partners (22.2%); or same female persons/partners/ex partners (14.8%). In this situation, 74% of them reported the feelings of indifference *(no big deal, I don't care); or* fear and powerlessness (7.4%) or other feelings (14.8%).

There were 4.4% (N=20) of students experienced more then once someone posting without consent an intimate photo/video of them that they sent him/her privately. The perpetrators were different people (35%); or same male persons/partners/ex partners (25%); or same female persons/partners/ex partners (25%). In this situation, 40% of them reported the feelings of indifference *(no big deal, I don't care); or* fear and powerlesness (10%) or other feelings (25%).

There were 3% (N=14) of students that experienced more then once someone blackmailing them into posting private information/photo/video of them online if they don't do something sexual in return. The perpetrators were different people (42.8%); or same male persons/partners/ex partners (50%). Just one person reported experiencing it from a female partner/ex partner. In this situation, 50% of them reported the feelings of indifference *(no big deal, I don't care);* fear and powerlesness (42.8%) and fellings of anger (7.1%).

3.4. Students' reactions

Students were presented with imaginary situations in the form of WhatsApp conversations related to sexpreading i.e disseminating photos containing sexual images of other people without their consent; sexual harassment in the form of „cyberflashing"; control in intimate partner relationships i.e. constant messaging and password exchange. The idea was to explore students' reactions as victims or receivers of these messages.

Table 3. presents students' reactions to the imaginary situation of sexpreading where a girl sent a nude photo of herself to a boyfriend and he forwarded it to his friends without her consent. Respondents were asked to assess what would they do if they were in that girl's position (multiple answers were allowed).

Table 3.

Sexpreading - reactions	Girls (%) N=337	Boys (%) N=121	Total (%) N=458
Do nothing and wait for it to fade out	22.8	27.3	24
Break up the relationship	51.9	38.8	48.5
Revenge	13.9	16.5	14.6
Talk to friends and ask for advice	34.4	23.1	31.4
Tell parents	26.4	14	23.1
Report to the police	22.8	17.4	21.4
Tell trusted teacher	9.2	9.9	9.4
Other	5.7	10.4	7.2

The most common reaction would be to break up the relationship (48.5%); talk to friends and ask for their advice (31.4%); do nothing (24%) and then turn to parents (23.1%); report to the police (21.4%); try to revenge (14.6%) and at the end turn to a trusted teacher (9.4%).
Most common girls' reactions would be: break up the relationship (51.9%), ask advice from friends (34.4%), tell parents (26.4%) and report it to the police/or do nothing (22.8%).
Most common boys' reactions would be: break up the relationship (38.8%), do nothing (27.3%), ask advice from friends (23.1%) and report it to the police (17.4%). The boys' reactions most likely depend on the ability to put themselves in girls' position.
From these answers it's evident that in dealing with situations of violence young people will mostly rely on themselves and their own capacities to resolve a situation (or rely on friends).

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Table 4. presents students' reactions to the imaginary situation of receiving an unsolicited dick pic.

Table 4.

Cyberflashing- reactions	Girls (%) N=337	Boys (%) N=121	Total (%) N=458
Nothing, it's not a problem	4.2	16.5	7.4
Wouldn't answer	6.2	9.9	7.2
Reply-questioning the behaviour	5	9.9	6.3
Block/report	79.2	50.4	71.6
Reply-threatening if doing it again	2.1	5.8	3.1
Other	3.3	7.4	4.4

Majority of students (71.6%), both boys and girls replied that their reaction would be blocking and reporting the person. In addition, more boys then girls (16.5% vs. 4.2% respectively) assesed this situation as non-problematic. Other reactions included the following: revenge including physical violence; ridicule the sender; show message to the parents; publish it on instastory with the name of the person.

Table 5. presents students' reactions to the imaginary situation of relationship control i.e. receiving partner's excessive text messaging and asking her/him why is she/he not answering immediately.

Table 5.

Partner's excessive messaging- reactions	Girls (%) N=337	Boys (%) N=121	Total (%) N=458
Guilt *(no awareness of this behaviour as problematic)*	23.1	36.4	26.6
Annoyance *(certain level of awareness)*	15.7	20.7	17
Awareness *(of it as a problematic behaviour)*	56.1	35.5	50.7
Other	5	7.4	5.7

Around half of students (50.7%) are aware it's a problematic behaviour, more girls then boys (56.1% vs. 35.5% respectively). In addition, around ¼ of students (26.6%) do not recognize it as a form of relationship control.

Another form of relationship control is a partner's demand for exchanging passwords (e.g. for social networks, e-mails). Students were asked if they were willing to exchange passwords with a partner and the answers were the following:
- No, because it's my privacy (73.2%)
- Yes, it shows trust and I have nothing to hide (12.9%)
- Yes, but only if I get his/hers (10.5%)

More girls then boys are aware that passwords are a private matter (79.2% vs. 56.2% respectively). On the other hand, more boys then girls think that exchanging password is a form of trust among partners (22.3% vs. 9.5% respectively) and would do it if they get a partner's password in return (16.5% vs. 8.3% respectively).

Table 6. presents students' reactions to the imaginary situation of sexualization of women's bodies (i.e. boys' sexualized comments on girls' looks) from the perspective of bystanders.

Table 6.

Sexualization of women's bodies- attitudes as bystanders	Girls (%) N=337	Boys (%) N=121	Total (%) N=458
No awareness -*normalization of the situation*	5.3	24	10.3
Certain level of awareness -*resignation*	36.8	37.2	36.9
Awareness -*discomfort*	4.7	4.1	4.6
Awareness –*rejection of the behaviour*	42.7	19	36.5
Awareness-*impulse to react*	8.3	2.5	6.8
No conscience about people doing it	1.2	9.9	3.4
Other	0.9	3.3	1.5

The two most common attitudes among youth involve some form of resignation/tolerance (e.g. attitude „*just boys being boys*") that is supported by 36.9% of respondents and awareness in the form of rejecting the behaviour supported by 36.5% of them. More girls then boys reject the behaviour (42.7% vs. 19% respectively) while similar percentage of both boys and girls displays some form of resignation towards the behaviour (37.2% vs. 36.8% respectively). Also, more girls then boys have an impulse to react in such a situation and tell boys that it's unacceptable behaviour (8.3% vs. 2.5%).

Table 7. presents students' reactions to the imaginary situation of sexpreading (i.e. sending nude photo to a boyfriend that was sent to other people without her consent). Students were asked to assess the situation as a members of a group chat (*multiple choice options*).

Table 7.

Sexpreading (revenge porn) - attitudes as member of a group chat	Girls (%) N=337	Boys (%) N=121	Total (%) N=458
No awareness –laughing, making jokes	3	19	7.2
Victim blaming attitude	20.2	26.4	21.8
Bystander attitude-knowing it's bad but not engaging	12.5	23.1	15.3
High level of awareness-voicing the problem and proposing solutions	38	15.7	32.1
Concern for the (female) victim	49	19	41
Other	4.5	12	8.1

The most frequent reaction is concern for the (female) victim (41%) and a high level of awareness (*i.e. asking to delete the pictures and talk to the sender about his criminal behaviour*) of 32.1% of respondents. Around 1/5 of respondents displayed a victim blaming attitude (i.e.*she should have known that this will happen*) while 15.3% displayed a passive bystander attitudes (i.e. *it's not Ok but I would not say anything*). More girls then boys expressed concern for the victim (49% vs. 19% respectively) and high level of awareness (38% vs. 15.7% respectively). On the other hand, boys tend to express more victim blaming attitude then girls (26.4% vs. 20.2% respectively). Some of the answers in the category „other" included asking advice and help from adults/parents.

Table 8. presents the respondents' answers to the question whether they would resend the nude photo to another friend and the majority replied that they would not do it (79.2%).

Table 8.

Sexpreading (revenge porn) – resending the picture	Girls (%) N=337	Boys (%) N=121	Total (%) N=458
Yes	1.8	11.6	4.4
No	84.3	65.3	79.2
Only to best friend to comment it with him/her	12.8	17.4	14
Other	1.2	5.8	2.4

4.4% responded positively while 14% of them said that they would resend it just to a best friend. More girls then boys reported that they would not be involved in the sexpreading (84.3% vs. 65.3% respectively). But, more boys then girls reported that they would be involved in sexpreading to friends/or best friends (29% vs. 14.6%).

Table 9. presents students' reactions to the imaginary situation of sextortion (e. g. distribution of a girl's sexually explicit images by a boy she used to date in order to extort sexual favours from her).

Table 9.

Sexual harassment (sextortion)- recommendations as a friend/bystander	Girls (%) N=337	Boys (%) N=121	Total (%) N=458
Victim blaming attitude	3	6.6	3.9
Indifferent	-	4.1	1.1
Compliance with the request	1.2	2.5	1.5
Ask for advice/help	9.2	9.9	9.4
Recognition of it as abuse behaviour that needs to be reported	83.7	70.2	80.1
Other	3	6.6	3.9

Students were asked to provide strategies or recommendations to a girl as a friends or bystanders. Majority of students (80.1%) - slightly more girls then boys (83.7% vs. 70.2% respectively)- are aware

that it's an abusive behaviour that has to be reported. Around 9% of students would advise her to ask for advice/help (from older siblings or friends).

Table 10. presents students' responses to the imaginary situation of control in intimate relationship that involves partner's request to unfollow someone from social media because of his/her jealousy.

Table 10.

Control in intimate partner relationship (erasing contacts)-response as a friend/bystander	Girls (%) N=337	Boys (%) N=121	Total (%) N=458
Certain level of awareness (right to freely make a decision)	40.9	38	40.2
Awareness (behaviour that is not based on trust)	48.4	34	44.5
No awareness (behaviour as a sign of love)	9.2	21.5	12.5
Other	1.5	6.6	2.8

Students were asked to provide their view on a situation as a friend or bystander. Around 44% of students recognize that this is an unacceptable behaviour in a relationship and not based on trust. Almost the same proportion of youth (40%) are aware that a person has a right to their own decisions and that partner doesn't have the right to ask for this. However, about 12% of youth consider this as non-problematic behaviour and as a sign of love and commitment in a relationship.

Table 11. presents young people's responses to the imaginary situation of control in intimate relationship that involves partner's request to change a profile picture on social media accounts, picturing them as a couple so that people know that they are in a relationship. Students were asked to provide their view on a situation as a friend or bystander.

Table 11.

Control in intimate partner relationship (changing profile picture)-response as a friend/bystander	Girls (%) N=337	Boys (%) N=121	Total (%) N=458
No awareness	22.3	28.1	23.8
Certain level of awareness (but wouldn't react))	24	36.4	27.3
Awareness (abusive behaviour)	49.3	24.8	42.8
Other	4.5	10.7	6.1

Around 43% of them recognize the behaviour as abusive. 27% of students posess a certain level of awareness and think it's unacceptable behaviour but wouldn't react to it while 24% of them has no awareness about the problem, but on the contrary think it's cute.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Students' sample (N=458) included more females then males and majority were aged 15-18 and coming from urban settings. Most commonly used application among youth for contacting or chatting with friends is Instagram and WhatsApp while Facebook is less popular.

In regards to **general awareness of gender-based violence among youth,** the results show that students are aware of unacceptability of different forms of gender-based violence. Majority of young people consider unacceptable behaviours such as boys barging into girls' changing rooms and taking pictures of them for fun; mocking someone because of being gay, or because of promoting non-violence online; or commenting someone's appearance as looking gay or not in accordance of one's gender. When it comes to the behaviour related to girls' non-conforming to stereotypical gender role then opinions are divided –some support conforming to gender stereotypical roles and some don't. More boys then girls support girls' conforming with stereotypical gender role. Vast majority of students, more girls then boys, consider *sextortion* as unacceptable behaviour. *Constant messaging* in a intimate relationship where a person expects that partner has to be available all the time and answer to all requests immediately, is not widely recognized as a form of controlling behaviour. Around 1/5 of students, more girls then boys, think it is a violent behaviour. Exchange of passwords with the partner is considered by majority as unacceptable behaviour (the same proportion of both boys and girls think it's not OK).

Insight into students' **experiences of cyber SGBV** show that a higher share of girls in comparison to boys reported having experienced online sexual comments related to their bodies and being blackmailed that someone is going to post online private information/photo/video of them if they don't do something sexual in return. On the other hand, a higher share of boys compared to girls experienced the following: posting online hurtful picture/video/webpage of them or fake account under their name; posting (without consent) an intimate photo/video of them that they sent a person privately; online threats related to physical safety: and request to watch online porn or participate in acts inspired by online porn.

When asked if they have ever send a message to someone that they haven't met in person with a photo of their intimate body parts, 4.4% of students replied they did because they wanted to and 3.3% said they did because that person was asking for it. More boys responded that they did it because they wanted to (9.1%) or because the person was asking for it (5.8%) while 2.7% of girls said they did it because they wanted to and 2.4% did it because the person was asking for it.

11.6% of students responded that they send a message to a partner that contained a photo of their intimate body parts because they wanted to. 2.2% of them said they did it because a partner was asking for it. More boys then girls responded they did it because they wanted to while 3.3% of boys and 1.8% of girls said they did it because their boyfriend/girlfriend was asking for it.

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Most students reported receiving a few times unwanted message with someone's body parts. 31.2% of girls and 24.8% of boys received such a message a few times; 13.2% boys and 19.3% of girls received it once while 7.4% of girls and 3.3% of boys reported receiving it frequently.

When it comes to sharing password for social accounts with a partner, girls more often reported sharing password with a male partner then boys with their female partners. 11.2% of those who shared the password with a partner reported that partner made changes on the given on-line platform without their knowledge. Also, more girls then boys have changed their profile pictures because their partner asked for it.

Those who experienced different forms of cyber SGBV (e.g. posting online hurtful picture/video/webpage of them/ or creating a fake account under their name; sextortion; posting without consent an intimate photo/video of them that they sent to the person privately; on line threats related to physical safety; watching online porn or participating in acts inspired by online porn) *more then once* when asked about the *perpetrators* and their *own emotional state* replied as follows:
- in all the cases perpetrators were mostly different people or the same male persons or male partner/ex partner or less frequently females
- majority reported feelings of indifference while same reported fear and powerlessnes and feelings of anger.

Students' reactions to situations related to cyber SGBV (e.g. as victims or receivers of messages) were measured through imaginary situations in the form of WhatsApp conversations related to sexpreading i.e disseminating photos containing sexual images of other people without their consent; sexual harassment in the form of „cyberflashing"; control in intimate partner relationships i.e. constant messaging and password exchange. In the situation of sexpreading where a girl sent a nude photo of herself to a boyfriend and he forwarded it to friends without her consent, the most common reaction would be to resolve the situation on their own (i.e. end the relationship or ask friends for advice on what to do). In a situation of receiving an unsolicited dick pic majority of students would block and report the person. In a situation of relationship control in the form of receiving partner's excessive text messaging and asking her/him why is she/he not answering immediately, around half students, more girls then boys, recognize the behaviour as problematic, while around ¼ of students do not recognize it as problematic. Another form of relationship control is a partner's demand for exchanging passwords (e.g. for social networks, e-mails) and the majority of students would decline the request. More girls then boys are aware that passwords are a private matter. On the other hand, more boys then girls think that exchanging password is a form of trust among partners and would do it if they get a partner's password in return.

*S*tudents' reactions to the situation of sexualization of women's bodies (i.e. boys' sexualized comments on girls' looks) from the perspective of bystanders most commonly include some form of resignation/tolerance (e.g. attitude *„just boys being boys"*) or awareness in the form of rejecting the behaviour. More girls then boys reject the behaviour while similar percentage of both boys and girls displays some form of resignation towards the behaviour. Also, more girls then boys have an impulse to react in such a situation and tell boys that it's unacceptable behaviour.

In a situation of sexpreading (i.e. sending nude photo to a boyfriend that was sent to other people without her consent) from the perspective of bystanders (i.e. members of a group chat) the most

frequent reaction is concern for the (female) victim and awareness and pro-active stance towards the problem (*i.e. asking to delete the pictures and talk to the sender about his criminal behaviour*). More girls then boys expressed concern for the victim and awareness of the problem. On the other hand, boys tend to express more victim blaming attitude then girls. When asked about resending the nude photo to another friend, the majority responded negatively (i.e. *they would not do it*) while 14% would resend it to a best friend. More girls then boys reported that they would not be involved in the sexpreading but more boys then girls reported that they would be involved in sexpreading to friends.

From the position of friends/bystanders, in a situation of sextortion (e. g. distribution of a girl's sexually explicit images by a boy she used to date in order to extort sexual favours from her), majority of students, slightly more girls then boys, recognize it as abusive behaviour and would advise the victim to report it.

From the position of friends/bystanders, in a situation of control in intimate relationship that involves partner's request to unfollow someone from social media because of his/her jealousy, majority of students recognize it as unacceptable behaviour and agree that partner doesn't have the right to ask for this. However, about 12% of youth consider this as non-problematic behaviour and as a sign of love and commitment in a relationship.

From the position of friends/bystanders, in a situation of control in intimate relationship that involves partner's request to change a profile picture on social media accounts (i.e. picturing them as a couple so that people know that they are in a relationship), students were divided on their view of the situation. Around 43% of them recognize the behaviour as abusive. 27% of students think it's unacceptable behaviour but wouldn't react to it while 24% of them has no awareness about the problem, but on the contrary think it's cute.

Results related to general awareness of GBV or cyber SGBV and students' reactions, show that girls are better in recognizing violent behaviours and are more inclined to react or seek help and support.

Recommendations

Specific recommendations related to the findings of research on secondary school students include focusing on several issues:

- Prevention work with students on the issue of cyber SGBV by raising awareness about consequences of their online behaviour and informing them about the strategies on how to protect themselves or seek help and support.
- It is necessary to work with students, especially boys, and focus on deconstructing their gender stereotypes and attitudes related to GBV. Boys should be provided with information and strategies on how to resist the patriarchal norms and peer pressure and how to react in situations of cyber SGBV.
- Especially highlight a certain violent behaviours that are often conflated with love and affection (i.e *partner's excessive messaging*). In addition, deconstruct the *myth of*

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romantic love (especially prevalent with girls) and provide young people with information and skills needed for building quality/healthy relationships.

- Place special emphasis on informing, educating and supporting bystanders on how to react in situations of GBV.
- Teachers should use more proactive approach to reach students in order for students to recognize teachers as adults that can offer support and help in situations of GBV.

The following, **more general, recommendations** take into account the overall situation regarding the teen-dating violence prevention in a national context.

1. The problem of violence in relationships of adolescents requires a **systematic approach to prevention in the Republic of Croatia**. Prevention of violence in intimate partner relationships must begin as early as possible, and it is clear that the school system is the one in which these topics can worked on progressively, starting from kindergarten, all the way to university, or even further, in the system of lifelong learning. It is necessary to confront the attitudes, behaviors, assumptions and language that contribute to a culture of violence against women and to help teenagers begin to develop a thoughtful and strategic ways of opposing it. Peer education can be effective tool but also it is important to encourage young people themselves to create and implement activities and for school to cooperate with the local community. It is necessary to develop a long term strategy for the violence prevention, which will include the systematic gathering of information on the implementation of prevention programs and those programs by civil society organizations in order to evaluate the effects of the programs on the users. Also needed is a continuous funding of programs that have proven effective and encouragement of cross-sectoral cooperation. A better coordination of institutions and civil society organizations working on prevention and a comprehensive catalog list of recommended programs that would be available to all stakeholders is also needed.

2. In **education and prevention work** on the problem of teen-dating violence, it is necessary to focus on:
- Recognition and awareness of psychological/emotional forms of violence;
- Changing attitudes about violence and gender stereotypes;
- Raising awareness of the myths about violence;
- Understanding the power dynamics and control in relationships;
- Recognition and raising awareness of positive aspects and characteristics of quality and non-violent relationships
- Develop and strengthen self-esteem and self-confidence, communication skills, negotiation skills and conflict resolution skills as aspects of quality and non-violent relationships;
- Enticing and raising awareness of issues of sex/gender equality and the right to a life free of violence as basic human rights;
- Raising awareness about the influence of peer groups and the media;
- Additional training of all those involved;
- Using various creative methods and art forms in the prevention work: music, films, comics, theater, art work, etc.

- Anonymity, confidentiality and expertise; encouragement, advice and support and protection for victims;
- Information on existing mechanisms and resources for reporting violence;
- Psychological and social work with perpetrators

3. For prevention to be effective, it is necessary that it is accompanied by **adequate legislation and public policies.** The inclusion of gender based violence in the strategy aimed towards adolescents, the provision of funds, the identification and dissemination of good practice can have long-term positive results.

4. Civil society organizations stand out in the process of violence prevention. They have been recognized as partners/collaborators to other institutions and facilities, such as schools which largely rely on CSOs and implement their programs, use manuals, participate in trainings and projects of CSOs. In order to ensure continuous work in the prevention of GBV, it is necessary to ensure the cooperation of local authorities and relevant institutions with CSOs, the communication and mechanisms of involvement and consultation.

5. The improvement of the national **tracking system** of youth abuse through the creation of a standardized database on cases of violence, including teen-dating violence.

6. It is necessary to include the violence in intimate partner relationships, including the adolescent relationships, in the **legislation** on violence against women.

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