



With the support of the  
European Commission

# **Schoolmates project**

Transnational research on homophobic  
bullying in schools

**Final report**

# - SCHOOLMATES -

## Transnational Research: Final report

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Bologna (Italy), November 2007

**Important notice:** before we begin our analysis, it's important explaining that this research doesn't present a quantitative picture of the PHENOMENON of homophobic bullying. It analyses the PERCEPTION that the school population (students, teachers and non-teaching school personnel) has of homophobic bullying, homophobic violence and homosexual people.

Therefore, in these pages you won't find numbers outlying how many homophobic incidents there are in schools each year or how many gay and lesbian students are victimised by their peers and teachers. Here you will find the description of how the school population sees daily psychological, verbal and physical homophobic violence and how they relate to it.

We chose to focus on this aspect because peers, teachers and non-teaching personnel are the first and the most important source that may be activated to prevent and contrast bullying in schools and understanding how they can be motivated and trained to do so it's of the utmost importance.

Miles Gualdi

Project manager

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# 1.

## INTRODUCTION

This report presents the final results of a quali-quantitative research focused on homophobic bullying and attitudes towards homosexual people by students and school personnel.

The research was a preparatory activity of the Schoolmates project, co-financed by the European Commission in the framework of the DAPHNE II programme. It reached about 1.500 people in different high-schools in 4 Countries (Austria, Italy, Poland and Spain) and was implemented in 5 local contexts by the project partners:

- In Vienna, Austria, by Antidiskriminierungsstelle für gleichgeschlechtliche Lebensweisen of the City of Vienna;
- In Bologna and Modena, Italy, by Arcigay;
- In Warsaw, Poland, by [Kampania Przeciw Homofobii](#);
- In Madrid, Spain, by Federación Española COLEGAS.

As far as we know it's the broadest trans-national survey ever accomplished in Europe on this specific subject (homophobic bullying in schools) and therefore had to face important gaps:

- *Gaps in theory and academia*

There isn't a scientific background to this subject.

There are a few bibliographical references, mostly limited to the Anglo-Saxon context, mainly based on concrete field experiences by activists and volunteers.

It seems that this matter isn't part of curricular training for teachers and school personnel in general.

- *Gaps in aggregated general data*

Statistical indicators are modest, local and widely heterogeneous, thus not allowing the creation of a frame to contextualise the data gathered in the present research.

In most of the involved Countries, official statistics don't analyse the phenomenon; the subject of homophobic bullying is therefore invisible in the eyes of the most established surveying systems.

Most of the times even the qualitative data gathering (mainly surveying personal experiences with specific attention to victimization) hasn't gone beyond the simple anecdotic of single events.

In general, adopted methodologies don't present the necessary scientific base to provide the comparability of data gathered at different times and in different contexts.

- *Gaps in applied policies and interventions strategies*

We haven't got a shared operative definition of "homophobic bullying" most of all we record a lack of skills and tools to prevent and contrast it, as proven by this same research. In most cases, single activists or professional involved can only apply their personal sensibility.

In practice, we can witness a wide development in anti-bullying training for school personnel; but these experience are mainly (if not solely) focused on social and identity items others than sexual orientation (ethnic origin, religion, gender, school performance, disability) overlooking the peculiarities of homophobic bullying.

As it's easy to understand by this framework, it's difficult to design and assess specific actions, that are usually episodic and subjective.

- *Gaps in the direct involvement of key-actors, mainly the targets*

There's an increasing awareness of the phenomenon of homophobic bullying. Such awareness struggles with the lack of both real opportunities for problem solving and safe institutionalised contexts for the victims to seek support.

Motivated by the above-mentioned lacuna, we propose this report as our contribution to the analysis of this issue, so relevant in school-life but still so miss-known.

It's not possible to fill in all the gaps, especially since the nature of this survey is widely operative, aiming at providing specific skills and data to educators. We will focus our reflection on 3 main thematic areas:

- *Is there homophobic bullying in schools? Is it pervasive? What are its characteristics?*
- *What are the opinions, attitudes and emotional reactions towards homosexual adolescents (or adolescents who are perceived as homosexuals) in the school environment?*
- *Are there relevant differences related to gender or role (students/school personnel)?*

We wish to thank the people who made this survey possible: the partners of the Schoolmates project, of course; in particular we would like to thank the scientific staff who worked on all the phases of this research: Laura Pozzoli, Marta Abramowicz and Roman Winkler. Last but not least we want to thank all the people of every age and role that gave us some of their time to reply to our questions.

Thanks to everyone: we think that the Schoolmates research is, in itself and beyond the obtained results, an experience to itself and a good network activity on the subject of homophobic bullying in schools.

Raffaele Lelleri

Transnational research co-ordinator

## **2.**

### **THE RESEARCH**

This chapter will present:

- The adopted methodology (§ 2.1);
- The research tools (§ 2.2);
- The characteristics of the sample (§ 2.3).

## § 2.1

### METHODOLOGY

Chart 1 presents the main methodological characters of the research; as it can easily be understood, the methodology was slightly complex, mainly due to:

- The necessity to address both specific and macro targets;
- Involving people of different age and role within schools;
- Employing both qualitative and quantitative tools;
- Being transnational, involving 5 local contexts (Bologna, Modena, Vienna, Warsaw and Madrid) in 4 different European Countries (Italy, Austria, Poland and Spain) thus dealing with specific terminology (mainly when dealing with derogatory words) and with differences in relation to the characteristics of school personnel, ages of pupils, types of high schools etc.
- Being mostly carried out locally by different researchers, though under the transnational supervision of the co-ordinator.

Chart 1  
Methodology

<p><b>Goals:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Collecting reliable and comparable data about the perception of different forms of homophobic bullying at school and about their main characteristics: frequency, victims and perpetrators – lesbian/gay people and presumed-LG people, places and timing, reactions, gender, age and role</li><li>▪ Collecting reliable and comparable data about opinions and attitudes towards homosexuality and homosexuals</li><li>▪ Promoting the discussion about the issue of homophobic bullying at school</li><li>▪ Contributing to standardize an international quantitative database about this issue</li></ul>
<p><b>Targets:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Students – and their representatives</li><li>▪ Teaching personnel</li><li>▪ Non-teaching personnel</li><li>▪ Parents' representatives</li><li>▪ [LGBT] people in general</li></ul>
<p><b>Tools:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Self-administered questionnaire, translated into the four partners' languages (Italian, German, Polish and Spanish) with mainly closed (multiple choice) questions</li><li>▪ Semi-structured interview (individual interview and focus group), with all open questions</li></ul>



- On-line form, translated into the partners' four languages, with mainly open questions

The analysis of the collected data has been centralized for the quantitative data and locally-based for the qualitative one.

Self-administered questionnaires were gathered anonymously in schools after a brief presentation by the local researchers. Interviewees were granted full privacy.

The on-line form (published on the project website: [www.arcigay.it/schoolmates](http://www.arcigay.it/schoolmates)) made it possible to gather further feedbacks by the people involved in the survey and allowed people who were not involved directly to give their comments and experiences on the subject, in complete anonymity. The information gathered through the website were not scientifically organised and have therefore not been included in this work (except for some experiences that local researchers have included in the qualitative part); they have though been included in the educational material produced by the project and published separately.

### **Sample:**

a) The sample in numeric terms:

- The general indication to partners for the qualitative questionnaire was to reach 200 students in each town (100 aged 13-15 and 100 aged 16-19); 50 teachers per town and 10 non-teaching personnel per town (preferably 3 school directors, 3 clerks and 4 janitors/caretakers/porters).
- The general indication for the semi-structured interview was to carry out 10 interviews involving preferably 3 school directors, 3 teaching personnel, 2 non-teaching personnel, 2 representatives of the parents, not previously involved in the quantitative part.
- Indication for the focus group was to carry 1 out in each town, involving 6 interviewees (not involved in the individual interviews), preferably: 4 teachers and 2 representatives of the students.

Given local differences and some problematics specific to some partners, the general guidelines were adapted locally. The numbers and characters of the sample doesn't therefore strictly respect the given guidelines.

b) Specific sampling:

- Partners were given 3 indications to follow for the sample of students to involve with the self-administered questionnaire:
  - differentiate as much as possible the types of schools (post-compulsory and pre-university); focus on schools that hadn't previously been involved in activities by the partner organisation, especially in the field of sexual orientation;
  - involve a whole class, not just to volunteers or participants to the workshops;
- In sampling teachers and non-teaching personnel and in sampling interviewees for the qualitative part, guidelines given were similar to the ones related to the sampling of students but local researchers had more freedom.
- The on-line form had, of course, no sampling guidelines

### **Timing:**

Questionnaires administration has lasted totally about a semester: May 2006 through January 2007, with considerable difference in each local context, given by accessibility of schools and also schools' specific schedule.

Time necessary to carry out the qualitative part has been longer and took until April 2007.

## § 2.2

### TOOLS

The research tools were:

- The questionnaire (one common version for students, teachers and non-teaching personnel);
- The common track for the semi-structured interview (to be used both for interviews and focus groups);
- On-line form.

The general characteristics have already been pointed out in chart 1 (§2.1). here we want to underline some features that were agreed upon and that strongly characterise this survey:

- *First of all, each tool has been created and agreed upon by all partners, with the supervision of the transnational co-ordinator, thus creating shared research tools, that proved to be most adaptable to the 4 local contexts.*

We must point out that the Schoolmates research proved to be a pilot experience since the beginning, given the lack of previous similar activities implemented transnationally.

For such reasons we consider the tools and most of all the questionnaire a project result in itself.

- *As it will be explained more in depth in the third chapter, also basing on the bibliography and previous experiences, we didn't consider bullying a solid phenomenon without shades; on the contrary we declined it on a range with 4 different steps:*

1. *Verbal indirect offences*
2. *Written offences*
3. *Isolation/exclusion*
4. *Verbal/physical assault*

We decided thus to address not only the events that are more violent and therefore more visible (although hopefully less frequent) but also to the daily attitudes and behaviour that present a lesser degree of intensity, but make up the environment adolescents live in and therefore may even prove more harming. In this sense “indirect verbal offences” account for the daily “normal” use of derogatory terminology used to identify homosexual people that, even when it's not addressed to someone in particular, affect the well-being of homosexuals in school.

- *We decided to specify the target as “adolescents who are or are perceived as homosexuals”, convinced that homophobic bullying doesn’t only concern people who actually are homosexuals but represents a threat for the school environment in general. More so since gays and lesbians are seldom visible in high schools and are therefore targeted for being perceived as such, along with others who are actually not homosexuals but don’t fit into the gender stereotypes.*

This reflection is substantiated by the fact that addressing someone as “faggot” or “dyke” has the role of a general offence, aiming at intimidating, belittle and stigmatise someone beyond their real or perceived sexual orientation.

The fact remains that such behaviours harm a plurality of people: the person who’s the target (whatever his/her sexual orientation might be), homosexual people who witness the episode, friends or relative of homosexual people, who realise that homosexuals are targeted by violence.

- *In order to put interviewees at ease while giving as much information as possible and provided the possibility to add any further information through the on-line form that was promoted also at the end of the questionnaire, we decided not to ask the sexual orientation of the respondents, nor to ask about direct involvement in acts of homophobic bullying, as target nor as bully.*

More specifically, we avoided including elements of voluntariness or opportunity when asking to describe events in the questionnaire, since they could have misled the interviewee and could have only be understood in the semi-structured interviews and in the focus groups.

- *Finally, consistently with what was reported in other surveys, we explicitly foresaw a series of articulations:*
  - *The analysis took into consideration both formal and informal places (such as the classrooms, the halls but also the yard and the locker-rooms); the same was done for the time, including both the curricular hours (during class) and extras (before and after class);*
  - *The role within school (student/school personnel) was always specified, so that different perceptions could emerge and also to record the existence of vertical homophobia- although horizontal homophobia (that is bullying among peers) remained the core of the survey;*
  - *Gender has been constantly taken into consideration: for the respondent, for the target of bullying, for the bully for any witness/third party.*

## § 2.3

### THE SAMPLE OF THE QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

As previously mentioned, the questionnaire was administered to 1.469 people.

The following chart describe the main background characteristics of respondents; these same characteristics will represent the independent variables in the analysis presented in chapter 3. The sample's main characters are:

- Large number of respondents from Austria and Italy; small number from Spain (chart 1);
- Mainly women in all of the 4 Countries (charts 2a and 2b). Except for the Spanish sample, women are the majority among interviewed students, teachers and non teaching personnel (charts 4a and 4b);
- As planned, the vast majority of respondents are students. Adults (teachers and non teaching personnel) sum up to 350 of the total respondents (charts 3a and 3b);
- The age range among students is 13 to 19, with a higher number of respondents aged 16-19, also given the fact that the age group 13-16 is almost completely absent from the Italian and Spanish sub-samples (charts 5a and 5b);
- The sample is equally divided in the 3 groups proposed on the basis of the parents' level of formal education, although there are some strong difference among the nationals sub-samples (charts 6a and 6b).

Chart 1

Nationality of respondents (n. and valid %)

	n.	valid %
Austria	620	42,2
Italy	437	29,7
Poland	260	17,7
Spain	152	10,3
<i>TOT</i>	<i>1.469</i>	<i>100,0</i>

Charts 2a and 2b

Gender of respondents (n. and valid %), and \* Country

	n.	valid %
Males	526	36,2
Females	926	63,8
(missing)	17	-
<i>TOT</i>	<i>1.469</i>	<i>100,0</i>

valid %	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Males	35,5	34,3	46,5	27,0
Females	64,5	65,7	53,5	73,0
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

Charts 3a and 3b  
Role in the school (n. and valid %), and \* Country

	n.	valid %
Students	1097	75,0
Teachers	289	19,8
Non teaching personnel	76	5,2
(missing)	7	-
<i>TOT</i>	<i>1.469</i>	<i>100,0</i>

valid %	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Students	60,6	84,5	79,6	98,7
Teachers	30,6	12,7	16,5	1,3
Non teaching personnel	8,8	2,8	3,8	-
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

Charts 4a and 4b  
Role in the school \* gender (n. and valid %), and \* Country

	n.	valid %
Students M	383	26,4
Students F	708	48,8
Teachers M	116	8,0
Teachers F	167	11,5
Non teaching personnel M	27	1,9
Non teaching personnel F	49	3,4
(missing)	19	-
<i>TOT</i>	<i>1.469</i>	<i>100,0</i>

valid %	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Students M	21,5	29,6	32,3	27,0
Students F	39,4	54,9	47,3	71,7
Teachers M	10,7	4,2	12,7	-
Teachers F	19,5	8,6	3,8	1,3
Non teaching personnel M	3,3	0,7	1,5	-
Non teaching personnel F	5,6	2,1	2,3	-
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

Charts 5a and 5b  
Age, in clusters (n. and valid %), and \* Country

	n.	valid %
13-15	152	10,5
16-19	863	59,6
20-29	101	7,0
30-39	69	4,8
40-49	135	9,3
50-59	112	7,7
60-69	15	1,0
(missing)	22	-
<i>TOT</i>	<i>1.469</i>	<i>100,0</i>

valid %	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
13-15	18,1	0,5	15,4	-
16-19	38,4	77,2	63,7	88,2
20-29	7,1	7,5	3,9	10,5
30-39	8,9	0,2	5,4	-
40-49	15,7	6,1	4,6	1,3
50-59	10,9	6,8	6,6	-
60-69	1,0	1,9	0,4	-

Charts 6a e 6b  
Parents' level of formal education (n. and valid %), and \* Country

	n.	valid %
Compulsory education	391	28,4
Technical – upper education	546	39,7
University education	438	31,9
(missing)	94	-
<i>TOT</i>	<i>1.469</i>	<i>100,0</i>

valid %	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Compulsory education	17,0	23,9	49,2	50,0
Technical – upper education	55,9	33,5	22,0	23,3
University education	27,2	42,6	28,7	26,7
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

It's easy to determine that the four national sub-samples are quite different from one another. Relatively different are the types of schools involved and the involvement strategies applied in the five different local contexts, as underlined by the local researchers themselves:

- In Italy the survey involved 6 schools in 2 different cities;
- In Spain one school in one town;
- In Poland, given the particular socio-political context that made it impossible for LGBT organisations to work in schools, the local partner decided (in agreement with the transnational research co-ordinator) to administer the questionnaire mainly to the

people who attended the project workshops and who came from different schools of Warsaw;

- In Austria, 17 schools were involved.

For these reasons and also given the different “colour” and “intensity” of derogatory words referring to homosexual people in the different languages, in chapter 3 we will always present the results both for the transnational sample and disaggregated for the 4 national samples, which can be compared only taking into considerations all these factors.

The qualitative research, presented in this work, was not implemented by the Spanish partner.

### **3.**

## **RESULTS**

In this chapter, we present the results of the transnational research of the Schoolmates project.

Its contents follow the footprint proposed in the questionnaire, followed by the qualitative results of the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups. When possible, the qualitative analysis will be presented along with the questionnaires results.

These are the subjects that will be discussed along the text:

- Frequency and characteristics of the phenomenon (§ 3.1);
- Personal safety perception (§ 3.2);
- Capacity to identify homosexual people and visibility (§ 3.3);
- Opinions on homosexuality (§ 3.4);
- Emotional reactions to homosexuality (§ 3.5);
- Qualitative analysis (§ 3.6).



### § 3.1

## **FREQUENCY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PHENOMENON**

### **3.1.1. Indirect verbal offences**

As mentioned in chapter 2, in this research a specific area of investigation was dedicated to indirect verbal offences (IVO). These are offensive remarks against homosexuals not addressed to someone specific or the use of derogatory language related to homosexuality (fag, faggot, dyke etc) as a generic offence for someone, with the intention of insulting him/her not specifically for his/her sexual orientation.

It's a fact that in many Countries, accusing someone of being a homosexuals is perceived as one of the worst possible offences, while offensive remarks against homosexuals are common in conversation, even when they don't target a specific person.

These behaviours are very affective in creating a homophobic environment that creates a sensation of unsafety, exclusion and unease/malaise in homosexual people who may witness them, even if they're not the target of this behaviour and are therefore highly relevant for this survey.

Charts 7a and 7b present replies to the following questions:

→ *During this school-year, how many times have you ever HEARD WORDS such as “fag, faggot, queer, bent...”, in your school, to identify male students who are or appear to be homosexual?*  
→ *And words such as “dyke, invertite...” to identify female students who are or appear to be homosexual?*

Charts 7a and 7b

Frequency: HEARD WORDS (valid %) \* gender of the target and \* Country

<b>valid %</b>	<b>Fag, faggot...</b>	<b>Dyke, invertite...</b>
Always	13,1	2,6
Often	23,5	7,2
Sometimes	23,2	18,8
Seldom	21,0	30,5
Never	19,2	40,8
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

valid %	Fag, faggot...				Dyke, invertite...			
	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Always	8,3	15,1	26,5	3,9	1,3	4,1	2,7	3,3
Often	22,2	31,4	13,8	22,4	6,2	10,1	5,0	7,2
Sometimes	16,5	27,5	27,7	30,3	15,1	25,2	11,2	28,3
Seldom	23,2	18,1	19,2	23,0	26,5	33,0	34,2	33,6
Never	29,8	7,8	12,7	20,4	51,0	27,5	46,9	27,6
TOT	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

More than one third of the respondents state that they heard “always” or “often” derogatory expressions about homosexual males in their school; the percentage is considerably lower for derogatory words targeting female homosexuals (9,8% vs. 36,6%) – in all the local contexts.

We find some noticeable differences in the National sub-samples: Italy and Poland appear to be the Countries where offences towards male homosexuals are more common, while for female homosexuals the situation is worse in Italy and Spain. This result may depend on purely linguistic features and doesn't in mean that the situation is in itself better of worse, but the abundance of homophobic language is a mirror of social homophobia in general and describes the constant indirect pressure homosexuals teenagers are exposed to.

In order to provide an easier analysis of these data, we computed an synthetic index named “frequency in exposure to homophobic IVO”. It's a continuum that ranges from a maximum of 100 in the theoretic case all respondents replied “always”, to the opposite minimum of 0 in the theoretic case all respondents replied “never”.

This index is presented in chart 8, analysed on the grounds of the gender, Country, role and parents' education of respondents. The ‘\*’ (star) indicates that within the same column and sub-group, the result is significantly different from one “type” of respondents to another.

Chart 8

HEARD WORDS – Synthetic index of “frequency in exposure to homophobic IVO” (0-100)

\* gender, Country, role and parents’ education

	Fag, faggot...	Dyke, invertite...
TOT	47,6	25,1
Males	54,9*	26,7
Females	43,5*	24,1
Students	53,1*	29,1*
Teachers	32,1*	12,1*
Non teaching personnel (NTP)	27,6*	15,2*
Students M	62,4*	31,1*
Students F	47,8*	27,9*
Teachers M	35,8*	13,8*
Teachers F	30,2*	11,1*
NTP M	31,5*	19,2*
NTP F	25,5*	13,0*
Compulsory education	50,0*	25,2
Technical – upper education	43,3*	23,4
University education	52,7*	27,4
Austria	39,0*	20,1*
Italy	57,0*	32,6*
Poland	55,6*	20,6*
Spain	41,6*	31,3*

The statistical analysis shows a series of perceptible differences in the exposure to homophobic indirect verbal offences:

- In general it's easy to see that it affects male homosexuals much more than female homosexuals; although less epidemic, IVO targeting females is present. These features are common to all the sub-groups, whatever the “divide” is;
- The different sub-groups tend to have similar opinions regarding homophobic bullying targeting females, while difference in perception of homophobic bullying targeting males show relevant differences among all sub-groups;
- The sub-groups more exposed to homophobic bullying targeting males are (in decreasing order): male students, Italians, Polish, males, and students in general;
- The ones who are less aware of homophobic bullying targeting males, are: females among non teaching personnel, non teaching personnel in general, female teachers and males among NTP.

Let's go more in depth on this subject by analysing the replies to the following questions (they were multiple choice questions where multiple replies were possible):

- *Who used these words?*
- *When did you hear those words?*

→ Where did you hear those words?

Charts 9a and 9b  
Who used these words (valid %), and \* Country [multi-response]

	%
Students M	95,0
Students F	56,2
Teachers M	3,2
Teachers F	0,8
NTP F/M	1,8
Others	1,9

%	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Students M	93,7	96,5	96,4	91,9
Students F	55,5	62,2	48,9	52,4
Teachers M	2,9	4,9	1,3	1,6
Teachers F	0,4	1,0	1,8	-
NTP M	1,3	2,2	2,2	-
NTP F	0,4		1,8	1,6
Others	1,1	3,5	-	3,2

For a mistake in the questionnaire print, in the Italian version Non teaching personnel was not sub-divided into males and females

Interviewed in all Countries agree on the fact that who's more likely to use homophobic offences in schools are mainly male students.

Female students play a considerable, although less visible, role, especially in Italy.

School personnel present perceptibly lower percentages; one piece of data, again from the Italian sub-sample, sticks out: almost 5% of the Italian respondents declared they heard male teachers using homophobic offences at least once.

Charts 10a and 10b  
if HEARD WORDS, when (valid %), and \* Country [multiresponse]

	%
During class	33,8
Between classes, during the break	80,4
Before school begins	50,0
After school	41,7

%	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
During class	38,0	25,8	47,6	19,7
Between classes, during the break	93,5	60,5	88,0	83,6
Before school begins	34,0	77,5	49,8	18,9
After school	47,4	30,8	51,1	39,3

Charts 11a and 11b  
If HEARD WORDS, where (valid %), e \* Country [multiresponse]

	%
In the classroom	57,0
In the hall, lobbies, schoolyard	80,6
In toilets, locker-room	28,4
In the gym	27,8

%	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
In the classroom	64,3	49,8	61,4	45,0
In the hall, lobbies, schoolyard	80,4	89,1	76,2	59,6
In toilets, locker-room	19,0	32,8	38,6	30,3
In the gym	21,0	29,1	45,3	15,6

Charts 10a and 11a confirm what had already emerged from previous surveys and from the experiences of LGBT activists and students: homophobic bullying takes place mostly in times and places that are unsupervised by adults. Breaks, halls, classrooms between classes are the contexts where this type of violence is most frequent.

It must be pointed out that even supervised contexts like classes may witness episodes of verbal violence against LGBT students or students who are perceived as such. This is particularly true for the Polish sub-sample.

It's difficult to say whether these "accessory" contexts are unsupervised because they're perceived by teachers and school personnel as outside of their responsibility or because they become de-regulated notwithstanding school policies.

It's likely that different schools supervise these spaces in different ways and that school personnel may guard them differently; only in-depth case studies can respond to this. National policies may also vary.

Charts 12 and 13 give us a hand in interpreting this point by analysing the role of respondents.

They prove that students and school personnel have similar patterns in responses. The intensity varies, proving that students are more present in general during homophobic episodes, but adults are well aware of what the contexts and timing may be. Replies by non teaching personnel present more similarities to the ones given by students than to the ones given by teachers. They especially are the adults more aware of homophobic bullying in timings and places others than class, proving an important source to prevent and contrast it.

Cocker-rooms and toilets prove, as expected, the most unsupervised context and therefore the place where homophobic bullying goes less perceived by adults.

Chart 12  
If HEARD WORDS, when (valid %) \* role [multiresponse]

%	Students	Teachers	NTP
During class	33,8	35,0	27,3
Between classes, during the break	79,7	82,8	86,4
Before school begins	55,7	25,6	40,9
After school	44,9	26,1	47,7

Chart 13  
If HEARD WORDS, where (valid %) \* role [multiresponse]

%	Students	Teachers	NTP
In the classroom	59,7	49,0	36,4
In the hall, lobbies, schoolyard	80,0	81,4	93,2
In toilets, locker-room	32,7	12,3	15,9
In the gym	31,8	12,3	15,9

### 3.1.2 Written bullying

We will now analyse another type of homophobic bullying present in schools: written bullying:

→ During this school-year, how many times have you READ WORDS such as “fag, faggot, queer, bent...” in your school, to identify male students that are or appear to be homosexual?  
 → And words such as “dyke, invertite...” to identify female students who are or appear to be homosexual?  
 → Where did you read these words?

Charts 14a and 14b  
Frequency of READ WORDS (valid %) \* gender of the targeted person, and\* Country

valid %	Male Target	Female Target
Always	3,6	1,6
Often	8,4	3,1
Sometimes	19,9	10,6
Seldom	26,4	28,9
Never	41,7	55,9
TOT	100,0	100,0

valid %	Male Target				Female Target			
	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Always	1,1	2,8	10,4	4,6	0,3	1,6	4,2	2,0
Often	5,5	12,4	10,0	5,3	2,5	3,9	2,3	4,6
Sometimes	11,6	28,6	18,8	30,9	6,1	14,8	8,5	20,4
Seldom	25,6	26,0	29,2	25,7	22,3	34,0	35,4	29,6
Never	56,2	30,2	31,5	33,6	68,9	45,6	49,6	43,4
TOT	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Written homophobic bullying appears to be less common than indirect verbal offences (see Charts 7a and 7b), in all national sub-samples. Here, like previously verified for IVO, males tend to be more targeted than females.

Chart 15 confirms this information and presents exposure patterns similar to the ones presented in chart 8.

Chart 15  
 READ WORDS – Synthetic index of “exposure to written homophobic bullying (0-100) \*  
 gender, Country, role and parents’ education level

	Male Target	Female Target
TOT	26,5	16,4
Males	27,1	16,9
Females	26,3	16,2
Students	30,3*	19,5*
Teachers	14,0*	6,3*
Non teaching personnel (NTP)	18,7*	10,1*
Students M	32,3*	20,7*
Students F	29,2*	18,8*
Teachers M	12,7*	5,6*
Teachers F	15,0*	7,0*
NTP M	15,7*	11,6*
NTP F	20,3*	9,4*
Compulsory education	29,0	18,0
Technical – upper education	22,7	14,2
University education	30,4	18,8
Austria	17,5*	10,8*
Italy	32,9*	20,5*
Poland	34,6*	19,0*
Spain	30,4*	23,0*

In the case of written bullying, the gender of witnesses doesn't effect the replies, while for IVO male respondents tended to witness more cases. Probably the places where this form of violence is perpetrated are cross-sectional to the gender variable.

A variable that is not cross-section is the role: as for indirect verbal offences, adults (especially teachers but also non teaching personnel) appear to be less exposed to this kind of bullying.

Charts 16a, 16b and 16c analyse where the writings are read and by whom.

Charts 16a, 16b and 16c  
if READ WORDS, where (valid %), and \* Country and \* role [multiresponse]

	%
Exterior walls	33,3
Walls inside the school	31,7
Bathroom doors	57,4
Paper	28,0
Notebooks	16,2
Blackboard	21,1
Other	18,3

%	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Exterior walls	11,0	47,5	39,7	40,2
Walls inside the school	30,8	38,6	31,0	13,0
Bathroom doors	44,7	71,3	55,2	53,3
Paper	48,0	16,5	25,9	10,9
Notebooks	15,4	14,9	16,7	21,7
Blackboard	21,6	16,5	22,4	32,6
Other	20,5	13,2	30,5	5,4

%	Students	Teachers	NTP
Exterior walls	35,2	22,3	28,1
Walls inside the school	33,0	25,2	21,9
Bathroom doors	59,6	38,8	65,6
Paper	27,1	37,9	18,8
Notebooks	18,3	3,9	9,4
Blackboard	22,3	11,7	28,1
Other	17,2	25,2	21,9

Replies give a complex picture.

Bathroom doors emerge anyway as the place where the majority, in each sub-sample, witnesses cases of written bullying.

Exterior walls are another place that features high percentages, especially for Italy, Poland and Spain. Exterior walls, as emerged in qualitative interviews, present a specific controversy in terms of competence (whether they're under the school's responsibility or not). Whether they're part of the school personnel's duty or not, they highly influence the perception of security and inclusiveness.



### 3.1.3 Exclusion

Exclusion is another type of bullying, when it's purposely acted by the group of peers. In charts 17a and 17b we analyse the replies to the following questions:

→ *During this school-year, in your school, have you ever seen a student ISOLATED or MARGINALISED because he is or seems to be homosexual?*  
 → *During this school-year, in your school, have you ever seen a student ISOLATED or MARGINALISED because she is or seems to be homosexual?*

Charts 17a and 17b

Frequency of SEEN ISOLATED/MARGINALISED (valid %) \* gender of the target and \* Country

valid %	Male Target	Female Target
Always	2,7	1,5
Often	4,2	1,4
Sometimes	11,8	4,6
Seldom	17,4	17,7
Never	63,9	74,8
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

valid %	Male Target				Female Target			
	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Always	1,7	1,2	5,8	6,2	1,1	0,5	2,3	4,6
Often	3,6	3,0	4,6	9,7	1,5	0,9	1,5	2,6
Sometimes	6,8	10,7	20,5	20,0	3,9	3,9	5,8	7,2
Seldom	11,6	22,9	13,5	32,4	6,9	16,5	17,4	65,1
Never	76,4	62,1	55,6	31,7	86,6	78,2	73,0	20,4
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

As expected, the percentage of people who witness this kind of behaviour is noticeably lower than the previous types; especially the answer “always” and “often” present a decrease of 19 for male targets and 7 for female targets compared to indirect verbal offences and a decrease of 3 point percentage for male targets and 2 for female targets compared to written bullying.

Spain and Poland appear to be the Countries where such behaviours are more common, both for male and female students who are or are perceived as homosexuals.

We present in chart 18 the usual synthetic index “frequency in exposure to exclusion”.

Chart 18  
SEEN ISOLATED/MARGINALISED – Synthetic index ‘frequency in exposure to exclusion’  
(0-100) \* gender, Country, role and parents’ educational level

	Male Target	Female Target
TOT	16,1	9,3
Males	17,6	9,8
Females	15,2	9,1
Students	19,1*	11,5*
Teachers	6,8*	2,2*
Non teaching personnel (NTP)	7,6*	4,6*
Students M	21,5*	12,4*
Students F	17,7*	11,0*
Teachers M	7,2*	2,8*
Teachers F	6,7*	1,8*
NTP M	5,8*	2,8*
NTP F	8,6*	5,6*
Compulsory education	20,0*	11,6*
Technical – upper education	12,6*	6,9*
University education	17,4*	10,4*
Austria	10,7*	5,9*
Italy	14,6*	7,2*
Poland	22,9*	10,7*
Spain	31,6*	26,5*

Reading the information given the general transnational sample, the two main interpretative axis:

- The gender of the victim – males are far more victimized than females
- The role of the observer – students, on the one hands, and adults on the other, seem to live in the same school, but in different contexts.

In partial discordance with what emerged previously, the gender of the witness isn’t relevant, in this case.

### 3.1.4 Violent bullying

At the other end of the scale, we find the most grave kind of violence: the explicit, direct verbal or physical violence against; bullying itself. In order to gather data on this kind of behaviour we used the following questions:

- During this school-year, in your school, have you ever seen a student *MOCKED, OFFENDED* or *ASSAULTED* because he is or seems to be homosexual?
- During this school-year, in your school, have you ever seen a student *MOCKED, OFFENDED* or *ASSAULTED* because she is or seems to be homosexual?
- Who mocked, offended, assaulted these students?
- Did someone intervene to help who was being offended or assaulted?
- Why do you think people don't intervene in school to help who is offended or assaulted?
- If someone did intervene, who was it?
- Did you 'speak up' to defend who was being offended or assaulted?
- Explain why you did or why you didn't intervene

### Charts 19a and 19b

Frequency of SEEN *MOCKED/OFFENDED/ASSAULTED* (valid %) \*gender of the victim and \* Country

valid %	Male Target	Female Target
Always	3,3	1,2
Often	6,7	1,6
Sometimes	15,0	5,8
Seldom	21,2	17,1
Never	53,8	74,3
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

valid %	Male Target				Female Target			
	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Always	1,5	2,5	5,0	9,9	0,3	0,5	1,9	5,9
Often	4,9	7,6	8,1	8,6	1,5	1,2	2,7	1,3
Sometimes	11,3	13,6	16,2	32,2	4,6	4,4	5,0	15,8
Seldom	20,4	22,4	20,4	22,4	11,9	19,9	15,4	33,6
Never	61,9	53,9	50,4	27,0	81,7	74,1	75,0	43,4
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

Chart 19a presents results that are more alarming, especially for male students, than the ones we met in chart 17a: respondents affirm they've witnessed more people being ill-treated and assaulted (verbally or physically) than cases of people being excluded, confirming the fact that the scale we decided to analyse (indirect verbal offences, exclusion, violent behaviours) isn't linear and that the phenomenon we try to describe here is multi-faceted.

While cases of homophobic verbal or physical violence are residual for female students, they appear to be a real threat for male students who are or appear to be homosexuals, since almost 50% of the respondents witnessed such behaviours at least once in the preceding school year. This particularly emerges in the Spanish national sub-sample.

Chart 20

SEEN MOCKED/OFFENDED/ASSAULTED – Synthetic index for ‘exposure to homophobic violence/homophobic bullying’ (0-100) \* gender, Country, role, parents’ educational level

	Male Target	Female Target
TOT	21,1	9,6
Males	22,7	8,9
Females	20,2	10,0
Students	24,4*	11,4*
Teachers	11,8*	3,6*
Non teaching personnel (NTP)	8,0*	5,7*
Students M	27,5*	11,0*
Students F	22,7*	11,6*
Teachers M	10,9*	3,2*
Teachers F	12,5*	4,0*
NTP M	5,6*	4,6*
NTP F	9,4*	6,2*
Compulsory education	26,4*	13,4*
Technical – upper education	18,1*	7,7*
University education	21,6*	9,1*
Austria	15,9*	6,7*
Italy	20,6*	8,5*
Poland	24,2*	10,3*
Spain	38,0*	23,2*

Even when the phenomenon is generally more perceived as in this case, students and adults have a significantly different perception of it.

How should we interpret this difference? The two main hypothesis we can make, that may be integrated, are related to the fact that:

- Students and school personnel appear to live in two different and detached sub-contexts, with different timing, places, dynamics and actors, which are only partially communicating;
- Students and school personnel read reality through cognitive frames which diverge relevantly and define bullying in two different ways – apparently, at our complete surprise, the students’ definition is wider and more comprehensive than the one used by adults.

Chart 20 also presents an unforeseen specific (although very small) difference in responses related to the gender variable:

- What emerges is that males tend to witnesses homophobic violence against males more often than female witnesses and vice versa. This may be due to the fact that

teenage tend to spend more time with groups of their own gender and that both competitive/aggressive and coping/support dynamics are more common among peers; but it may mostly be due to the types of timing and places where violence usually takes place: restrooms, locker-rooms and other gender-divided contexts have previously been mentioned as one of the “normal environments” where violence takes place, since they’re outside of the adults’ supervision.

- This doesn’t change the wider frame that has previously strongly emerged and that is confirmed here: male students tend to be victimised significantly more often than female students; and the gender of the witness isn’t a relevant variable since males and females tend to respond similarly.

Charts 21a and 21b analyse who is perceived as the perpetrator of these acts.

Charts 21a and 21b  
if SEEN MOCKED/OFFENDED/ASSAULTED who did (valid %), and \* Country  
[multiresponse]

	%
Students M	95,3
Students F	54,1
Teachers M	3,3
Teachers F	2,0
NTP M and F	1,3
Other	0,4

%	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Students M	93,9	95,7	97,7	94,6
Students F	56,5	54,1	45,8	58,6
Teachers M	4,9	2,9	3,8	-
Teachers F	2,0	1,4	3,1	1,8
NTP M	2,4	1,4	-	-
NTP F	0,4		-	1,8
Other	2,4	1,9	0,8	1,8

For a mistake in the questionnaire print, in the Italian version Non teaching personnel was not sub-divided into males and females

In general, the frame is similar to the one we’ve seen for the indirect verbal offences (charts 9a and 9b), with male students pointed out as perpetrators of violent verbal and physical bullying by more than 90% of the respondents, followed at long distance by female students, who have anyway the significant percentage of 55%. Although adults only sum up to very low percentages, this data deserves a very special attention: here again males emerge as more likely to have violent behaviours than female (only in Poland the two groups appear to have similar behaviours). Still, almost 5% of respondents in the Austrian sub-sample and 4% in the Polish and 3% in the Italian ones affirm that they witnessed a male teacher acting violently (verbally or physically) against a student for being or being perceived as homosexuals. This is particularly grave because teachers are the ones who are suppose to ensure the students’ safety and to create a positive environment where they can express their personality.

The question “*Did someone intervene to help who was being offended or assaulted?*” is of central importance in our questionnaire, because it’s aimed at confirming what generally shared in international bullying-related analysis: that is the fact that acts of bullying, even violent behaviours, go generally unaddressed.

Charts 22a and 22b

If SEEN MOCKED/OFFENDED/ASSAULTED, frequency of intervention (valid %), and \*  
Country

	%
Always	10,8
Often	7,3
Sometimes	20,8
Seldom	23,5
Never	21,6
I don’t know	16,1
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>

valid %	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Always	9,8	-	18,9	24,5
Often	11,0	5,2	5,5	4,5
Sometimes	21,7	25,0	8,7	24,5
Seldom	22,4	27,8	19,7	21,8
Never	15,4	20,3	42,5	14,5
I don’t know	19,7	21,7	4,7	10,0
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

Charts 22a and 22b unfortunately confirm this information, although with noteworthy differences among the national sub-samples, and open the way to the following observations:

- There’s a lack of awareness of the phenomenon, especially due to lack of supervision in specific places and timing of school life, that doesn’t allow for full response to acts of violence;
- Both school personnel and peers lack the necessary skills to contrast bullying;
- Policies to address the phenomenon may privilege personal/interpersonal dynamics, therefore away from observers; this may help solve the single situation in a less contrasted way, but gives the idea of a lack of general school policy or practice against bullying.

Charts 23a, 23b, 24a, 24b and 24c complete the picture by analysing the role of who intervened and the reaction of the respondent him/herself.

Charts 23a and 23b

IF someone intervened, WHO (valid %), and \* Country [multiresponse]

	%
Students M	40,4
Students F	58,8
Teachers M	43,8
Teachers F	51,3
NTP M	6,3
NTP F	5,0
Other	7,1

valid %	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Students M	41,5	46,3	45,2	23,9
Students F	61,0	64,9	54,8	48,9
Teachers M	49,8	30,6	20,4	75,0
Teachers F	52,2	37,3	43,0	79,5
NTP M	5,4	6,0	6,5	9,1
NTP F	2,4	7,5	4,3	8,0
Other	9,3	6,7	4,3	5,7

In the transnational sample, female students (and females in general) are perceived as the most intervening. There's a perceptible difference with the males students, who present a percentage lower by 10% and it's noteworthy since male students have proved to be the ones who are the most victimised and even the more present during the violent acts. The role of non teaching personnel is minimal.

Particularly interesting is the data from the Spanish sub-sample, where the difference between male and female students is much higher and, especially, where teachers are much more active, compared to the other national sub-samples. This may also explain the lower level of intervention by students: if the school proves to have a strong policy against violence, students are less in charge of intervening themselves. In reading this information, it should be kept in mind that the Spanish sample was confined to only one school.

Charts 24a, 24b and 24c

IF SEEN MOCKED/OFFENDED/ASSAULTED, "Did you 'speak up' to defend who was offended or assaulted?" (valid %), and \* Country and \* role

	%
Always	16,9
Often	14,2
Sometimes	26,2
Seldom	16,1
Never	26,6
TOT	100,0

valid %	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Always	20,2	8,1	25,6	16,4
Often	17,8	14,8	10,9	9,1
Sometimes	24,8	26,2	11,6	46,4
Seldom	16,1	19,5	10,9	15,5
Never	21,1	31,4	41,1	12,7
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

valid %	Students M	Students F	Teachers M	Teachers F	NTP M	NTP F
Always	11,4	8,2	65,0	53,6	33,3	36,4
Often	12,3	14,2	25,0	19,6	-	-
Sometimes	21,5	31,5	10,0	17,9	50,0	27,3
Seldom	21,0	16,5	-	7,1	-	18,2
Never	33,8	29,5	-	1,8	16,7	18,2
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

It's interesting to point out that chart 24c reflects the mirror image of what we've seen in chart 23a, with some very important specificities that must be pointed out:

- Female students perceive themselves as much less intervening, compared to how the general sample perceives them;
- Male teachers have all replied “always”, “often” or “sometimes”, presenting a perception of themselves as much more intervening than the one given by the general sample;
- Also the non teaching personnel portray themselves as more intervening than they are in the general perception.

In order to further understand the dynamics of intervention and non intervention, the questionnaire asked “*Why do you think people don't intervene in school to help who is offended or assaulted?*” and “*Explain why you did or why you didn't intervene*”. The analysis of these open questions was left to developed to local researchers and will follow in the next chapters.

### 3.1.4a

#### Qualitative analysis – The Italia case, by Laura Pozzoli

1) *Why do you think people don't intervene in school to defend the “victim”?*

189 people in the Italian sample replied to this question.

We can organise replies in these groups of motivations:

- One is linked to the fear of repercussions that defending the victim of homophobic bullying can bring about (respondents fear that by standing out they themselves may be identified as homosexuals and be isolated or become the target of bullying)
- One blames contemporary society, for being individualistic and conformist: witnesses are, in these respondents' opinion, selfish and indifferent; they also tend not to intervene in order to maintain the identification with the wider peer group



- Some replies focus on the necessary skills to detect and recognise bullying: respondents feel that the majority of witnesses tend to under evaluate the incidents, not to recognise them as bullying or are not even present when these acts take place
- Some respondents underline the fact that most witnesses tend not to intervene because they share the homophobic prejudices acted out by the bullies
- Few respondents say that defence is the victim’s responsibility, therefore there’s no moral obligation for witnesses to intervene in their defence
- Few replies, not numerous but significant, focus on the target of bullying, following the well known mechanism of “blaming the victim”: it’s the students who are or are perceived as homosexuals who, for being what they are, expose themselves to bullying and ill-treatment, so there’s nothing that witnesses can or should do about it.

On the basis of this classification, we gathered the replies in chart 25. Replies here outnumber the total of 189, because some replies were transversal to 2 or more classes and were counted as multiple replies.

Chart 25  
If SEEN MOCKED/OFFENDED/ASSAULTED, “Why do you think people don’t intervene in school to defend the “victim”?”

	n.
They fear possible consequences	53
Indifference, selfishness	34
Conformist attitude	27
They’re afraid to be identified as homosexuals	24
They underestimate the facts	22
They share homophobic prejudice	12
They think victims should defend themselves	8
They’re not present when bullying takes place	6
They think it’s the victim’s fault	5
I don’t know	3

As we can see from chart 25, the fear of being identified as homosexuals is the reason mostly pointed out to justify the lack of intervention to defend victims. This underlines the specificity of homophobic bullying as opposed (for example) to racist bullying: someone white who’s willing to stand up against racist bullying won’t be stopped by the fear of being identified as the member of a specific ethnic minority.

Victims of homophobic bullying find themselves potentially more isolated than victims of other typed of bullying.

## 2) Explain why you did or didn’t intervene

178 respondents replied to this question.

17 respondents affirmed that they have never been direct witnesses of homophobic bullying, while 52 of them affirmed they had witnessed it but never or seldom intervened and gave various reasons for it. Most of the reasons follow the classes identified in chart 25.

10 respondents affirmed that the acts they witnessed were jokes and not serious and therefore didn’t call for intervention, this proving that bullying can go underestimated, while a few respondents stated that each one should mind their own business not stick their nose around.

We feel it’s important to report some of the replies to this question, especially due to the grave opinions expressed:

*- I don’t intervene because I think homosexuality is against nature and not normal*

*- I’m not interested in the subject and being a Christian I haven’t got a good opinion of gays and lesbians. God made us so that we can reproduce and homosexuals can’t*

- *I'm a fascist, so I would burn to death all gays, except for the ones that don't show they are*

- *If a homosexual is assaulted, it means that he was acting in a way that's contrary to normality. Because of the choice to offend common sense he must face the reaction, even violent, of normal people.*

Such strong negative opinions are the motivation brought for non intervening and also paint the picture of shared homophobia that greatly affects the environment gay and lesbian pupils have to deal with in school.

Chart 26

If SEEN MOCKED/OFFENDED/ASSAULTED, “Why DIDN'T you intervene?”

	n.
I've never witnessed acts of bullying	17
It was just an harmless joke	10
One should mind his/her own business	9
I shared the onions of the bully/bullies	6
I was afraid of possible repercussions	5
It was the victim's fault	3
I was the bully	2

The others respondents did intervene. The reasons they bring about to explain why they reacted can be organised in the following classes:

- Affirmation of equality and contrast of sexual-orientation based discrimination
- A general sense of injustice and respect for others; in these kind of responses, attention is focused on the offence and the unacceptability of any kind of violent behaviour
- The reference to the unbalance of power between the victim and the bully/bullies, to the weakness of the person who's targeted and to his/her inability to defend him/herself and therefore to the necessity of an external support
- A smaller group of respondents focused on themselves, on their feelings at the moment of the incident and their initiative (“I intervened because I felt like it” “Because I always say what I think”).
- Some teachers focused on the educational motivations at the basis of their intervention
- Three respondents affirmed they intervene because the accuse of homosexuality was false.

Chart 27

If SEEN MOCKED/OFFENDED/ASSAULTED, “Why DID you intervene?” (Italian, n.)

	n.
Reaction to injustice	34
Unfair balance between the victim and the bully/bullies	24
To contrast homophobia	21
Personal initiative	6
Educational reasons (teachers)	4
The victim was not homosexual	3

### 3.1.4b

#### Qualitative analysis – the Polish case, by Marta Abramowicz

1) *Why do you think people don't intervene in school to help who is offended or assaulted?*

The answers on this question are focused on 5 main points:

- Fear

People are afraid that they will be physically attacked if they defend a gay person or people are afraid that they will be perceived as a gay person themselves. In such case they would become a victim of homophobic attacks too, physical and psychological as well.

- Indifference  
People just do not care about what is happening to the others and they do not pay attention – especially when they just do not identify with the suffering of the gay victim, treating him/her as a member of the out-group, not of the in-group. It is also thinking: ‘It is not my problem’.
- Silent approval  
People are aware of what is happening in school and they can even be against violence, but they agree of what is done to gay people in schools.
- Supporting of homophobic actions  
There are some people who support homophobic attacks and they agree with the thought ‘We should eliminate gay people’. They might cover their homophobia in every day life (but not necessarily) and when they are witnesses of an incident they support offenders.
- Treating hate speech as a joke  
Hate speech in Poland is so common, used every day also by politicians, that people are just used to such words as faggot or dyke. Offensive incidents are treated by people as jokes – sometimes cruel, but still they do not perceive it as something serious.

## 2) Explain why you did or you didn't intervene

There are only a few answers explaining why people did intervene – the reason they present is always the same: it is obvious that you should react to violence or insults towards other people. Most of the answers concern why people did not intervene. The same explanations as at the previous question appear. People mention:

- Fear – They are afraid to be beaten or verbally attacked  
*- I was afraid to be also beaten, because it is terrible and since now I will also call you gay!*
- Indifference  
*- I was not interested, because this person should deal her/himself with it or ask older pupils for help.*
- Silent approval  
*- Why should I react? I feel gays are ugly or more openly homophobic than others.*  
*- I don't like gays.*
- Some people mention that they did not feel like to intervene because they perceived the situation as a joke  
*- I know it is just for jokes.*

### 3.1.4c

#### Qualitative analysis – the Austrian case, by Roman Winkler

##### 1) Why do you think people don't intervene in school to help who is offended or assaulted?

Basically, there are three major reasons why people in school (teachers, students and other school actors) do not intervene in case of homophobic bullying:

- Homophobic bullying is part of the ‘daily language’ in school  
Respondents state that words such as ‘gay’, ‘faggot’ or ‘dyke’ are almost daily used in school.  
Hence, there is a lack of awareness of the meanings of these words respectively they are used indifferently.

- Fear
 

The majority of the surveyed persons indicate that group dynamic factors and peer pressure are the main reasons why people do not counteract homophobic bullying in school.

People are afraid to be labelled as gay/lesbian if they help those who are bullied in school due to their sexual orientation.

Some also state that those who help others run the risk to become a target too – “*To get into the cross-fire*”.

Moreover, there is the fear to become isolated and to lose the social status in the classroom and in school.
- Lack of civil courage
 

Some respondents hold that there is too little awareness of homophobic bullying in school and a lack of civil courage.

These arguments link to the previous category – the lack of awareness and courage is often nurtured by fear.

2) *Explain why you did or why you didn't intervene*

Respondents who did or who would intervene in case of homophobic bullying indicate the following arguments (summary) for their acting:

- Discrimination (whatever form it might have) must not be accepted in school
- Homosexuality is as ‘normal’ as heterosexuality
- Intervention is a moral obligation
- Part of the school regulation
- To prevent escalation in the classroom
- To question heterosexual norms

By contrast, another groups of surveyed persons also state why they did not or would not intervene in case of homophobic bullying in school. Again, the following represents a summary of the main arguments:

- Lack of time – ‘Because, I was in a hurry’
- Indifference regarding homophobic bullying – ‘Not my business’
- Intervention would not make a difference – the ‘bullies’ would not stop attacking gay or lesbian students
- The ‘situation’ was not serious enough; there were no physical attacks – just verbal attacks
- People have to resolve such conflicts on their own

## § 3.2

### **PERSONAL SAFETY PERCEPTION**

This chapter analyses the responses to the following questions:

- Do you think that a homosexual male student feels safe in your school? Why?
- Do you think that that a homosexual female student feels safe in your school? Why?
- For a gay or lesbian student, how are these words (fag, faggot, queer, dyke, invertite... )?
- If someone used those words with you, how would you feel?

#### Charts 28a and 28b

Level of personal safety in school (valid %) \*gender , and \* Country

	Gay student	Lesbian student
Yes, very safe	9,4	13,4
Quite safe	31,4	31,1
Little safe	23,2	19,1
No, not safe at all	12,3	10,2
I don't know	23,7	26,2
<i>TOT</i>	100,0	100,0

valid %	Gay student				Lesbian student			
	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Yes, very safe	10,2	7,2	13,5	5,3	13,3	11,8	21,4	4,7
Quite safe	22,4	45,6	33,5	22,1	22,8	42,2	35,7	25,3
Little safe	23,6	19,0	22,3	36,6	20,5	17,1	14,3	27,3
No, not safe at all	13,9	9,0	13,9	12,2	11,0	9,7	8,3	12,0
I don't know	29,9	19,2	16,7	23,7	32,3	19,4	20,2	30,7
<i>TOT</i>	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Almost one fourth of the sample say they can't reply to this question, especially when they're asked to evaluate the safety of lesbian students. This high percentage is mainly due to the incapacity to identify with a homosexual student on the one hand and to the lack of visibility of homosexual pupils on the other (especially of lesbian students)

In any case, the perception of safety is highly different for gay students and for lesbian students. Male homosexuals are perceived as more unsafe than females: the gap between the positive pole (very safe – quite safe) and the negative pole (little safe – not safe at all) for males is only 5% (40,8% vs. 35,7%), while for females it's about 15% (44,5% vs. 29,3%).

Lesbian students appear to be:

- More difficult to identify (as will be confirmed further on the report);
- Safer in schools, probably also due to their lesser visibility.

National sub-samples present relevant differences: in general the choice of respondents for the "milder" replies, both in the positive and negative areas, but in the Austrian and Spanish sub

samples gay students are perceived and more unsafe than in the Italian and Polish sub-sample, where most respondents concentrated on the “positive” pole. This may be due to the types of school involved and also to the peers’ awareness of the phenomenon of bullying (we should keep in mind that the research focused on the perception of peers and teachers; a sample made up of only gay and lesbian students would have probably given a radically different perspective).

Charts 29a, 29b, 30a and 30b confirm the difficulty respondents have in identifying with homosexuals and the tendency to underestimate the seriousness of words and terms that are offensive for homosexuals.

#### Charts 29a and 29b

“For a gay/lesbian students, words like ‘fag’, ‘faggot’, ‘dyke’.. are:” (valid %), and \* Country

	%
Very offensive	44,8
Quite offensive	28,4
Little offensive	5,5
Not offensive at all	3,4
I don’t know	13,5
Other	4,4
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>

	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Very offensive	33,2	51,9	54,3	57,2
Quite offensive	31,5	29,6	24,6	18,4
Little offensive	8,8	3,2	4,3	0,7
Not offensive at all	6,0	1,7	2,0	-
I don’t know	15,0	10,4	10,2	21,1
Other	5,4	3,2	4,7	2,6
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

#### Charts 30a and 30b

“If someone used words like ‘fag’, ‘faggot’, ‘dyke’... with you, how would you feel? ” (valid %), and \* Country

	%
Very offended	37,3
Quite offended	19,8
Little offended	11,1
Not offended at all	17,2
I don’t know	6,3
Other	8,3
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>

	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Very offended	22,1	48,3	52,5	42,1
Quite offended	18,4	24,1	14,8	21,7
Little offended	10,4	11,1	11,3	13,8
Not offended at all	30,1	8,1	5,1	11,2
I don't know	7,5	n.d.	11,7	9,9
Other	11,4	8,3	4,7	1,3
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

Note: for a printing mistake, in the Italian version, the option “*I don't know*” wasn't present

We asked respondents to motivate the answers given in charts 28a and 28b. Local researchers analysed the related replies.

### 3.2a

#### Qualitative analysis – the Italian case, by Laura Pozzoli

- *Why does a homosexual male/female student feel safe/unsafe in your school?*

Respondents who replied to this question are 346 out of the general sample of 437.

Who sustained that homosexual students (or students who are perceived as homosexuals) are safe, gave these classes of motivations:

- Their school doesn't experience cases or situations of bullying, in general
- Their school population has no prejudice and is supportive and tolerant towards anyone. Racism and discrimination are a thing of the past
- None of the students is really capable of harming or seriously offending anyone
- Since they've never witnessed acts of bullying, they perceive the school as objectively safe
- There are no violent acts, at the most mocking which doesn't really affect the safety of students
- Only few respondents account for their perception of safety with the ability of school personnel to prevent and contrast violence. Only one teacher mentions a project implemented in the school on sexual orientation and sexual orientation related discrimination
- Only one reply, but noteworthy, points out the fact that sexual orientations alternative to heterosexuality are kept hidden in order to avoid bullying

Respondents who perceive their school as little safe or not safe at all for homosexual students give these classes of motivations:

- The generalised machist environment makes the school an unsafe place for gay students
- Negative attitudes towards homosexuality are still very present in society and therefore in school
- Some respondents point out at the unsafety perception shared by all members of minorities in general
- Others point out the general violent attitude of adolescents in general, who are generally unaware of the possible consequences of their words or actions.

### 3.2b

#### Qualitative analysis – the Polish case, by Marta Abramowicz

- *Why does a homosexual male/female student feel safe/unsafe in your school?*

The answers to this question characterize very well Polish people attitude towards homosexuality.

First of all, most of the respondents point out that there are no gays and lesbians in their schools, or there even might be, but “*We don’t talk about it*”. The answers show that homosexuality is a taboo in schools and gays and lesbians live closeted – the same as mature homosexual people in Polish society. Here are a few examples of such typical statements:

- *I think we don’t have any gays or lesbians in our school.*
- *Nobody publicly has said they’re gay or lesbian. I think they only say it to some people they trust. Like my friend has said it to me.*
- *The problem is not visible in our school. But I suppose that if somebody finds out that someone is gay or lesbian he or she would have some problems.*

The hate speech is so common that many people declare that they are used to it or they treat it as a joke:

- *The word ‘faggot’ is frequently used in our school but I think in my school people use it as synonymous for ‘stupid’.*

Another group of answers shows that people are “*almost tolerant*”, they just do not accept gay people – it means that you can be tolerant (you can think this about yourself, you can be perceived as tolerant by other people) and does not automatically include that you will be tolerant for gay people. Gays and lesbians are very often so marginalized that they are not even mentioned in discussions on how to prevent discrimination:

- *Almost tolerant. We don’t discriminate openly, but many of us make fun of gays and lesbians.*
- *Because, besides general tolerance, people do not accept gays and lesbians.*

There were also a few openly homophobic statements:

- *Normal school - without gays and lesbians - lucky us!*

People also claim that there is tolerance in schools, but with an exception: there are people with fascist views among students:

- *My school is in Western Poland, so homosexuality is not a strange thing and not too many people are surprised by homosexuals. So, they can feel safe, except while with contact with nationalists.*

Finally, I would like to present two interesting statements:

- *Sometimes the violence is to protect heterosexuals against homosexuals. We don’t know how to behave so we attack*

It shows that heterosexual majority attacks gay people because they do not know any other way of behaviour than attacking, and also underlines that heterosexual people feel threaten by gay people.

There is a common myth very strong in Poland that gay people are focused only on sex and they want to seduce heterosexual healthy persons.

- *It depends if you show off*

It shows the attitude of many people – gays as well – that gay people should not show off their own orientation publicly. Showing publicly means, for example, to say that he/she has a partner, not to mention to be an activist of LGBT organization.

If a gay person does it, he or she is exposed to attacks with the silent or loud approval of the rest of society, because our society believes that sexual orientation is a private issue and should be kept secret.



### 3.2c

#### Qualitative analysis – the Austrian case, by Roman Winkler

- *Why does a homosexual male/female student feel safe/unsafe in your school?*

Apart from a few 'I don't know' answers regarding the safety of homosexual students in school, most of the responses can be grouped in two major categories:

- Homosexuality as a taboo

Some respondents state that homosexuality is not an issue in their schools.

Among this group of surveyed persons, there are those who hold that "*Homophobia does not exist*" in their schools and those who say that the issue is deliberately not dealt with in school to avoid any further conflicts.

- Tolerance towards homosexual students

Most of the responses in this category indicate that gay and lesbian students are not excluded in school.

However, they are also not treated specially due to their sexual orientation – the responses let rather assume that being gay/lesbian is part of school life and students are equally included or excluded from the school community like any other student. Some respondents state that sexual orientation is not a "*criterion for belonging*".

Nevertheless, there are a few answers expressing obvious aggressions towards gay and lesbian students (Example: "*Gay men are disgusting while lesbian women are lustful*" or "*Gays will be beaten*").

Fortunately, such answers have not represented the common opinion of the surveyed persons. Nevertheless, they must be taken seriously since they are indices that homophobic bullying does exist and often correlates with sexism (Example: "*I think gay people are abnormal, but I don't mind lesbians, because they excite me*").

### § 3.3

#### VISIBILITY AND PRESENCE

In this chapter we will analyse the outcomes to 2 questions, strictly connected:

- How you can understand that a boy/girl is gay/lesbian?  
 → In your school do you personally know at least one gay/lesbian student?

Charts 31a and 31b

How do you recognise (valid %) \* gender, and \* Country [multiresponse, max 2 answers]

	Gay student	Lesbian student
How he/she acts (walks, moves... )	62,8	30,4
Clothes, how he/she cares about own image	24,2	19,7
People he/she hangs around with	10,8	16,6
How he/she addresses other people, how he/she talks	38,6	20,1
What he/she does in spare time (hobbies, interests... )	5,0	7,5
Subjects he/she likes in school / he/she's best at	0,5	0,6
Impossible to understand it	24,6	44,0
Other	6,3	7,8

valid %	Gay student				Lesbian student			
	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
How he/she acts (walks, moves... )	61,6	76,9	30,4	82,4	28,9	34,2	9,7	62,3
Clothes, how he/she cares about own image	21,9	27,0	30,0	15,5	16,0	23,7	13,6	33,6
People he/she hangs around with	6,8	16,4	13,2	6,8	15,4	23,7	10,5	11,6
How he/she addresses other people, how he/she talks	29,8	53,1	23,0	59,5	13,7	30,5	7,8	37,7
What he/she does in spare time (hobbies, interests... )	4,4	6,9	5,4	0,7	6,3	8,8	5,4	12,3
Subjects he/she likes in school / he/she's best at	0,2	0,2	0,4	2,7	0,7	0,7	0,8	-
Impossible to understand it	28,0	14,8	40,5	11,5	46,7	36,7	65,9	15,1
Other	9,9	4,4	4,7	-	12,0	6,0	5,4	-

These data give us some important information:

- The majority of respondents doesn't converge on single aspects. On the contrary, replies distribute a wide range of possibilities;

- This is particularly so for lesbian students; in this case, the reply mostly chosen is ‘Impossible to understand it’;
- There are significant difference in the national sub-samples; in particular, Polish respondents seem much more careful in attributing any specific sexual orientation on the basis of these elements.

Further to this point, charts 32a and 32b analyse the direct acquaintance of respondents to homosexual people in their school.

Charts 32a and 32b  
 “In you school do you personally know... ?” (valid %), and \* Country and \* role

	Gay student	Lesbian student
Yes, we are friends	9,7	4,5
Yes, but not very well	9,0	6,8
There’s at least one, but I don’t know him/her personally	14,4	9,4
No	9,9	10,7
I don’t know	57,0	68,6
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

valid %	Gay student				Lesbian student			
	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain	Austria	Italy	Poland	Spain
Yes, we are friends	6,4	7,9	12,8	21,7	4,2	5,7	3,9	3,3
Yes, but not very well	6,8	7,9	12,1	15,8	8,5	5,4	5,8	5,3
There’s at least one, but I don’t know him/her personally	10,2	20,3	10,5	21,1	9,3	14,2	5,8	2,7
No	8,8	4,4	24,1	5,9	6,9	6,1	27,6	9,3
I don’t know	67,9	59,4	40,5	35,5	71,1	68,6	56,8	79,3
<i>TOT</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

Surprisingly, most of respondents replied that they don’t know whether there were homosexual students in their school. Instead of taking for granted that there’s none, since they don’t know any, they prefer to infer that they don’t know (implying that it’s possible). Here again, uncertainty grows in relation to lesbian students.

About 10% of respondents are sure that there are no homosexual students, both gays and lesbians.

Personal acquaintance, even if superficial, characterizes 18,7% of respondents for gay students, and 11,3% for lesbians, proving once again the lower visibility of female homosexual students.

Differently from the previous question, in these case national sub-samples don't present perceptible differences.

### § 3.4

#### OPINIONS ON HOMOSEXUALITY

We also wanted to include in the questionnaire some questions to detect the opinions about homosexuality in general, not connected with bullying.

In defining this set of questions, we selected the most common biases and shared ideas about homosexuality.

Charts 33a, 33b, 33c, 33d and 33e  
Do you agree with the following statements (valid %), and \* Country

	Sign	Yes completely	Yes quite	Not really	Not at all	I don't know	TOT
If someone has an homosexual orientation, he/she should do anything to overcome it	-	9,5	10,2	23,4	45,9	11,1	100,0
I would change my feelings towards a friend, if I discovered he/she is homosexual	-	5,7	9,1	20,6	54,3	10,3	100,0
Homosexuals should not be allowed to work with minors	-	5,6	6,3	14,6	69,0	4,6	100,0
Homosexuality should be condemned because it's against nature	-	7,5	6,5	14,0	66,7	5,3	100,0
Homosexuality is simply an expression of sexuality and affectivity, just like any other	+	47,7	22,7	8,6	11,5	9,5	100,0
One becomes gay or lesbian because he/she had disturbed relationships with one or both parents	-	4,4	7,4	19,9	40,5	27,8	100,0
Most of the problems of homosexual people are caused by negative attitudes from society	+	31,2	33,5	8,8	12,6	13,9	100,0
Homosexuality is a temporary phase that people grow out of	(-)	3,8	5,0	29,1	37,3	24,8	100,0

Note: the question about homosexuals working with minors is present only in the Italian version

<b>Austria</b>	<b>Yes completely</b>	<b>Yes quite</b>	<b>Not really</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>TOT</b>
If someone has an homosexual orientation, he/she should do anything to overcome it	5,5	7,5	30,6	43,9	12,5	100,0
I would change my feelings towards a friend, if I discovered he/she is homosexual	4,3	8,9	22,7	54,6	9,4	100,0
Homosexuals should not be allowed to work with minors	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Homosexuality should be condemned because it's against nature	3,5	3,8	14,0	73,3	5,3	100,0
Homosexuality is simply an expression of sexuality and affectivity, just like any other	56,0	21,8	6,0	7,0	9,3	100,0
One becomes gay or lesbian because he/she had disturbed relationships with one or both parents	1,7	6,5	22,2	44,0	25,7	100,0
Most of the problems of homosexual people are caused by negative attitudes from society	28,6	34,7	9,0	11,0	16,8	100,0
Homosexuality is a temporary phase that people grow out of	0,8	4,4	34,9	31,0	28,9	100,0

<b>Italy</b>	<b>Yes completely</b>	<b>Yes quite</b>	<b>Not really</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>TOT</b>
If someone has an homosexual orientation, he/she should do anything to overcome it	6,9	11,8	19,9	51,2	10,2	100,0
I would change my feelings towards a friend, if I discovered he/she is homosexual	2,8	6,0	16,9	62,5	11,8	100,0
Homosexuals should not be allowed to work with minors	5,6	6,3	14,6	69,0	4,6	100,0
Homosexuality should be condemned because it's against nature	5,8	6,3	13,0	68,4	6,5	100,0
Homosexuality is simply an expression of sexuality and affectivity, just like any other	34,8	31,6	13,0	13,9	6,7	100,0
One becomes gay or lesbian because he/she had disturbed relationships with one or both parents	2,1	6,0	22,5	39,6	29,9	100,0
Most of the problems of homosexual people are caused by negative attitudes from society	31,9	32,2	11,9	13,1	11,0	100,0
Homosexuality is a temporary phase that people grow out of	0,2	2,3	27,4	43,6	26,5	100,0

<b>Poland</b>	<b>Yes completely</b>	<b>Yes quite</b>	<b>Not really</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>TOT</b>
If someone has an homosexual orientation, he/she should do anything to overcome it	21,2	13,9	7,3	49,4	8,1	100,0
I would change my feelings towards a friend, if I discovered he/she is homosexual	16,2	12,0	12,4	47,9	11,6	100,0
Homosexuals should not be allowed to work with minors	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Homosexuality should be condemned because it's against nature	21,4	14,0	7,4	52,5	4,7	100,0
Homosexuality is simply an expression of sexuality and affectivity, just like any other	43,4	12,8	9,3	20,9	13,6	100,0
One becomes gay or lesbian because he/she had disturbed relationships with one or both parents	17,1	14,3	14,3	29,1	25,2	100,0
Most of the problems of homosexual people are caused by negative attitudes from society	36,3	32,0	5,0	13,5	13,1	100,0
Homosexuality is a temporary phase that people grow out of	18,1	9,7	18,9	36,3	17,0	100,0

Spain	Yes completely	Yes quite	Not really	Not at all	I don't know	TOT
If someone has an homosexual orientation, he/she should do anything to overcome it	12,8	9,5	32,4	32,4	12,8	100,0
I would change my feelings towards a friend, if I discovered he/she is homosexual	1,3	14,0	37,3	40,0	7,3	100,0
Homosexuals should not be allowed to work with minors	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Homosexuality should be condemned because it's against nature	4,7	4,7	28,0	60,0	2,7	100,0
Homosexuality is simply an expression of sexuality and affectivity, just like any other	59,2	17,7	4,8	6,8	11,6	100,0
One becomes gay or lesbian because he/she had disturbed relationships with one or both parents	-	2,7	13,3	48,7	35,3	100,0
Most of the problems of homosexual people are caused by negative attitudes from society	30,7	34,7	6,0	16,7	12,0	100,0
Homosexuality is a temporary phase that people grow out of	1,4	7,4	28,4	45,9	16,9	100,0

The general impression is that respondents have in general a moderately positive idea of homosexuality. Most respondents disagreed with all statements with a negative sign and agreed with the ones presenting a positive sign.

Remarkable is the percentage of unsure respondents on the two statements regarding the origin of homosexuality or its transitory character. In both these cases, almost 1 respondent out of 4 couldn't decide.

The percentage of people hostile to homosexuality varies, depending on the single statements, from 10 to 20%.

In order to better analyse all these data and in order to disaggregate them in relation to different variables, we created a synthetic index named "degree of agreement". As already seen for other indexes, it ranges from a minimum of 0 (in the hypothetical case all respondents completely disagreed) to a maximum of 100 (in the hypothetical case all respondents agreed completely). "I don't know" was not considered as an option in creating this index.

The index is presented in chart 34, disaggregated on the variables of gender, Country, role and parents' formal education degree. Also in this case the sign "\*" indicates that a specific group presents a significant difference in replying in comparison to the general sample.

In order to better interpret the meaning of these statistical indicators, it's always necessary to keep in mind the sign (negative, -, or positive, +) of the statements respondents were asked to agree or disagree upon.



Chart 34

synthetic index “degree of agreement” (0-100, excluding “I don’t know”) gender, Country, role and parents’ formal education degree

	<b>If someone has an homosexual orientation, he/she should do anything to overcome</b> -	<b>I would change my feelings towards a friend, if I discovered he/she is homosexual</b> -	<b>Homosexuals should not be allowed to work with minors</b> -	<b>Homosexuality should be condemned because it’s against nature</b> -
TOT	27,1	20,8	15,3	17,4
Males	31,6*	24,2*	28,0*	22,3*
Females	24,6*	18,6*	8,6*	14,6*
Students	29,4*	23,8*	17,0	20,1*
Teachers	17,8*	10,5*	4,7	8,1*
Non teaching personnel (NTP)	24,7*	14,6*	3,0	12,9*
Students M	35,9*	28,2*	32,2*	27,1*
Students F	26,1*	21,4*	9,2*	16,4*
Teachers M	18,6*	12,5*	2,0*	8,6*
Teachers F	17,0*	8,4*	5,9*	7,6*
NTP M	23,8*	17,4*	-*	13,9*
NTP F	25,2*	13,2*	4,2*	12,3*
Compulsory education	32,4	28,0*	10,8	24,6*
Technical – upper education	22,6	18,0*	13,6	13,6*
University education	26,8	18,5*	20,4	15,9*
Austria	23,7	19,7*	n.d.	11,3*
Italy	23,9	14,1*	15,3	15,3*
Poland	35,9	32,0*	n.d.	34,8*
Spain	34,4	24,9*	n.d.	17,6*

Note: the question about homosexuals working with minors is present only in the Italian version

[continues]	Homosexuality is simply an expression of sexuality and affectivity, just like any other +	One becomes gay or lesbian because he/she had disturbed relationships with one or both parents -	Most problems of homosexual people are caused by negative attitudes from society +	Homosexuality is a temporary phase that people grow out of (-)
TOT	72,6	22,1	65,5	22,4
Males	67,7*	25,8*	64,1	22,7
Females	75,6*	20,2*	66,6	22,5
Students	70,3	23,4*	65,1	24,1
Teachers	79,3	19,1*	69,1	16,7
Non teaching personnel (NTP)	80,6	15,3*	57,6	22,6
Students M	63,3*	27,9	64,3	24,4
Students F	74,1*	21,3	65,7	24,0
Teachers M	79,3*	21,8	66,7	17,4
Teachers F	79,5*	17,4	71,7	16,7
NTP M	77,3*	15,9	48,3	24,6
NTP F	82,5*	15,1	61,9	21,7
Compulsory education	67,6	30,6	65,0	29,2
Technical – upper education	77,1	18,7	66,8	20,6
University education	72,1	19,4	66,9	19,0
Austria	79,9	18,0*	65,7	21,6
Italy	64,6	19,4*	64,4	14,8
Poland	63,7	42,0*	68,3	37,2
Spain	82,1	9,6*	63,4	19,0

These are the general outcomes we can infer from chart 34:

- Female respondents have a better opinion of homosexuality, emerging in all the statements in the list. The difference is often significant also at statistical level. This doesn't come as a surprise, since the better approach that women have to homosexuality is widely proven and studied in international studies. This fact is usually related to gender specificities in socialisation and in creating and defending the Self-image; also the different gender-related approach to peer relations plays a role in this;
- Teachers prove to have a better opinion of homosexuality than students do. This seems to diverge with the general impression that younger generations are usually more opened than the older ones, but may be explained by two factors: homophobia and homophobic language appears to be one of the channels of “normal”

socialisation among teenagers on the one hand and on the other that teachers because of their educational level and personal characters can't be regarded as representative of their generation. It remains to understand why these positive characters are not always transmitted to students;

- Confirming the first two points, we find a generalised combined effect of role and gender: in fact, male students are almost always the sub-group with highest degree of agreement to negative statements and the symmetrical lowest level of agreement to the positive ones;
- As far as our small sample can go, the Polish national sub-sample proves to be the one with the highest level of homophobia.

### § 3.5

#### ATTITUDES TOWARDS HOMOSEXUALITY

After we've taken into consideration behaviours, and opinions, we would like to analyse attitudes toward homosexuality, in this last part of the report.

Partners agreed on 2 pictures depicting same sex couples (one gay and one lesbian) kissing.

These pictures were included in the questionnaire and respondents were asked to describe their reactions, following a list of given feelings. Charts 35a-35d describe the replies that were given. As in chart 33, we divided reaction in positive and negative and assigned a symbol to them.

The Polish partner decided not to include this part, fearing that pictures of same-sex couples kissing would be perceived as too provocative.

Charts 35a, 35b, 35c and 35d  
 "How do you feel... ?" (valid %) \* gender and \* Country

	Sign	Gay couple					Lesbian couple				
		Very	Quite	A little	Not at all	TOT	Very	Quite	A little	Not at all	TOT
Embarrassed	-	11,1	11,2	24,3	53,4	100,0	5,0	9,5	27,2	58,2	100,0
Attracted	+	2,1	2,0	4,3	91,5	100,0	4,7	5,2	13,9	76,2	100,0
Scared	-	5,6	3,2	11,0	80,2	100,0	1,8	2,1	10,7	85,5	100,0
Encouraged	+	2,3	1,8	5,8	90,2	100,0	2,0	4,1	8,7	85,3	100,0
At unease	-	5,3	6,0	20,3	68,4	100,0	1,9	4,8	18,9	74,3	100,0
Angry	-	5,0	4,5	6,6	83,9	100,0	1,3	1,9	5,7	91,0	100,0
Ashamed	-	6,5	4,2	13,5	75,8	100,0	2,3	2,8	11,2	83,7	100,0
Disgusted	-	14,8	7,4	15,4	62,4	100,0	5,6	5,4	15,6	73,4	100,0
Shocked	-	7,2	8,9	20,9	63,0	100,0	4,2	8,8	23,9	63,1	100,0
Happy	+	5,6	6,2	13,3	74,8	100,0	7,1	10,5	17,5	64,8	100,0
Confused	(-)	4,4	4,4	20,8	70,4	100,0	1,7	4,0	20,7	73,6	100,0
Indifferent	(++)	23,8	24,5	19,1	32,6	100,0	29,2	29,3	17,0	24,5	100,0
Against it	-	13,9	4,1	10,3	71,7	100,0	6,9	4,0	9,1	80,1	100,0

Austria	Gay couple					Lesbian couple				
	Very	Quite	A little	Not at all	TOT	Very	Quite	A little	Not at all	TOT
Embarrassed	8,0	7,1	19,8	65,1	100,0	5,2	4,7	20,2	69,8	100,0
Attracted	2,2	1,9	3,9	92,0	100,0	4,6	4,8	16,5	74,1	100,0
Scared	5,9	2,7	12,2	79,1	100,0	1,9	2,7	12,2	83,3	100,0
Encouraged	2,9	2,1	6,2	88,9	100,0	2,4	5,0	9,8	82,8	100,0
At unease	3,9	2,9	18,0	75,2	100,0	1,4	1,9	14,4	82,4	100,0
Angry	4,6	3,6	6,6	85,2	100,0	1,2	1,7	6,1	91,0	100,0
Ashamed	5,1	2,6	11,9	80,4	100,0	2,0	2,0	9,0	87,0	100,0
Disgusted	14,2	6,6	13,0	66,2	100,0	4,9	5,1	13,6	74,6	100,0
Shocked	8,0	4,9	10,9	76,2	100,0	3,7	2,9	9,7	83,7	100,0
Happy	4,7	4,5	12,0	78,8	100,0	6,4	7,7	18,6	67,4	100,0
Confused	3,4	2,6	19,7	74,3	100,0	1,0	2,6	18,6	77,8	100,0
Indifferent	31,5	27,3	14,3	26,9	100,0	37,7	31,6	10,7	20,0	100,0
Against it	12,1	3,2	8,4	76,3	100,0	5,4	2,4	6,6	85,6	100,0

Italy	Gay couple					Lesbian couple				
	Very	Quite	A little	Not at all	TOT	Very	Quite	A little	Not at all	TOT
Embarrassed	15,5	18,6	30,8	35,1	100,0	5,4	16,7	34,8	43,1	100,0
Attracted	1,7	2,9	4,6	90,8	100,0	5,8	6,1	12,3	75,8	100,0
Scared	6,5	3,6	12,3	77,6	100,0	1,7	1,2	9,9	87,2	100,0
Encouraged	1,2	1,2	2,7	94,9	100,0	1,5	1,7	5,6	91,3	100,0
At unease	6,5	12,2	25,9	55,4	100,0	2,9	9,9	25,7	61,5	100,0
Angry	6,3	5,8	7,0	81,0	100,0	1,9	2,4	6,7	88,9	100,0
Ashamed	9,7	7,7	16,7	65,9	100,0	3,4	4,6	16,1	75,9	100,0
Disgusted	19,5	9,2	21,9	49,4	100,0	7,9	6,7	20,9	64,4	100,0
Shocked	8,0	15,9	34,7	41,4	100,0	4,1	17,3	42,7	35,9	100,0
Happy	5,0	8,7	13,4	73,0	100,0	5,7	16,0	14,6	63,7	100,0
Confused	5,3	7,7	20,8	66,2	100,0	2,7	7,2	22,22	68,0	100,0
Indifferent	15,7	25,2	23,3	35,7	100,0	19,5	31,0	24,8	24,8	100,0
Against it	18,3	5,3	14,5	61,9	100,0	9,6	6,3	14,9	69,2	100,0

Spain	Gay couple					Lesbian couple				
	Very	Quite	A little	Not at all	TOT	Very	Quite	A little	Not at all	TOT
Embarrassed	10,6	6,1	23,5	58,9	100,0	2,9	8,1	33,8	55,1	100,0
Attracted	3,1	-	5,5	91,4	100,0	1,5	4,6	6,9	86,9	100,0
Scared	1,5	3,8	1,5	93,1	100,0	1,6	2,3	6,3	89,8	100,0
Encouraged	3,1	2,3	13,8	80,8	100,0	1,6	7,9	13,5	77,0	100,0
At unease	7,7	-	13,1	79,2	100,0	1,5	2,3	17,7	78,5	100,0
Angry	3,1	4,6	5,4	86,9	100,0	-	1,5	0,8	97,7	100,0
Ashamed	3,0	0,7	10,4	85,8	100,0	-	0,8	5,4	93,8	100,0
Disgusted	3,0	5,2	6,0	85,8	100,0	1,5	3,0	7,6	87,9	100,0
Shocked	1,5	4,5	22,4	71,6	100,0	6,8	8,3	28,0	56,8	100,0
Happy	11,5	6,2	19,2	63,1	100,0	15,2	6,1	22,0	56,8	100,0
Confused	6,1	2,3	25,8	65,9	100,0	1,5	-	25,4	73,1	100,0
Indifferent	15,7	10,7	26,4	47,1	100,0	22,5	14,5	20,3	42,8	100,0
Against it	8,3	3,8	6,1	81,8	100,0	5,2	3,7	1,5	89,6	100,0

The reactions are generally not intense. Most respondents don't indicate strong reactions and the only one that gathers more than 20% is, significantly, indifference, in relation to both couples. Other reactions that outstand are happiness in relation to the lesbian couple and embarrassment, disgust and "being against" in the case of the gay couple.

It's interesting pointing out that attitudes toward the lesbian couple are in general more favourable, especially in males respondents. This is not a sign of higher acceptance of lesbianism as opposed to male homosexuality, as suggested by Roman Winkler, the Austrian researcher and as we will see further on.

Charts 36a and 36b analyse the synthetic index (here as well built on a continuum 0-100 as previously explained) in relation to our usual sub-groups built on the variables of gender, Country, role and parents' level of formal education.

Chart 36

Synthetic index (0-100) \* gender, Country, role and parents' level of formal education

Gay couple	Embarrassed -	Attracted +	Scared -	Encouraged +	At unease -
TOT	26,7	4,9	11,4	5,4	16,1
Males	37,6*	5,1	23,2*	6,5	26,1*
Females	21,3*	4,8	5,5*	4,9	11,1*
Students	27,5	4,8	13,8*	5,1	18,1
Teachers	23,5	4,7	3,9*	6,3	9,9
Non teaching personnel (NTP)	26,6	5,9	20,9*	6,0	9,8
Students M	42,5*	4,2	29,3*	5,8	31,9*
Students F	20,2*	5,2	6,0*	4,9	11,2*
Teachers M	24,8*	7,5	4,8*	9,6	9,6*
Teachers F	22,4*	3,4	3,5*	4,8	9,8*
NTP M	13,7*	9,3	5,6*	5,6	1,9*
NTP F	32,4*	4,0	4,2*	6,3	14,1*
Compulsory education	27,5	7,3	5,8	7,2	15,8*
Technical – upper education	23,4	3,9	11,9	5,5	13,8*
University education	29,5	5,1	13,7	4,3	19,7*
Austria	19,3*	4,8	11,8	6,3	11,8
Italy	38,2*	5,1	13,0	2,9	23,3
Poland	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Spain	22,5*	4,9	4,6	9,2	12,1

<b>Gay couple [continued]</b>	<b>Angry -</b>	<b>Ashamed -</b>	<b>Disgusted -</b>	<b>Shocked -</b>	<b>Happy +</b>
TOT	10,2	13,8	24,9	20,1	14,1
Males	19,6	23,2*	40,4*	30,6*	11,0
Females	5,4	9,2*	16,7*	14,8*	16,0
Students	12,6*	16,0*	29,2*	23,8*	14,6
Teachers	2,4*	6,6*	10,5*	8,3*	12,8
Non teaching personnel (NTP)	3,3*	8,2*	12,2*	7,8*	12,5
Students M	25,2*	28,9*	48,9*	38,3*	9,5
Students F	6,2*	9,7*	19,0*	16,5*	17,4
Teachers M	2,6*	6,6*	14,1*	7,8*	16,7
Teachers F	2,4*	6,4*	7,8*	8,8*	10,9
NTP M	1,9*	1,9*	16,7*	5,3*	11,1
NTP F	4,2*	11,8*	9,7*	9,4*	13,3
Compulsory education	9,2	14,2	21,7	18,8	17,2
Technical – upper education	9,7	12,6	24,1	18,7	13,3
University education	11,6	15,4	27,8	22,3	14,5
Austria	9,2	10,8	22,9*	14,9	11,7
Italy	12,4	20,4	32,9*	30,1	15,2
Poland	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Spain	7,9	7,0	8,5*	11,9	22,1



<b>Gay couple [continued]</b>	<b>Confused (-)</b>	<b>Indifferent (-+)</b>	<b>Against it -</b>
TOT	14,3	46,5	20,1
Males	20,9*	41,6*	35,2*
Females	10,8*	49,2*	12,5*
Students	15,5	44,1	22,9*
Teachers	11,5	54,1	10,3*
Non teaching personnel (NTP)	6,7	53,5	13,3*
Students M	24,9*	38,5*	42,9*
Students F	10,7*	47,2*	12,9*
Teachers M	10,1*	50,0*	11,3*
Teachers F	11,7*	56,3*	9,8*
NTP M	3,7*	55,0*	13,0*
NTP F	8,3*	52,5*	13,5*
Compulsory education	13,1	43,2	20,4
Technical – upper education	13,6	48,8	18,3
University education	16,4	45,2	21,7
Austria	11,7*	54,5*	17,1
Italy	17,4*	40,3*	26,7
Poland	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Spain	16,2*	31,7*	12,9

Lesbian couple	Embarrassed -	Attracted +	Scared -	Encouraged +	At unease -
TOT	20,5	12,8	6,7	7,6	11,5
Males	17,7*	27,7*	7,5	9,3	11,7
Females	22,0*	5,1*	6,4	6,8	11,4
	17,7	27,7	7,5	9,3	11,7
Students	19,9	13,9	7,7	8,0	12,3
Teachers	20,5	9,6	3,5	5,8	8,4
Non teaching personnel (NTP)	30,2	7,2	4,0	8,8	11,1
Students M	18,8*	30,9*	9,2	9,9	13,9
Students F	20,6*	5,2*	7,0	7,0	11,6
Teachers M	15,0*	19,6*	2,2	7,2	5,3
Teachers F	23,1*	4,5*	4,2	5,2	10,0
NTP M	11,8*	9,3*	3,7	7,4	3,7
NTP F	38,7*	6,1*	4,2	9,7	15,2
Compulsory education	23,4	11,9	3,5	8,6	10,1
Technical – upper education	17,3	12,5	7,5	8,3	10,2
University education	20,8	14,8	7,4	6,8	14,0
Austria	15,1*	13,3	7,7	9,0	7,4*
Italy	28,2*	14,0	5,8	4,4	18,0*
Poland	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Spain	19,6*	6,9	5,2	11,4	9,0*

<b>Lesbian couple [continued]</b>	<b>Angry -</b>	<b>Ashamed -</b>	<b>Disgusted -</b>	<b>Shocked -</b>	<b>Happy +</b>
<b>TOT</b>	4,6	7,9	14,4	18,0	20,0
<b>Males</b>	5,7	8,4	14,5	21,6*	23,2*
<b>Females</b>	3,9	7,7	14,3	16,3*	18,4*
<b>Students</b>	5,0	8,4	16,6	21,2	20,9
<b>Teachers</b>	2,4	5,6	6,7	7,9	17,4
<b>Non teaching personnel (NTP)</b>	4,1	8,8	11,1	8,5	16,7
<b>Students M</b>	6,7	9,6	17,6	26,8*	23,3
<b>Students F</b>	4,2	7,8	16,1	18,5*	19,6
<b>Teachers M</b>	2,2	4,3	4,7	6,1*	23,7
<b>Teachers F</b>	2,6	6,3	7,3	9,0*	14,4
<b>NTP M</b>	3,7	5,6	7,4	5,3*	18,5
<b>NTP F</b>	4,3	10,8	13,1	10,4*	15,6
<b>Compulsory education</b>	3,4	7,9	10,6	19,5	20,5
<b>Technical – upper education</b>	4,9	7,2	13,7	14,8	19,4
<b>University education</b>	5,3	8,4	16,7	20,9	21,4
<b>Austria</b>	4,3	6,4	12,8	8,9*	17,7
<b>Italy</b>	5,8	11,8	19,4	29,9*	21,2
<b>Poland</b>	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
<b>Spain</b>	1,3	2,3	6,1	21,7*	26,5

<b>Lesbian couple [continued]</b>	<b>Confused (-)</b>	<b>Indifferent (-+)</b>	<b>Against it -</b>
TOT	11,2	54,5	12,6
Males	14,0*	50,1*	16,1*
Females	9,8*	56,7*	10,8*
Students	11,8	53,4	13,6
Teachers	10,3	57,6	7,9
Non teaching personnel (NTP)	6,0	56,8	15,7
Students M	16,3*	48,2	18,6
Students F	9,6*	56,2	11,0
Teachers M	8,3*	54,5	7,5
Teachers F	11,0*	59,1	8,1
NTP M	1,9*	60,0	13,0
NTP F	8,3*	54,9	17,2
Compulsory education	10,0	48,1	11,3
Technical – upper education	10,0	58,1	10,7
University education	14,1	53,6	14,8
Austria	8,9	62,4*	9,2
Italy	14,9	48,4*	18,8
Poland	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Spain	10,0	38,9*	8,2

This set of question was not present in the Polish version of the questionnaire

There's a number of considerations we can draw from these data, most of which confirm impressions we had previously expressed:

- The lesbian couple tends to be perceived as less controversial than the gay one: our sample proves a “reactive factor” generally more homogeneous (that means that in statistic terms, differences within the sub-samples and between the general sample and the sub-samples are less significant); the gay couple; reactions to the gay couple present instead significant differences in the various sub-samples;
- The lesbian couple also reports in general more positive reactions than the ones met by the gay couple. It's especially the sub-sample of male students who tend to present the bigger difference in the way they react to the lesbian couple and to the gay couple. It's particularly the case of such reactions as “scared”, “at unease” or “shocked”; as mentioned before, this is hardly to be intended as wider acceptance of lesbianism; it may even be the opposite: female homosexuality is widely used in the male erotic imaginary and is therefore less shocking and contrasted, but as a sign of machismo rather than of emancipation;
- Students prove to be more intense in the negative reactions than the teachers. This is especially true for reactions to the gay couple. In this specific case, it's interesting to point out that non teaching personnel show patterns that are closer to the ones of the students rather than to the ones of their peers (teachers);

- As noticed before, the combination of the gender and role variables seems to particularly characterise the pattern of the male students sub-group: they always report the more intense level in the negative reactions to the gay couple and (comparatively) the higher degree of intensity in positive reactions to the lesbian couple;
- The level of parents' formal education confirms to be an irrelevant variable, as in the previous points;
- In relation to the national sub-samples, Italy proves to be the one showing the higher degree of homophobia, towards both the gay and lesbian couple. As mentioned before, this may be due to the types of schools involved, as well as to a higher level of homophobia in the Italian society.

## § 3.6

### **QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

The last part of this report is dedicated to the outcomes of the semi-structured interviews and of the focus-groups.

This part was developed by the Italian, Austrian and Polish local researchers, since it was not implemented by the Spanish partner and goes in depth on the following points:

- frequency and characters of the issue “homophobic bullying in schools”;
- possible tools to prevent and tackle the problem;
- assessment of these tools;
- needs and expectations toward the Schoolmates project.

#### **3.6a**

##### **The Italian case, by Laura Pozzoli**

#### **SAMPLE**

##### **- Implemented interviews**

Liceo scientifico Copernico (Bologna):

- 1 student
- 1 principal
- 1 non-teaching personnel

Istituto tecnico e Liceo Scienze sociali E. Mattei (San Lazzaro di Savena – Bologna):

- 1 secretary
- 2 janitors

Liceo scientifico Tassoni (Modena):

- 1 vice principal
- 1 teacher
- 1 janitor

Istituto tecnico per Attività sociali Selmi (Modena):

- 1 principal
- 1 teacher
- 1 janitor

Liceo classico Galvani (Bologna):

- 1 principal
- 1 teacher

- 1 janitor
- 1 secretary

Liceo scientifico Fermi (Bologna) (not in the quantitative sample):

- 1 student

## EXTENT AND CHARACTER OF THE PHENOMENON

### - existence of homophobic bullying in the schools involved

No one among the interviewed people or the participants to the focus group has direct knowledge of cases of homophobic bullying in their school.

Anyway, all schools seem to know some kind of violence and harassment, although in general they appear to be sporadic and not chronic (feature that characterises the relation between victim and bully).

Hardly ever bullying is thought to be direct and openly inflicted; it usually is indirect and subtle.

*- The type of bullying that's more common is the indirect [...]. It's always disguised, never evident; since this is a well-bread environment, violence takes the shape of social and cultural pressures.*

*- We don't have open cases [of homophobic bullying], meaning that ever since I've worked here, we haven't had cases that were evident enough to get on my desk or to my attention. Therefore there are no openly homophobic violent behaviours, but I can't exclude that there are other forms.*

It's likely that the only cases that arrive to the school personnel's attention are the tip of an iceberg.

Anyway, although they may not know of cases of homophobic bullying, teachers and school personnel are aware of a general existence of homophobia and prejudices against homosexuals.

*- There may be cases of homophobia, but I've never seen any bullying [...]. I've witnessed to one of these activities [workshops organised by Arcigay] in one of my classrooms, and I've seen that there were, not many really, actually one in particular, one student. When he was asked "If a friend told you he is gay, what would you do, would you reject him"? he said he absolutely would, that when he's in a bar and finds homosexuals there he is disgusted, that they're all pigs who need to be cured and so on.*

Principals and teachers give to these homophobic attitudes.

- Some explain them with the social and cultural background of the pupils:
  - I've never seen homophobic bullying in this school and I don't think it exist. I can't exclude that there may be homophobic behaviours, maybe unintentional. As a teacher, I tend to think that these are due to the low educational level of the family.*

- Some think that this is a part in the process of construction of male identity during adolescence (ref. 'men studies'):
  - *Many boys to the question "If a friend told you he is gay, what would you do, would you reject him"? replied that they would erase that friend from their lives, they would change peer group not to see him again. Males have been much more selective and strict, but I think this depends on the fact that at that age they're affirming themselves and their personality.*
  
- In some of the interviewees opinion's, pupils have a superficial notion of terms and their meaning and very little conscience of the effect they may have on people:
  - *I really think that often adolescents use homophobic language because they don't know what other language to use. It's a lack of awareness, but also a deficiency in the vocabulary.*
  - *We've often noticed that students write on the exterior walls of the school, using language and expressions related to homosexuality that are meant to be offensive. It must be said that often adolescents use words and symbols without being really aware of what they mean. I'm making an example that is not related to this subject: often my students use the keffiyeh, I ask them "Why are you wearing it?", they don't know, they don't know what it represents. Other times it's the Celtic crosses... adolescents often use words without knowing what they mean.*
  
- Sometimes, there's a tendency to minimize the facts and overlook the intention to offend:
  - *If there's disrespect (for homosexuals) is because students perceive the school as a goliardic environment, so if they make jokes is because it's part of goliardic language and it's never targeted. I never noticed the intention to harm.*
  - *I've been told that there are young homosexuals and I've been told that those who are effeminate are picked on, but never in an offensive way. Most of the students regard homosexuality and heterosexuality as equal.*
  
- Often, homophobic behaviours are not recognised as such, since their cause is projected on the victim, especially on other features that are not related to sexual orientation:
  - *If I must recall, there was a student that I'm sure was homosexual, although he never came out, he was often treated differently by his classmates, but I don't think this was because of his homosexuality; there were other things in his behaviour [...]. He had other strange attitudes so he was an outsider...*
  
- **What are the different forms that bullying can adopt?**

The majority of bullying cases that interviewees have witnessed weren't related to homophobia, most of the time.

It's important nonetheless to describe them, in order to make a more complete picture of the school environment and of the phenomenon of bullying in its different manifestations (direct, such as violence both physical and verbal, as well as indirect, such as humiliation and isolation).



- Writings on the walls

Writings on the walls – addressed to both students and teachers – are very common and appear to be the most frequent expression of homophobia in schools.

*- There are writings such as “X is a fag”, in my school.*

*- Yes, there may have been some writings, but mostly on teachers, either males or females.*

*- In the toilets there are many writings saying “X is gay”, they may be true or not. Gay is used to offend anyone...*

In theory, in order to label an act as bullying, it must be reiterated. Interviewees give a very different interpretation. In one teacher’s opinion, a writing is a reiterated and permanent offence, since it stands where it’s written for at least a relevant amount of time, before it’s cancelled.

*- Writings are particularly evident and offensive, since they carry out the name, surname and characters of the target. Moreover it’s repeated, since they’re written on walls or doors you see many times a day in a school where you spend 6 hours each day. They also usually are in particularly exposed places: the hallways, the toilets. Writings are really the worst offence. There are also the writings on the exterior walls; there, they’re usually writings against teachers, I guess this is more common, and they’re the writings with the higher degree of homophobia.*

A principal stated that writings can be regarded as reiterated offence only if they reappear also after someone had erased them. In his opinion, the intervention of school personnel in contrasting the offence – by cleaning up the wall or the door – is enough to make the offence disappear.

*- I see that when we erase the writing, since we do erase them, they don’t reappear. This means that they can’t be regarded as bullying since there’s no insistence. Bullying is: “I want to crash you”.*

- Gossips

Together with offensive writing, gossips can be one of the ways to harm who is perceived as homosexual; this is confirmed by the students and, in the first place, by one of the interviewees who was gay, although not out to his classmates:

*- It’s happened that they would talk about me... but I don’t think that they meant to harm me, simply “he’s gay, he’s not” and laughs. They told me and then I started noticing it, after they’ve told me. They didn’t mean to hurt me, but it really did. Still they didn’t mean to, it wasn’t something like “See that fag, he’s disgusting” it wasn’t like that.*

Homophobic gossips are the type of homophobia that most easily escapes to teachers:

*- I guess they exist, but it’s unlikely that us teachers may come to know it. It’s something among the students and we can’t detect it. I guess it’s very common; you may hear the word during the interval, but I never could capture the whole thing.*

- Offensive words or gestures

According to the interviewees, the more direct forms of homophobic bullying are more common in middle school than in the high schools:

*- In my first year in middle school we were kids really, they would offend me heavily, I didn’t know then, I was only 11 and I understood it in that period but they would pick on me for the way I moved, the way I talked, they mostly called me “sissy boy”. I also remember that*

*I was excluded by the rest of the class [...]. I remember that they offended me heavily.*

- Exclusion

Isolation and exclusion are the most common forms of direct bullying and are also the ones teachers can difficultly act on.

Different reasons for exclusion were given, such as homosexuality (real or perceived), for the looks and physical aspect, for the economic status and for the relation within the class (being a nerd, for instance).

*- There is exclusion. In one class in my school, not mine, there's a gay guy, and he simply doesn't exist for the rest of the class. I don't know him, but some of his classmates tell me that he doesn't exist. That is, on the one hand, they don't have any problem with him, on the other they just exclude him. He is gay and he just is out [...]. there was one girl who didn't shower, no-one wanted to be close to her. We even bought her a huge bottle of liquid soap... I think she realised it very well because everyone... she didn't talk with anyone, she would just sit in the class and leave after school was over.*

*- There may be exclusion, that is a psychological type of violence. In this school this may mainly be due to a different economic status.*

- Threats

Although not very common, threats are present.

- *One girl accused another of stealing from her. The second student gave her a wooden board with offences a threats written on it, such as "if you dare say something I'll sue you and send you to prison for calumny". For one month she lived in fear due to these threats. I learned it from the mother who came to know if the situation and talked to me. The girl didn't spontaneously ask for my intervention. Only after her mother intervened the situation was solved.*

Another example given is about some girls who received threats by a classmate. In this case, as in the previous one, the gravity of the situation required the intervention of the school, that that decided to intervene with a specific project on bullying, involving a psychologist to discuss about the phenomenon.

*- We had to face this problem in one class, because there were some students, well, one boy actually, who would impose on girls and he would force them to hand their notes for instance. He used verbal threats and some of the girls wanted to quit school...*

- Humiliations

There has been one case of humiliation reported, perpetrated by tow students on a girl in their class:

*- we've experienced this case of humiliation on a girl, not homophobic bullying though. We came to know it and we solved the problem. She was a very shy and reserved girl. The two boys were older since they failed the previous year and they felt much stronger than she was. They humiliated her. They took their pants off to show her their butts. We came to know this, we convoked them and punished them*

- Thefts / damages to the victim's goods

Only one case of damages to belongings, without reference to sexual orientation or any other ground.

*- This year there has been one case: one boy thought that he was being targeted, since his motorbike, that was very recognisable, was damaged.*

### **- Who is the “bully” and who is the “victim”**

The profile of the bully given by interviewees is the classical found in literature: aggressive, incline to use violent solutions and to impose to those he/she regards as weaker, needy for attention and respect, used to dump his tensions upon others.

*- I think they're mainly naughty boys. I remember this guy, who was a little bully; he had problems, economic problems for instance. They have problems, they need to impose themselves in some way, they're superficial and feel they're number one.*

Often the bully is someone who wants to be transgressive and becomes a negative leader in the class, apparently the stronger one in character.

Victims are usually shy, introverted, good students or those who don't fit the standards (in terms of looks)

According to the interviewees' opinion, girls tend to be more open to homosexuality than boys. In the schools where Arcigay operated, the results of the questionnaire used to canvas the students' opinions confirmed the different attitudes: negative views on homosexuality appear more frequent among males than among females, as already detected by other surveys.

*- In the questionnaire there was a specific question: “If your best friend came out as homosexual, what would you do?” most of the girls replied that they wouldn't have any problem and talk to him/her, while most of the boys replied “I would never want to talk to him/her again” or “I would change group of friends”.*

*- A boy, replying to the question “What would you do if your best friend came out as homosexual” replied categorically that he would have rejected him/her [...]. Girls are more sensitive and open to understanding a phenomenon that exists, to contrasting exclusion and avoiding social stigma.*

This different attitude is not only observed by adults but also confirmed by students:

*- For them [male student] it's like he [gay classmate] didn't exist [...] instead girls will talk to him”.*

### **- Evolution of homophobic bullying along the years**

Opinions related to eventual changes in the phenomenon of homophobic bullying vary.

- Some interviewees affirm that homophobic bullying and in general prejudices against homosexuals decreased in school, along with a more general affirmation of respect for diversity in the Italian society.

*- I think that diversity is more accepted, at least the one related to sexual orientation*

*- I think things have improved. Today's attitude towards homosexuality is better than it used to be. It must be said that in the past homosexuality was more hidden, while if today a guy has this*

*problem, it's more evident. At the same time it's more accepted, so visibility and acceptance have gone along.*

- Other respondents think that, on the contrary, in the last few years the phenomenon of homophobic bullying has perceptibly increased, especially among younger students. In their opinion, the younger students are more aggressive than they used to be and lack a social and group awareness, being also little apt at listening and relating to others.
  - *I've been teaching in this school for 20 years, 22 actually, and I see a huge difference between how my students used to be when I started and how they're now [...]. Now they're more problematic, they don't respect the rules.*
  - *The younger ones, those arriving the first year from middle schools, are more aggressive, they don't value the group or supporting attitudes.*
  
- Others point at the progressive cultural decay that appears to mark the present times having a very strong effect on adolescents, especially in terms of their ability to produce and process ideas and opinions. In some teachers and principals' opinion, adolescents appear to be less capable of pondering on diversity.
  - *Students build relations only among small groups and only through sharing fads. This attitude has been more and more evident in the last years.*
  - *I think that attitudes [toward homosexuality] have improved and worsen: improved in relation to our ability to teach them respect for diversity; worsen when you have to face ignorance. By ignorance I don't mean not knowing the date of birth of Christopher Columbus; I mean the inability to reflect about diversity, to probe yourself and find out that you may carry diversity yourself.*

### **- How do we detect cases of bullying?**

According to the respondents, there are very few indicators and tools that can help monitor the situation and detect cases of bullying.

In particular:

- Some respondents refer to the increase in access to psychological counselling services offered by schools as a sign of difficulties and problematic situations.
- Another indicator of an increase in problematic situation is the growing number of cases when the family has to be involved especially in grave situations (such as threats).
- The main tool for detecting bullying cases is reported to be the sensitivity of teachers and school personnel in general. This isn't reliable, since it depends on the personal attitudes and most respondents report how the majority of teachers are only interested in didactic aspects, neglecting human relations with the students and in particular their ability to develop social skills:
  - *Q: do you think teachers pay enough attention to possible bullying cases?– R: Well, to be honest, I think we would all be able to intervene, but I think some colleagues just turn the other way in order not to get involved and avoid problems.*

*- Some teachers are very sensitive about this subject, others aren't. I think some teachers regard their role only in terms of teaching their subject. Maybe because some of them teach subjects that are not related to human relations and don't feel involved educational matters. But it's my opinion.*

It must be added that some teachers use superficial comments or even offensive language relating to homosexuality; this justifies and strengthens the negative attitudes and behaviours of some pupils, directly hurts homosexual students and impairs the ability of the rest of teachers in preventing and contrasting homophobic bullying.

*- Q: Does the school personnel possess the necessary skills to intervene? - R: I must admit, unfortunately, that I've sometimes heard colleagues who are cultured and competent, making negative remarks about homosexuals, addressing homosexuals with offensive terms that I don't want to repeat... this is a big problem, in my opinion.*

*- Once, during carnival, we were wearing costumes for the school party. I was disguised as a devil and I was fixing my make-up all the time since it was melting during class, using a small mirror. The biology teacher said: here, we've got the class fag". I don't think he meant to offend me, especially since no-one heard me besides me; he just wanted to make a joke.*

- Another important tool is the ability of students to detect and signal cases of homophobic bullying, although respondents have a different opinion on its effectiveness. One of respondents in particular regards the school's student Council as one of the best key witnesses and as one of the most important sources of information to know what happens in school:

*- Q: Do you think that there are violent episodes in your school? - R: I don't think so [...]. The students' Council has never said "we have to discuss this subject because such episodes happen".*

A female teacher is convinced that female students are the most sensitive (and therefore reliable) witnesses; she also stated that the students' ability to contrast and prevent bullying depends on the group's cohesion.

*- Girls are very good observers [...]. But it depends on the group [...]  
a girl alone doesn't usually intervene.*

At the opposite end, some respondents think that it's highly unlikely for students to report bullying cases to school personnel. One of teachers expresses his doubts stressing on the lack of awareness that students have, in his opinion, of the gravity of bullying and on the superficiality and immaturity of relations among adolescents.

*- There's an accomplice silence, it's unlikely that students will report on their classmates. This is also due, I think, to the fact that there isn't a real awareness of what violence may cause. They may be target of violence and bullying in the first years and when they're older they play bully with the younger students. They're very young: at 14 self awareness is very limited. Violence is just another way to build relations. It's the same for sexuality: just like violence it's not taken seriously. It's part of their superficial way to build and live relations.*

- An interesting point that emerged is the role of non teaching personnel (mainly janitors). They are the only adults present in the less-institutionalised contexts, so they are key observers, and they also are the only adults in schools able to build less formal relations with the students. Therefore they perceive themselves as one of the main resources to monitor and contrast bullying.

- *There were many students who would talk with me about their problems, family problems, sexual life... mainly girls; male students don't do it very often.*
- *I'm like a father for them, there's mutual respect and some of them talk to me about themselves.*
- *Students in class are very different then what they are in the hallways. They relate differently to us then to teachers. There's a more informal relation. If they have problems, they talk about them with us. Our skills are relational, because we're not teachers, we're not psychologists; we're parents. You cant' push a student to talk with you, you have to wait for him to do it. You can listen, and listening you can perceive if there are difficult situations, but you're always at some distance. This is how I behave: I listen and if I detect some serious situations, I report it to the principal.*

This opinion is also shared by some teachers who suggest to improve the professionalism and skills of janitors through specific training courses.

- *They're a key witness to observe students in non-structured contexts. They're present in those areas a times where school life is less supervised, which also are the contexts where incidents usually occur. It's important granting them skills to detect bullying, intervene and contrast it.*
- *Janitors would be glad and feel rewarded by being appointed the specific task of detecting and reporting on bullying episodes, though it might be complicated.*

Non teaching personnel involved in the survey proved a lively interest in being trained on specific skills related to bullying.

- *[Training] on this subject is always useful. For instance, we have work meetings in the afternoons related to different aspects of our job; we could dedicate specific meetings on bullying, involving teachers and non teaching personnel, because they're in the classrooms and we're outside.*
- *There are various initiatives in this school, for instance sexual education, but they never involve school personnel. They should [...] because it could happen that someone is in trouble and we should be able to help [...]. Janitors have the duty to control what happens in the hallways, we have to report to the principal cases of threats or exclusion. We need specific training though, especially to motivate people because many don't care.*

The main obstacle to detecting and preventing bullying that some teachers point out is the institutional division between didactics and personal relations imposed by the school system: teachers would only be appointed of the educational aspects of school life, while janitors are only informally invested with human relations with the students.

- *A good janitor has a very particular relation with students. They may be very familiar with students and become their confidants, but they don't share things they come to know. It's something they keep to themselves and use to give a meaning to their job.*
- *They have a connection with students very different from the one teachers have. Students feel a strong separation of roles. Involving them in didactics is hard, since didactics are never focused of physical relations, while the link they have with the janitors is also somewhat physical. [...] Nobody thinks that these two contexts may come into contact. The whole institutional organisation of schools is thought so that no-one would imagine that.*

- As far as administration and administration personnel are concerned, their proximity to students varies extremely from school to school. In some school, the administration offices are outside of the premises, without any overlapping between the students' and the personnel's spaces. We interviewed 2 people working in the school administration and even in the case where the offices were closer to students, the school worker perceived herself as distant and not in charge of what happened to the students. Information she had about what happens in the school appear therefore to be faded:

*- We only hear of bullying by others' reports, mainly jokes or gossip.*

## **ACTIVITIES FOR THE PREVENTION AND CONTRAST OF HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING**

### **- Previous experiences**

Before the activities related to the Schoolmates project, only one of the schools had previously activated specific activities on homophobic bullying.

All schools had instead already organised activities about homosexuality, although usually limited and sporadic.

In general, these activities (although regarded as too short and sporadic by most respondents) had a strong impact on participants and caused relevant reactions by third actors indirectly involved (teachers and parents) that must be taken into consideration when planning similar activities.

### **- What could be an effective activity to organise in order to prevent and contrast homophobic bullying?**

During the interviews and the focus group, some possible strategies and tools to prevent and contrast bullying have been proposed to the respondents, in order to gather their evaluation and suggestions.

The list of possible strategies, open to the respondents' contributions, was:

- Actions to support the victims of bullying (examples: telephone help-line, counselling service within the school, support by psychologist, etc.)
- Diversity and equal opportunity education (on sexual orientation, ethnic origin, religion etc.)
- Sexual and relational education activities
- School personnel training (who should be trained, on what specific areas: sexual orientation, diversity, victim's support, how approaching the bully etc.)
- Information material
- Approaching the subject during curricular hours, such as history, literature, sociology, psychology (for those schools that have these subjects in the students' schedule) etc.
- Initiatives that also involve parents (seminars, workshops etc.)

Herewith are illustrated the strategies that were regarded as more effective, with the related remarks.

- Sexual and relational education activities:

Sexual education activities have been introduced in all the schools involved in the survey, but only in few schools homosexuality is addressed. Some of the respondents thought that dealing also with homosexuality in sexual education classes would indirectly promote a positive view towards diversity and prevent hostility toward homosexual people.

- Fostering equal opportunities, diversity and non discrimination

Most of the respondents thinks that educational activities against discrimination should be horizontal:

- *Equal opportunities must be promoted, as we already do about anti-racism education. We could deal with diversity in general, since discrimination can be addressed on all grounds.*

- *We mostly need to educate on responsible citizenship, in all its forms, so that if you're a conscious and responsible citizen, diversity becomes a part of you. The school as an institution should aim at this goal, which is not didactic, it's not technical, but it defines education to tolerance and citizenship.*

- School personnel training

Training for schools personnel (both teachers and non teaching personnel) is regarded as fundamental by all respondents – students, teachers and janitors. Training can make up for the lack of skills teachers might have on the subject:

- *I don't think that teachers are more prepared on the subject than we students are... They need specific trainings on discrimination, because I see that if no-one specifically calls for their intervention, they just go on with class.*

Training may also extend to all teachers what is often left to the individual's sensitivity:

- *We should turn anti-discrimination in an institutional policy, not something left to the single teacher, create common skills: awareness of the problem, basic skills to detect, interpret and contrast it.*

It's also very important in order to overcome stereotypes and prejudices shared also by the school personnel, both teachers and non-teaching personnel.

- *I've heard cultured and competent colleagues making negative remarks about homosexuals [...] I think it [training] is important also for non-teaching personnel. [...] it's important] to deconstruct some ideas and stereotypes, because I think homophobia is still strong. Students observe and take as a raw model [non-teaching personnel] much more than they do with us, they're always present outside of the class, so it would if in a situation that involves homosexuality, janitors show inappropriate behaviours, it would result as deeply unfortunate.*

- Approaching homosexuality during curricular hours

Some respondents think that homosexuality could be broadly dealt with during curricular hours, within literature, history or art classes.

- *Teachers have the chance to address any diversity in a more transversal way through literary, history or philosophy classes. There are so many examples that surely the teachers who are more sensitive already do so.*

- *Since a long time in literature books there are modules dealing with diversity, through poetry for instance. In philosophy, starting with the*



*Greek culture, the subject is broadly dealt with. In literature, starting with Shakespeare on to Oscar Wilde, there are so many pretexts to deal with homosexuality. Starting next year, we would like to analyse the subject of diversity (not limited to homosexuality) through a transversal module involving all teachers. There are poems, lines, writings by Shakespeare that can be used to introduce the subject.*

One of the interviewed students stated that occasioned to deal with homosexuality offered by curricular subjects are still under-exploited by teachers:

*- I remember that talking about Oscar Wilde he said "He's been imprisoned for homosexuality". That was it, he didn't say anything else. Instead I remember that our teacher of French language disappointed me. There was a dossier dealing with Verlaine and his lover Rimbaud and she would call him "his friend". She said "Verlaine shot to his friend because he was going to leave"... I was very disappointed; why wouldn't she say lover or companion? That's guilty silence, censorship.*

While it's true that there are numerous occasion to deal with homosexuality in curricular hours, one of the teachers stresses the fact that further awareness is needed in addressing it:

*- One thing is talking about homosexuality in a serious an competent way, using the subjects we teach to educate to diversity. Much different is dealing with homosexuality in a superficial way. We have a good example with gender: there's already a high degree of awareness on gender issues and how didactics can educate about it. There's nothing of the sort about homosexuality or bullying.*

▪ Initiatives/activities involving parents

While everyone shares the idea that parents are a key-actor and should be involved, they also agree that it's very hard to do so. Parents delegate schools to train and educate their children; this is the shared opinion.

*- Parents only show up at the end of the school year, otherwise you never see them.*

### 3.6b

#### The Polish case, by Marta Abramowicz

#### SAMPLE

Individual interviews:

- 3 school directors (2 men and 1 woman)
- 3 teachers (2 W and 1 M)
- 2 non-teaching personnel (2 W)
- 2 parents (1 M and 1 W)

Focus group:

- 4 teachers (3 W and 1 M)
- 2 students (1 W and 1 M)

Each person interviewed is from different school.

Interviews – individual and group as well – took place in Warsaw, part of them in Campaign Against Homophobia office, part of them in schools where interviewee worked.

Group interview was organized in CAH office.

More women than men were interviewed – in Polish educational system much more women than men works.

The assumption in the guidelines suggested that school directors are treated as a non-teaching personnel - in Poland school directors are also in most cases teaching personnel.

#### DIMENSIONS AND TYPOLOGY OF THE PHENOMENON

Most of the interviewees say that, in their school, there are no problems with bullying, because there are no homosexual students.

[People being asked how they estimate the number of homosexual persons in society - in 8 out of 10 cases they did not know how to – they said numbers starting from 2% and finishing on 40%. When we told them that they represent 4-6% of society, which means that in their school they have at least one homosexual pupil in each class, they were in shock].

People from vocational schools underline that their male students use very often expressions like ‘faggot’, ‘sissy’ or ‘dyke’ or they write it on the walls – ‘Die, faggot!’, ‘No faggoting’. Sometimes group of males pick up one weak male and mistreat him very badly, but there nobody know if he is really gay.

People from other schools agree that there is aggression in schools, but this aggression is towards everyone who is different from the group, not especially towards gay and lesbians, especially that the are not certainty if they really are in their schools.

[Very characteristic is that they did not use words like ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’. They tried to avoid this subject and on the questions if they know any gay or lesbian, they answered sometimes: “*In our school we do not have this problem*”. I would like to stress that meaning “*problem*” they did not think about bullying, but about existence of gay people in school].

The reasons of aggression in schools in general are in respondents’ opinion following:

- difficult economic situation of parents and frustration in family connected with economical and social status;

- lack of parental control or any interest;
- weak authority of school personnel;
- lack of good moral patterns;
- lack of knowledge how to cope with your anger and frustration;
- natural aggressive attitude of children.

When it comes to aggression towards gay people, in perception of interviewees aggression is more justified, especially if somebody publicly show his/her orientation or march in Prides – because this is something different and homosexual people should not to show their sexual orientation to the others: “*Why do we have to know about sex life of our students?*”, most of the people conclude.

The answers from individual interviewees show that gay students live in schools in deep closet and even the slightest suspicion that somebody might be a gay, triggers aggressive reaction of group of colleagues.

Despite all this, it is possible for gay people to be ‘open’ at school if:

- they feel safe;
- on every form of bullying or hate speech there is a reaction of a teacher;
- teachers and all school personnel try to explain students why being aggressive is bad and why people should respect themselves;
- every student is treated with great respect by teachers and school director.

## **INTERVENTIONS OF PREVENTION AND TACKLING**

- Individual interviews:

All respondents claim that their schools have never operated on this field, although they underline that teachers have very actively raised their qualifications on every field, including for example anti-homophobia workshops conducted by Campaign Against Homophobia.

Respondents suggest that teachers should be more motivated to work by higher salaries and that it is necessary to change the policy of Ministry of Education, because in such climate of hate towards gay people (especially teachers) is very difficult to teach about tolerance.

They also say that, of course, tolerance should be promoted in school, but how can they do this in such political atmosphere when you cannot even mention homosexuality in positive context because you could be dismissed?

They stress – especially school directors - that they are too afraid to say that students should tolerate gay people, not mention to invite gay activists to give lessons about homophobia, even if they personally think that it is right.

*- If I had agreed on lesson about tolerance towards gay people or presenting homosexual people as normal people, then next day I would have had crowd of angry parents at my office, at Church [religion is taught in every Polish schools, mostly by priests, Church have very big influence on politicians], at local municipality, which hired me. To dismiss me one angry parent is enough.*

Interviewees agree that they do not see possibilities nowadays to openly counter-act homophobia in schools, although they stress that they personally will try to prevent aggression to every person.

- Focus group:

Respondents point that in some schools from the first grade students are taught about respect to other people.

They underline that attitude towards others and safety in school can be a result not only of one or even few actions, but core values (respect to the others, humanity and democracy) and model of education the school is built on.

Such schools are made by people with passion who really care what is happening in their institutes.

A good idea can be to have a kind of Parliament, at school, in which representatives of teachers, parents and students discuss main issues and everybody can propose topic of the discussion.

Other good ideas:

- obligatory philosophy lessons;
- involving students in many activities, promoted by school director and all teachers – they help people from orphanages, collect food and other things for people who need it, organize multicultural evenings showing culture, kitchen, rituals of different cultures;
- diversity at school – people with disabilities, refugees, people of different religion and races attending the same school. Therefore, students can learn about diversity from the beginning;
- noticing every aggressive behaviour and using various ‘fixing methods’, like: offenders have to explain their behaviour and teacher show them why they should not do it anymore; students are encourage to talk about what is happening – offenders, victims and witnesses; the school counsellor or philosophy teacher makes special lessons connected with was happened. All of this applies also for homophobia;
- giving lessons that homosexuality is a normal orientation;
- not avoiding difficult questions and, when necessary, ask specialists for help – sexologists, psychologists, Amnesty International’s educators.

## **EVALUATION OF THE INTERVENTIONS OF PREVENTION AND TACKLING**

- Individual interviews:

Respondents say that there is not good time to start any anti-homophobia actions. The best way for gay people is to keep their orientation secret or tell only a few people he/she trusts.

Although, they agree that anti-violence actions in schools are necessary. But they do not know what the best method to prevent violence is.

Most of them suggest that parents should be more involved in the raising process, cause school is not able to fulfil lack of parental control and care.

- Focus group:

Respondents stress that preventing bullying, violence and other pathologies in school is the matter of whole system in particular school.

First of all, teachers must themselves respect values they try to teach children.

Second of all, people must feel that they create school and they must feel that they are involved – all of them: students, teachers, parents. If they like their school, if they feel that they can have influence of what is going on, then they will have motivation to care of atmosphere in school and also they will feel safe. People in school should not hide problems, but try to cope with them, for example: drug-addicted person needs therapy, not to be relegated from school etc.

When this precondition is fulfilled and teacher has natural authority, then when he/she reacts on violence in school, he/she will be listened.

Weak point of such system is creating different reality than world outside – students after graduating might have problems with accommodation to a cruel and indifferent society.

## **NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS TOWARDS “SCHOOLMATES”**

- Individual interviews:

Respondents suggest that an instant change of Minister of Education might be helpful.

Most of them are surprised that we are so focused on protecting gay people from bullying, because “*There are more important problems in schools – for example hungry children*”.

Most of the respondents claim that they do not know any gay person, so they do not think that this topic is so important. But a few respondents notice that atmosphere of hate towards gay people in schools is very dangerous and if there is so many of gay people [5 %] then they must suffer a lot and they must feel extremely lonely.

Concerning "Schoolmates", people are interested in the results of the research and they ask the équipe to keep them informed about it.

- Focus group:

Also these respondent are very interested in the results of the research.

They are also interested in learning new methods of coping with bullying in schools.

### 3.6c

#### The Austrian case, by Roman Winkler

##### SAMPLE<sup>1</sup>

- Individual interviews:

Name	Ms. Heiner
Gender	Female
Role	Teacher
Interview situation:	Individual
Day and duration	27 November 2006, 1 hour
Location	Coffee house

Name	Mr. Perner
Gender	Male
Role	Teacher
Interview situation:	Individual
Day and duration	27 November 2006, 1 hour
Location	Coffee house

Name	Mr. Krammer
Gender	Male
Role	Teacher
Interview situation:	Individual
Day and duration	27 January 2007, 1 hour
Location	Coffee house

Name	Ms. Stockinger
Gender	Female
Role	Teacher
Interview situation:	Individual
Day and duration	1 February 2007, 1,5 hours
Location	Coffee house

Name	Ms. Kronberger
Gender	Female
Role	School director
Interview situation:	Individual
Day and duration	29 November 2006; about 1,5 hours
Location	Director's office

Name	Ms. Lindinger
Gender	Female
Role	School director
Interview situation:	Individual
Day and duration	12 April 2007, 1 hour
Location	Director's office

Name	Mr. Behrman
Gender	Male
Role	School director

<sup>1</sup>

Due to privacy reasons, original names of the interview partners were replaced by other names in this report.

Interview situation:	Individual
Day and duration	16 April 2007, 1 hour
Location	Director's office

Name	Ms. Kehler
Gender	Female
Role	Representative of "Parents association" in a Viennese school
Interview situation:	Individual
Day and duration	28 November 2006, 1 hour
Location	Coffee house

Name	Mr. Holzmann
Gender	Male
Role	Non-teaching personnel
Interview situation:	Individual
Day and duration	3 April 2007, 1 hour
Location	Interviewee's office

Name	Ms. Kern
Gender	Female
Role	Non-teaching personnel
Interview situation:	Individual
Day and duration	29 March 2007, 1,5 hour
Location	Coffee house

Name	Ms. Springer
Gender	Female
Role	Non-teaching personnel
Interview situation:	Individual
Day and duration	13 April 2007, 1 hour
Location	Coffee house

- Focus group:

Name	Mr. Walden
Gender	Male
Role	Teacher
Interview situation:	Focus group
Day and duration	2 February 2007, 2,5 hours
Location	Office of the Viennese Antidiscrimination Unit (WASSt)

Name	Mr. Brandstetter
Gender	Male
Role	Teacher
Interview situation:	Focus group
Day and duration	2 February 2007, 2,5 hours
Location	Office of the Viennese Antidiscrimination Unit (WASSt)

Name	Ms. Hanusch
Gender	Female
Role	Teacher
Interview situation:	Focus group
Day and duration	2 February 2007, 2,5 hours
Location	Office of the Viennese Antidiscrimination Unit (WASSt)

Name	Ms. Fellner
------	-------------

Gender	Female
Role	Student
Interview situation:	Focus group
Day and duration	2 February 2007, 2,5 hours
Location	Office of the Viennese Antidiscrimination Unit (WASSt)

Name	Ms. Ballauf
Gender	Female
Role	Student
Interview situation:	Focus group
Day and duration	2 February 2007, 2,5 hours
Location	Office of the Viennese Antidiscrimination Unit (WASSt)

Name	Mr. Winter
Gender	Male
Role	Trainee at the Viennese Antidiscrimination Unit (WASSt)
Interview situation:	Focus group
Day and duration	2 February 2007, 2,5 hours
Location	Office of the Viennese Antidiscrimination Unit (WASSt)

## INTRODUCTION

*“It’s enough!  
We have to counteract aggression amongst young people.”  
(Dan Olweus<sup>2</sup>)*

Following the above quote, bullying in schools is a contemporary phenomenon throughout Europe and concerns today’s teachers, parents, non-teaching personnel and not least the students. Bullying may have “different faces” and students might get bullied for various reasons such as their ethnic background, their religious beliefs, their gender or their sexual orientation. The latter is the major concern of the “Schoolmates” project and of this report.

Our research investigates the extent to which homophobic bullying exists in selected schools and how the involved actors deal with it.

Against the backdrop of the major goal of the “Schoolmates” project, the development and enhancement of concepts and instruments fighting against homophobic bullying in schools, we interviewed eleven experts about their perceptions and experiences in this context. Furthermore, six persons were invited for a focus group discussion on this matter.

The following sections will firstly provide indications about the methodological approach of the empirical analyses and, secondly, present the major findings relating to homophobic bullying in public schools in Vienna.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

The proposed interview outline foresaw *four major dimensions* to be investigated during the individual interviews and the focus group discussion. Subsequently, each dimension was followed by several *research questions*.

### 1) The “status quo” of bullying in schools

<sup>2</sup>

Dan Olweus, a  
Norwegian psychologist, coined the term “bullying” for aggressive behaviour in schools. Given an increasing aggression in Norwegian schools, Olweus initiated training programmes against bullying (see Journal “SCI special” 2006, p. 16, <http://www.sciq.at>).



- Does homophobic bullying exist in your school and if yes, what are the manifestations of homophobic bullying?
  - Who are the “bullies” and who are “bulled” persons?
- 2) Prevention and tackling actions
- Have there been any prevention and / or tackling actions in order to fight homophobic bullying in your school or do you know about any prevention and / or tackling actions in general?
  - Which instruments / actions have been applied so far to counteract bullying in your school or have you heard about any anti-bullying actions?
  - How should anti-bullying actions being “designed” respectively how should school operate in this matter?
- 3) Evaluation of anti-bullying actions
- What is your experience about the effectiveness of such prevention / tackling actions?
  - In your opinion, what lessons can be learned from such actions?
- 4) Needs and expectations towards the “Schoolmates” project
- Which improvements / changes do you suggest in order to cope with homophobic bullying? How should teachers’ training consider anti-bullying actions?
  - Which competences are necessary to treat bullying professionally? Which formative needs are to be taken into consideration?
  - How could the “Schoolmates” project contribute to counteract homophobic bullying in schools?

However, the following findings will show that most of the interviewees could not provide detailed answers to each posed question. Given the diverse backgrounds of the interview partners, different foci dominated the interview situation. Thus, the “thematic issues” ranged from more general perceptions about sexuality in daily school formation to very specific reflections on gender differences and particularities in dealing with homo- and bisexual orientation in students’ school life.

Importantly, the original names of the interviewees’ have been changed due to privacy reasons. In case of direct references to interview partners, persons will be quoted by alternative names and the respective role of the individual will be indicated in brackets (teachers: T; directors: D; parents’ representatives: P; non-teaching personnel: NT; students: S).

Regarding the interpretation process of the individual interviews and the focus group discussion, all interviews were protocol led.

The focus group discussion was recorded and transcribed 1:1.

A short protocol was set up for the documentation and illustration of the interview situation.

The first interview was undertaken as an “orientation interview” to test the comprehensibility and the logical set of the interview questions.

The analysis of the interviews involved the following stages:

- A reduction of the interview text to paraphrases according to the pre-defined dimensions of homophobic bullying (see above);
- A sequential and extensive analysis (similarities and differences in interviewees’ answers);
- A hermeneutic interpretation of the interview answers.

Importantly, all findings in this report represent the experiences and views of the selected interview partners and do not provide a representative picture of Austrian teachers, school directors, parents’ representatives, non-teaching personnel and students.

## **MAJOR INTERVIEW FINDINGS**

### *- Individual interviews:*

In general, the recruitment of interview partners turned out to be a difficult task. At the beginning, there were only a few persons who were prepared to join in the interviews. Most of the individuals

who had refused to take part indicated that they did not think “to have the requested expertise” in this field.

Finally, we could convince several persons to participate by holding that they *are* “experts” given their institutional linkages to the area of public education.

Apart, some of the interviewed persons expressed a very keen interest in this issue and the “Schoolmates” project due to the professional experiences they have made with homophobic bullying. Some of the asked school directors and teachers also distributed the “Schoolmates” questionnaire in their schools.

In the following, we will present the findings of the individual interviews with the teachers, the school directors, the parents’ representatives and the non-teaching personnel.

#### *- Interviews with teachers:*

In total, two female and two male teachers were interviewed. All individually interviewed teachers are educated for “secondary schools” i.e. they teach students aging from 11 – 19 years old. Basically, all teachers have had a long experience in teaching. However, one teacher has recently retired (Mr. Krammer) and another teacher has been working as a professional trainer since a couple of months (Mr. Perner). Furthermore, three persons belonging to the group of the non-teaching personnel and one expert representing the group of the parents in schools were interviewed.

#### **Teachers’ experiences on the “status quo” of bullying in their schools:**

Apart from one teacher, all interviewed persons of this group report about the “existence” of homophobic bullying in their schools.

According to the interviewees, homophobic bullying amongst students has been primarily verbally expressed by using swearwords such as “faggot”. Any other violent attacks have not been experienced.

In case of homophobic bullying, the “bullies” are mainly male students attacking other (male) students. Mr. Perner (T) describes this situation as some kind of “*daily discrimination*” which is mostly common among the younger students (aging from 12 to 15 years old). Ms. Stockinger (T) shares this view and furthermore reports that male students with an immigration background are particularly “active” in homophobic bullying. She has also experienced that male students are the primary “target group” of bullying actions.

The bullying of female students who are assumed to be homo- or bisexual is less noticed by the teachers.

Generally, all teachers report that assumed lesbian or female, bisexual students have not attracted so much students’ attention than their gay or male, bisexual schoolmates.

Mr. Krammer (T), who was an active teacher for about 30 years, remembers one female student who talked to her class mates about her homosexuality. It was her clear intention to get in touch with others in order to talk with them about her way of life and love. Interestingly, her schoolmates refused most of the time to talk with her about her homosexuality. Mr. Krammer (T) has the feeling that the young woman was fully integrated in the class, but there was an overwhelming ignorance towards her sexuality. Although this is no proof for homophobic bullying, it can be assumed that female students are taken less seriously by others if they come out.

Irritation is also a feeling that another interviewee, Mr. Perner (T), experienced when two young women in a class “*performed as a couple*”. Accordingly, their male schoolmates could not deal with the situation and ignorance was again their way of coping.

#### **SUMMARY BOX TEACHERS**

- Most interviewed teachers perceive homophobic bullying as an issue at Viennese schools and “part of everyday school life”.
- Homophobic verbal attacks are the most common forms of bullying.
- Male students are the primary “bullies” – male students are also those who primarily experience homophobic bullying.
- Male schoolmates take the sexual orientation of lesbian or female, bisexual students less seriously.

#### **Teachers’ opinions on prevention and tackling actions to fight homophobic bullying:**

The interviews reveal that prevention and tackling actions against homophobic bullying encompass the following dimensions:

- The daily education in the classroom
- Education material (such as school books, movies etc.)
- The formation of university students who wish to become a teacher
- Awareness trainings among teachers in schools

*The daily education in the classroom:*

Ms. Heiner, (T), who mainly educates female students, holds that education of sexuality per se must be set in a broader school context.

As such, everyday education in school must take into consideration diverse forms of sexuality and ways of living. According to this teacher, homophobic bullying can be best prevented when students grow up with the knowledge about contemporary ways of sexuality. She compares this need for awareness with the increasing importance of social competences (such as self-competence or cultural competences) or anti-drug addiction programmes. Ms. Heiner states that today students are claimed to deal with a lot of societal changes that are brought about by global economic and political trends. However, there is a lack of understanding among teachers themselves that students also face a lot of uncertainties regarding the different ways of partnerships. Thus, students are often left alone with these ambiguities which often results in severe aggression. In this context, Ms. Heiner (T) holds, it is more than understandable that some students become “bullies” since these students have not learned to cope with ill-balances regarding their own sexual orientation.

Moreover, Ms. Heiner (T) states that the issue of sexual orientation must be put on the school agenda and students have to be taught to reflect on their own pictures of sexuality, partnership, family and so forth. Moreover, homo- and bisexuality is not just an issue of sexuality but also an issue of rights and obligations. Thus, the official (ministerial) programmes for all different kinds of subjects (such as education in law) should consider the issue of sexual orientation.

Ms. Stockinger (T) has similar views regarding prevention actions against homophobic bullying. “*There is a lack of preparedness to deal with sexual orientation in school*”, the teacher states.

However, there are students who are willing to deal with sexual orientation (whatsoever this may concern). She has been personally approached by students to put the issue of “sexual norms” on the education agenda. Ms. Stockinger reports that students feel some kind of pressure towards the dominant notion of “normality”. In this context, she argues, that education in school must also point to societal power structures which also involve the executed power to define what is “normal”. Hence, the teacher discussed with the students in a very vivid way how sexuality might be lived and experienced. Students were called to think for themselves “How it might / would be *to be different?*” However, Ms. Stockinger (T) states, this is an extraordinary situation since the regular education programme does not foresee to integrate the issue of sexual orientation and homophobic bullying in the daily school education. Nevertheless, she attempts to point students steadily to societal diversity which also encompasses sexual orientation and linked discrimination.

Mr. Perner (T) also calls for an integrating concept about sexual orientation in school education necessitating a “*legal binding*”, though. Thus, the teacher also demands to adapt the official education programmes to contemporary realities. Furthermore, Mr. Perner argues, homophobic bullying can only be prevented if sexuality is not a “taboo issue” anymore. In order to achieve this goal, students must be empowered to reflect in an open and free school atmosphere about the diverse forms of sexuality.

However, this also means that sexuality respectively the ways people choose to live together must be dealt with in all subjects. Accordingly, there is no reason that education in mathematics or physics cannot partly be linked to this issue. Similar to Ms. Stockinger’s (T) opinion, Mr. Perner (T) explains that education throughout various areas considerably deals with notions such as “normality” and diverging norms etc which need to be re-thought and adjusted to the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Mr. Krammer (T) argues that the basis for prevention actions has to be a modern concept of education targeting the establishment of appreciation towards “the other(s)” in school and beyond. Furthermore, the teacher holds that an enlightened school management is the premise for any anti-bullying action plan.

*Education material:*

Ms. Stockinger (T) states that pedagogic material available at schools is completely outdated regarding the existing “concepts of living and loving” in society.

Accordingly, today's schoolbooks still reproduce the dominant and classical picture of family and neglects homosexual partnerships and parenthoods. Evidently, education material provides the daily basis for teachers' work but given the lack of "adjusted school material", education about sexual orientation becomes difficult. Prevention against homophobic bullying would be easier if there were schoolbooks and movies available representing a balanced view of sexuality. Apart, Ms. Stockinger (T) assumes that this is also a reflection of dominant, societal power groups desiring a streamlined population.

Ms. Heiner (T) also calls for a re-modernisation of school and kindergarten materials. According to this teacher, dominant pictures of male and female roles are already perpetuated in the kindergarten given the existence of "male" and "female" toys. It is important, though, that the very young children learn to try out different ways of playing. This may prevent at a very early stage that children are "afraid" towards other ways of living. However, this also necessitates that parents and kindergarten teachers have an open-minded and fearless approach towards child development. Ms. Heiner (T) holds that the sooner individuals learn to discover the variety of ways of living, the lower the risk that these people might become a "bully" or a "bulled person" later on.

*University formation:*

None of the interviewees experienced any training in "sexual education" during their own university education and the interviewed teachers assume that the situation has not changed so far.

However, all teachers agree that it is of utmost importance that university students are triggered to undergo particular processes of self-reflection. Certainly, this shall also involve reflections about their own sexuality. The rationale is the assumption that these future teachers are more competent to deal with homophobic bullying since they know about potential anxieties and uncertainties linked to sexuality.

*Awareness trainings among teachers:*

All interviewees state that some problems linked to homophobic bullying are subject to lacking awareness amongst teachers.

As it was previously stated, teachers "are not taught" during their formation to deal with sexual orientation in general and homophobic bullying in particular. Thus, most teachers are overcharged and do not have the social competences to cope with homophobic bullying.

Ms. Heiner (T) considers the co-operation of different school actors (involving parents' representatives; school doctors; psychotherapists working in schools etc.) as an important strategy to counteract homophobic bullying. The teacher would like to be offered focused trainings for teachers on sexual orientation or to establish trainings involving broader issues such as the application of gender-neutral language. If there were such trainings, it might not be "unusual" anymore if homo- and / or bisexuality would be dealt with by students for school assignments.

Such irritation among teachers was experienced by Mr. Perner (T) and Mr. Krammer (T), though. Both teachers report that their colleagues reacted irritated as two students' chose a "homosexual topic" for their school leaving examinations.

Furthermore, trainings in sexual orientation in school are decisive since teachers also have a communication function towards the students' parents.

**SUMMARY BOX  
TEACHERS**

*Ad daily education in classroom:*

- Sexuality in general and homo- / bisexuality in particular must become a cross-cutting issue throughout all subjects taught in schools.
- Students must be taught to reflect on the dominant pictures of sexuality, partnership and family.
- Teachers have to point to the broader context within which sexuality is embedded. This mainly concerns the legal realm and includes "rights and obligations" linked to human relationships.
- The official (ministerial) programmes have to ensure the legal binding of "sexual education" and need to reflect the diverse concepts of sexuality in society.
- Dominant, societal norms about sexuality have to be questioned inside and outside the classroom. There needs to be shift from "desk-education" to more interactive forms of education (e.g. play-acting).

*Ad Education material:*

- Schoolbooks and movies dealing with sexuality need to deal with homo- and bisexuality and potential homophobic bullying related to it.
- Teachers need to have modern and open-minded education materials in order to have the adequate pedagogic information about homo- and bisexuality at hand.
- Education on the diverse forms of family, partnerships and parenthoods has to start in the kindergarten. Toys and other education materials have to “offered” equally to girls and boys.

*Ad university formation:*

- Education on homo- and bisexuality and discrimination in this field needs to be part of the university curricula for future teachers.
- Self-reflection trainings on sexuality have to become a compulsory part of the pedagogic education for future teachers.

*Awareness trainings among teachers:*

- Trainings on homo- and bisexuality and discrimination have also to become compulsory for “active teachers”.
- Effective anti-bullying actions have to be based on strong networks involving the school management; teachers; parents’ representatives; school doctors etc.).

**Teachers’ opinions on the evaluation of anti-bullying actions:**

All four interviewed teachers report that in their schools no substantial anti-bullying actions related to homo- or bisexuality have been taken so far.

As it was already pointed out previously, it is even difficult to deal on a more general level with homo- and / or bisexuality in daily school education. Consequently, there were only a few attempts to put the issue at the classroom agenda which partly provoked strong irritations among the teaching colleagues (!).

Moreover, the school management is often reluctant to get engaged in anti-homophobic bullying. Mr. Krammer’s (T) following quote summarises the “unofficial attitude” represented by the school management and most of the teachers “*We do not want to have ‘this’ in our school!*”

Thus, very ambitious teachers in fighting homophobic bullying hardly get the necessary team support that is needed to counteract jointly homophobic bullying.

**SUMMARY BOX  
TEACHERS**

- Generally, anti-homophobic bullying has not been implemented in the schools of the interviewed teachers.
- Although “projects” have also become an integral part in Austrian school life, there have not been any projects dealing with homophobic bullying or anti-homophobic prevention actions.
- Some interviewees report about a lack of “team support” in schools.

**Teachers’ expectations towards the “Schoolmates” project:**

The major expectation that interviewees have towards the “Schoolmates” project regards the project’s trainings for students and teaching personnel.

This mainly derives from the teachers’ perceptions that there is a strong need for awareness trainings about homo- and / or bisexual life-styles and the diverse layers of discrimination in society.

Such awareness trainings are considered to be adequate prevention actions. On the one hand, students shall be enabled to learn about homo- and bisexuality “theoretically”. On the other hand, they shall be offered options to discuss in a free and open-minded manner on their views and uncertainties related to sexual orientation.

Some of the interviewed teachers hold that for the latter purpose, interactive methods (such as play-acting) should be provided.

Apart from the project main focus, the interviewed teachers expect that the “Schoolmates” project contributes to a more “relaxed” approach towards sexuality in general, partnerships and relationships in Austrian schools. In order to achieve this goal, trainings for teachers must be implemented, though. This requires the strong support by the school management and it needs the commitment of the official education institutions (e.g. the Federal Ministry of Education and the local / regional education authorities) to prevent and counteract homophobic bullying.

**SUMMARY BOX  
TEACHERS**

- The “Schoolmates” project shall raise awareness on homo- and bisexuality and provide anti-homophobic bullying trainings for both, students and teachers.
- In order to establish a public understanding of homo- and bisexuality in schools and to realise wide-ranging prevention actions against homophobic bullying, a stronger “institutional” commitment of the official education authorities is needed. Teachers expect the “Schoolmates” project to provide substantial information for these institutions.

*- Interviews with school directors*

Ms. Kronberger (D), Mr. Behrmann (D) and Ms. Lindinger (D) are the heads of three Viennese public schools. Given the different types of schools they are leading, they have made different experiences with homophobic bullying. This also explains the different approaches these school directors have chosen (together with their teachers) in coping with homophobia in school.

**Directors’ experiences on the “status quo” of bullying in schools:**

Ms. Kronberger (D) is the director of a school for “Special kids / teenagers with special needs” (encompassing socially disadvantaged students; handicapped students; students with an immigration background). “Otherness” is somehow “normal” in her school.

Certainly, there are the same conflicts among students like in any other school. However, Ms. Kronberger has not noticed severe problems involving homophobic bullying and verbal (homophobic) attacks are rare at this school. Physical attacks have not been reported either in this context. In case of verbal attacks in school, Ms. Kronberger (D), the “education counsellor” at school and some teachers have immediately taken action by talking with students about such incidents. However, education about sexuality in general and homo-/bisexuality in particular are not only dealt with in connection with bullying in this school.

The different forms of sexual orientation are rather part of the school’s overall education profile. However, Ms. Kronberger (D) states, there is not a “universal education scheme” for the kids and teenagers. Due to the different needs of the students, the issue of homo- and bisexuality and the issue of bullying and discrimination must be adjusted to the students’ cognitive and social skills.

Mr. Behrmann (D) explains that his school is characterised by a very amicable atmosphere. Although there is a large number of students and teachers, nearly everyone knows everybody in school. As such he has a very good overview of what is happening in school and the expert states that homophobic bullying has never been an issue. He assumes that the reason for the “peaceful” climate in school is the fact that tolerance and mutual respect represent the main fundament of the school’s philosophy. Mr. Behrmann (D) holds that all conflict issues that he has had to deal with so far were without any homophobic background. In his school, homosexuality is considered as somehow “normal”. In addition, most of the teachers at his school have a very liberal attitude towards homo- and bisexuality. The director remembers that one of the topics a teacher proposed last year for the school leaving examination dealt with Austrian “gay cops”.

Ms. Lindinger (D) tells from her experiences as a director that as far as she has had to deal with controversies related to homosexuality, students’ parents have been those who have expressed worries and uncertainties about their teenagers. Ms. Lindinger (D) remembers that this happened several times when a young woman came out in school. Generally, there are more female students that have their coming out publicly in school than male teenagers. Given the school’s thematic focus on “gender issues”, there is a basic tolerant and respectful atmosphere in school. Nevertheless, like in many other schools, homophobic verbal attacks also occur in this school. “Faggot” is often used by kids, but Ms. Lindinger (D) is convinced that most of the (young) students do not have an idea about the meaning of

the words. But the director and her teachers consider such attacks as serious incidents which are debated in the classroom.

**SUMMARY BOX  
SCHOOL DIRECTORS**

- From the directors' points of view, homophobia has not caused severe problems in schools. Nevertheless, two directors know about verbal attacks having a homophobic motivation. Again, there appears to be little awareness about the meaning of the words, though.
- Directors feel responsible for coping with any form of homophobia in school – teamwork with teachers is considered necessary to deal with such incidents.
- The interviewed directors are committed to an open, liberal and tolerant atmosphere in their schools and any forms of bullying must be prevented.

**Directors' opinions on prevention and tackling actions to fight homophobic bullying:**

Ms. Kronberger is convinced that mutual respect among the school management, the teachers, the students and the parents is a presumption for an anti-homophobic atmosphere in school. Based on such climate of tolerance and respect, specific awareness-raising actions have to be taken. Since 2007 is the year of equal chances in the European Union, some teachers in Ms. Kronberger's school have decided to dedicate the yearly outdoor-camping to the diverse forms of equality and inequality in society. This will involve a one-week of play-acting through which students shall experience what it may mean to suffer from discrimination in society and how they might fight against it. The thematic range will cover discrimination due to gender, age, race and sexual orientation. In general, the issue of discrimination is important for Ms. Kronberger (D) since most of her students attend school for getting prepared for the labour market.

Mr. Behrmann (D) holds that teachers in particular should be provided more basic information ("*facts and figures*") about homosexuality. Besides, the interviewed director holds that a homophile or homophobic atmosphere in school always depends on individual attitudes. As such, respect towards homo- or bisexuality in general cannot only be achieved by trainings. It is much more an attitude that people hopefully develop in a tolerant way during their socialisation.

Ms. Lindinger (D) points to the school's specific thematic foci dealing with gender and equality. Moreover, the school introduced specific office hours for the female students. Indeed, the young women make often use of these face-to-face meetings in which they can talk individually to (female) teachers. The issues talked over during these office hours are also used to talk about homosexuality. Since the coming out of female students is somehow normal at school, Ms. Lindinger (D) is convinced that these specific office hours are valuable and important services for young women. Hence, problems that may arise during the process of coming out can be (partly) avoided. The school also tried to offer such office hours for male students – unfortunately, there was too little demand, though. The male students have not made use and Ms. Lindinger (D) assumes that office hours for boys are not considered "cool" in the male school community. Like other interviewees, Ms. Lindinger (D) also states a lack of appropriate education material. Furthermore, she demands that the formation at university has to be adjusted to the contemporary developments in society regarding different kinds of sexual relation- and partnerships. In order to establish a respectful and sustainable understanding of homo- and bisexuality in the daily life at school, the director claims that antidiscrimination of homo- and bisexual people (students and teachers) has to be embodied in the "Austrian school education act".

**SUMMARY BOX  
SCHOOL DIRECTORS**

- Directors propose anti-homophobic bullying measures ranging from actions involving the students (e.g. play-acting) to legal actions.
- Prevention and tackling actions should be adjusted to the gender needs of the students. Separated education (for female and male students) may help to bypass irritations amongst students when they discuss jointly on homo-/bisexuality.
- Education material and the formation of future teachers have to take into account contemporary ways of sexuality, partner- and relationships.

**Directors' opinions on the evaluation of anti-bullying actions:**

The interviewees report that no particular actions aiming at anti-homophobic bullying have been so far undertaken in their schools.

Apart, one special initiative (in Ms. Kronberger's school) has not been yet realised at the time when this report has been conducted. Hence, there are no experiences available.

Obviously, such actions and others (like the specific office hours for female students) are considered valuable and appropriate in order to counteract homophobic bullying and to contribute to an enlightened approach to deal with homo-/bisexuality in school.

- SUMMARY BOX**  
**SCHOOL DIRECTORS**
- Directors regard anti-bullying actions most successful when they are adjusted to the students' needs and life-worlds.
  - Anti-homophobic bullying has to be an integral part of each school's philosophy which needs to become manifest in concrete actions (e.g. open discussions about sexuality inside and outside of classrooms between all actors involved in daily school life).

### **Directors' expectations towards the "Schoolmates" project:**

One interviewed director would very much welcome if the project contributed to a closer co-operation between school actors, school medical officers and school psychologists.

Hence, trainings within the "Schoolmates" project should also be offered for those who are not directly involved in the daily school life.

Moreover, there should be experts in the psychological units at the supervisory school authorities who are trained in homo- and bisexual issues. Furthermore, more promotion actions should be taken in order to inform the broader public (including responsible politicians for school affairs) about the aims of "Schoolmates".

- SUMMARY BOX**  
**SCHOOL DIRECTORS**
- The "Schoolmates" project should enable to establish closer ties among the school actors. This needs to involve also those that are not directly based in schools (e.g. school medical officers or school psychologists).
  - The project should contribute to the public understanding of diverse forms of sexuality, partner- and relationships – promotion actions have to go beyond the "classical" target groups in schools (teachers, students, directors etc.).

### *- Interview with parents' representatives*

In this group, we could recruit one expert for an interview. Ms. Kehler (P) is a "parents' representative" in a Viennese public school and mother of a 17 year old daughter. Due to her function, Ms. Kehler (P) is in constant contact with students' parents, the teachers and the school management. Hence, she has a good overview of the daily problems and concerns in school.

### **Expert's experiences on the "status quo" of bullying in schools:**

Ms. Kehler (P) reports that homosexuality is generally dealt with in an open way in school, particularly among students in the senior classes.

However, she also knows that verbal attacks with a homophobic background (e.g. "faggot") are commonly used in school. Besides, no other forms of homophobia have been reported in school and she has not been informed by other parents that homophobic bullying would be a severe problem in school.

However, there is some kind of a general, violent atmosphere in the lower grades classes which also becomes manifest in (verbal) homophobia. This is why the school introduced a peer-mediation system in order to counteract such violence.

- SUMMARY BOX**  
**PARENTS'**  
**REPRESENTATIVE**
- Homophobic bullying mainly encompasses verbal attacks in school and is often applied in the lower grades classes.
  - Students attending senior classes are more open and tolerant towards homosexuality.

### **Expert's opinions on prevention and tackling actions to fight homophobic bullying:**



In general, the expert is sceptical towards specific projects dealing with homosexuality since this issue is often dealt with as a “minority programme”. She rather holds that homosexuality should be part of the formal education in particular subjects. Homosexuality as a cross-cutting issue could be part of education in history or German literature. Accordingly, there is a need to raise awareness about different forms of sexual orientation without pointing mainly to discrimination.

**SUMMARY BOX**  
**PARENTENTS’**  
**REPRESENTATIVE**

- Homo- and bisexuality should be deliberately dealt with in school but rather as part of the daily school education instead of setting up specific projects.
- Homo- and bisexuality are expressions of existing sexual orientations and should not be exclusively understood in connection with homophobic bullying.

### **Expert’s opinions on the evaluation of anti-bullying actions:**

Ms. Kehler (NT) does not know about any specific anti-bullying actions undertaken in school. There have not been initiated projects dealing with homophobic bullying so far.

#### *- Interviews with non-teaching personnel*

We interviewed three persons (two female and one male expert) belonging to the group of the non-teaching personnel. These experts are differently enrolled in the daily “school business”: Mr. Holzmann (NT) works as a psychologist in the main Viennese school administration. Ms. Kern (NT) is a psychotherapist who is specialised in the concerns of young children and teenagers. Ms. Springer is a teacher who additionally holds in her school the position of the “education counsellor”.

### **Experts’ experiences on the “status quo” of bullying in schools:**

Given the experts’ diverse backgrounds and tasks, the interviewees have very different perceptions about homophobic bullying in schools. Mr. Holzmann (NT) states that even he has not come across that issue in his daily work so far, bullying must exist from a statistical point of view. The expert tells that verbal attacks related to the sexual orientation are “part” of the daily school life, though. It is often used by students to make distinctions between them and the other students. In this context, homophobic bullying is a manner of “trial” i.e. students try out different behaviours to get to know social boundaries. The main questions framing their motivation are “What is allowed?” respectively “What is prohibited?”. Thus, bullying in all its different forms is applied to experience social power and success. Such behaviour continues and even increases when bullying attracts the attention of other schoolmates. However, most of the bullies do not even know the meaning of the homophobic words they are using. According to Mr. Holzmann (NT), it is important that students learn social rules. This necessitates that such rules are also taught and authentically communicated within the families. Ms. Kern (NT) knows from her daily work that homophobic, verbal attacks are somehow common amongst teenagers. Apart from homophobic bullying this involves all kinds of sexism. The expert holds that it is decisive to consider the students’ stage of psychological development. Puberty is a phase of self-definition and defence against “all others” and young women and young men show different manners of behaviour.

Ms. Springer (NT) states that her school has a long tradition in teaching mutual tolerance and respect. Hence, any discrimination is dealt with seriousness by the teachers. Like most of the other interviewees, the expert reports that most students use abusive words without knowing the meanings, though. However, as an “education counsellor” she has not been approached by students due to homophobic bullying. Nevertheless, in case of any forms of discrimination, teachers approach students in a respectful manner and attempt to resolve such conflicts on a rational basis. Furthermore, Ms. Springer (NT) considers common norms regarding sexuality as the most hindering factors for a “normal” co-existence of different people with different sexual orientations. This refers to society in general and to particular micro-environments (such as school) in particular.

**SUMMARY BOX**  
**NON-TEACHING**  
**PERSONNEL**

- From a psychological point of view, homophobic bullying might be considered as phenomenon through which students try out social rules and social boundaries.

- Homophobic bullying in schools must be analysed and understood against the background of the students' psychological phase – the puberty.
- Dominant norms “regulating” sexuality in society constrain the daily lives of homosexuals and bisexuals.

**Experts' opinions on prevention and tackling actions to fight homophobic bullying:**

Mr. Holzmann (NT) holds that a reliable social setting is needed in school and at home. Teachers and parents must discuss with their students / kids on various social rules including the respect towards people with different sexual orientations. As soon as such rules have been implemented, this reliable setting must be constantly adjusted to changing situations (e.g. a new student in the classroom) and it must be defended towards attacks. This needs a high level of awareness on the teachers' side who must already learn during their formation to deal with conflicts in the classroom. Thus, future teachers have to be prepared to get in touch with diverse people (students, parents etc.) who have different needs and expectations.

Ms. Kern (NT) states that any prevention against homophobic bullying must involve actions enabling students to learn about their (often distorted) perceptions of sexuality. “Outdoor activities”, led by experienced staff, can be adequate measures for teenagers to experience different forms of teamwork and relationships. Furthermore, the diverse forms of sexuality must be taught and discussed in subjects such as ethical education. However, Ms. Kern furthermore explains, sexuality is a rather delicate issue which must be dealt with utmost caution since some parents (and teachers) are often sceptical towards a more liberal sex education. Moreover, female and male students should be offered separated education units concerning this issue in order to ensure seriousness in the classroom.

Like the precedent interview partners, Ms. Springer (NT) claims that education in anti-homophobic bullying must already start at university. Since homophobic bullying often occurs as a group-dynamic process, teachers have to be trained in dealing with such conflict situations.

**SUMMARY BOX  
NON-TEACHING  
PERSONNEL**

- Homophobic bullying can be best counteracted by a reliable setting of rules in school and at home.
- Future teachers have to be prepared during their formation for diverse conflicts that might arise in connection with sexual orientations.
- Education on social competence (involving sexual orientation) must involve both “indoor” activities (education in the classroom) and “outdoor” activities.
- Gender-separated education is needed when dealing with sexual orientation and possible discriminations related to it.

**Experts' opinions on the evaluation of anti-bullying actions:**

The experts have not so far experienced wide-ranging and substantial anti-bullying actions. However, one expert holds that peer-mediation might be an adequate action due to the positive experiences made with it in other conflict situations.

**Experts' expectations towards the “Schoolmates” project:**

The interviewed experts have not expressed any particular expectations. Basically, the project should contribute to increase awareness about sexual diversity among students, teachers and parents.

*- Focus group interview*

For the focus group interview we invited four teachers and two students. Since one teacher became sick, three teachers, two female students and one trainee (who was doing an internship at the Viennese antidiscrimination unit) participated in the “Schoolmates ” focus group interview.

There were very vivid interactions among discussants. In fact, the invited experts provided valuable information related to homophobic bullying and related prevention/tackling actions in school. Apart,

the participants could learn from each other's perceptions and there was a constructive climate of "listening and telling".

### **Experts' experiences on the "status quo" of bullying in schools:**

Although the two female students attend different schools, they have made similar experiences concerning homophobic bullying.

Ms. Fellner (S), who is also school spokeswoman, reports that in her school homophobic, verbal attacks are steadily used to insult others (mainly male students). She assumes, though, that the main purpose of such homophobic bullying is to offend in a "more general way". While some students might be driven by a homophobic motivation, most schoolmates use "faggot" in a meaningless sense – this is to name the "otherness" of a person whatever his/her sexual background might be.

Apart from such verbal bullying, Ms. Fellner (S) also tells that there are two female students who are openly lesbian. These two students have not experienced homophobic bullying – their schoolmates are rather interested in the students' lives as lesbian women. Certainly, this involves some kind of curiosity but there have not been negative comments from others in school. By contrast, another student in school is assumed to be gay – this young man faces sometimes verbal attacks. Ms. Fellner (S) supposes that some students feel uncertain and irritated. It is important that every student is protected against any kind of bullying, the school spokeswoman states. Regarding female students, Ms. Fellner (S) noticed that young women are taken less seriously in their lives as lesbian women than men. Ms. Hanusch (T) knows from her daughter that female students that come out have more problems to be recognised as lesbian women than male, gay students. There is still the cliché among some (male) students that lesbian women just want to make other men attracted to them. Ms. Fellner (S) knows some lesbian students whose sexuality was not even taken seriously by the teachers. Accordingly, some teachers have explained that "this" is just a "phase which will go away; she [the student] might have made some bad experiences with men." Generally, students in school do not publicly speak about homophobic bullying. Some students even reacted with strong irritations when Ms. Fellner (S) asked them to distribute the "Schoolmates" questionnaire in their classrooms.

Ms. Ballauf (S) reports that two young men in her class are often teased because of their close friendship. Such reactions have triggered discussions in the classroom. Ms. Ballauf (S) claims that there are no open discussions with teachers. Since the interviewee knows that there is verbal, homophobic bullying in her school, she talked to the peer-mediators to thematise openly this issue in the classrooms.

Mr. Winter (S) has recently passed school and he remembers that verbal, homophobic bullying was "quite normal" in the classroom. This particularly occurred when there were media reports or movies dealing with homosexuality. In such cases, when homosexuality was an issue in the media, some students often reacted by statements such as "This is so disgusting!" Moreover, Ms. Winter (S) explains that any student that was not good in school was called a "faggot" – however, this was also applied for those (male) students who were very close friends or for those who came from the same village. Again, "gay" and "faggot" were expressions that were used for all those that were somehow different. There was no teachers' support or preparedness to deal with such incidents, though.

Mr. Walden (T) also claims that there are numerous clichés coining the picture of homosexuals in society. Such pictures also prevail in school. The teacher reports that once he presented a movie in the classroom dealing with the daily lives of two gay men. Prior, students assumed though that the story would mostly be about their sexuality. Mr. Walden (T) holds that such attitudes and prejudices are typical when it comes to discuss about homosexuality in school. Most students do not have an idea about the lives of homosexuals and there is a lack of "role models" for homosexuals. Mr. Walden (T) also knows verbal, homophobic bullying in his school and sometimes it is rather difficult to put such incidents on the school agenda. According to the expert, homophobic bullying must not be ignored and needs to be taken as seriously as any other form of bullying and discrimination.

#### **SUMMARY BOX FOCUS GROUP**

- Homophobic verbal attacks are commonplace in school – however, some experts doubt that such bullying has a particular homophobic motivation.
- Homophobia among students results from the students' own uncertainty about their sexuality given that students still experience their puberty.
- Female students who come out are taken less seriously by both groups, (some of) their schoolmates and (some of) their teachers.
- There are dominating clichés and stereotypes about homosexual life styles

in schools. Teachers and the school management do not always taken homophobic bullying as serious as it should be.

### **Experts' opinions on prevention and tackling actions to fight homophobic bullying:**

Mr. Walden (T) attempts to react to homophobic bullying by discussing with the students in the classroom. However, apart from “lecturing” on antidiscrimination, the teacher also encourages his students to participate in anti-bullying workshops. The aim is to enable students to experience how it “feels” to be bullied and which actions can students taken to resolve such conflict situations.

Mr. Brandstetter (T) proposes to initiate school projects that deal with homosexuality in a broader sense. Homosexual NGOs (such as the Viennese “HOSI”) could be used as examples for which students make business plans. Such projects could shed some light on the issue of homosexuality without exclusively pointing to sexuality. Moreover, students could learn about the daily business of an NGO fighting for gay and lesbian rights. Besides such initiatives, homosexuality must be discussed in connection to personal attitudes towards “other” (homo- and bisexual) life models. Mr. Brandstetter (T) states that such discussions must also be undertaken among teaching colleagues and should be part of the formation of future teachers.

Ms. Fellner (S) states that she tries to bring in the issue of homosexuality and related areas of discrimination whenever it is suitable during education in class. Hence, the student confronts her classmates and her teachers by putting forward critical questions and remarks. When it comes to prepare a paper or a presentation in class, Ms. Fellner (S) often chooses a topic related to gay and/or lesbian concerns.

#### **SUMMARY BOX FOCUS GROUP**

- Prevention against homophobia in school necessitates both, lectures on homosexual antidiscrimination and interactive education (e.g. play-acting).
- Homosexual NGOs could be used as examples in school projects to enable students dealing with homosexuality from a different angle.
- Some students are considerably active in gay and/or lesbian issues in school and get constantly engaged in discussions in the classroom.

### **Experts' opinions on the evaluation of anti-bullying actions:**

Mr. Walden (T) and Ms. Hanusch (T) report that they have initiated projects together with other colleagues dealing with anti-homophobic bullying. Accordingly, the school dedicated one week to the issue of “antidiscrimination”. Students and teachers welcomed this initiative and participated in a range of workshops. The teachers hold that it is important to deal with anti-homophobic bullying in alternative ways. Homophobic bullying is a serious issue that should not be merely discussed in the regular class education but needs innovative and interactive education forms.

Besides, all other focus group participants reported that no anti-homophobic actions have been so far undertaken in their schools.

#### **SUMMARY BOX FOCUS GROUP**

- Valuable experiences have been made with anti-bullying actions based upon interactive education forms.

### **Experts' expectations towards the “Schoolmates” project:**

All experts agreed that the “Schoolmates” project should contribute to a closer co-operation between the main school actors.

This shall help to:

- fight homophobic bullying jointly;
- raise awareness and to come to a more profound understanding of bullying in schools;
- develop education concepts going beyond the mere communication of factual knowledge about homo- and heterosexuality – this mainly involves interactive forms of education.