

LISTEN!

What children have to tell us
about bullying and safety
at school



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BULGARIA

Pupils from 1st grade, 134 “Dimcho Debelyanov” Public school; pupils from 5th grade, 55 “Petko Karavelov” Public school; pupils from 6th and 7th grade, 153 Specialized public sport school “Neofit Rilski”, Solfia, Children’s Monitoring & Advisory group between 11 and 17 years of age attending Animus Association Foundation activities. Special thanks to Dena Popova, Kristina Nenova, Todor Lalov and the class teachers for their contribution and support during the workshops and the focus groups. We thank Marina Angelova for conducting the school workshops and Maria Tchomarova for coordinating the services and workshops for children and help to understand children’s voices.

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LISTEN!

What children have to tell us about bullying and safety at school

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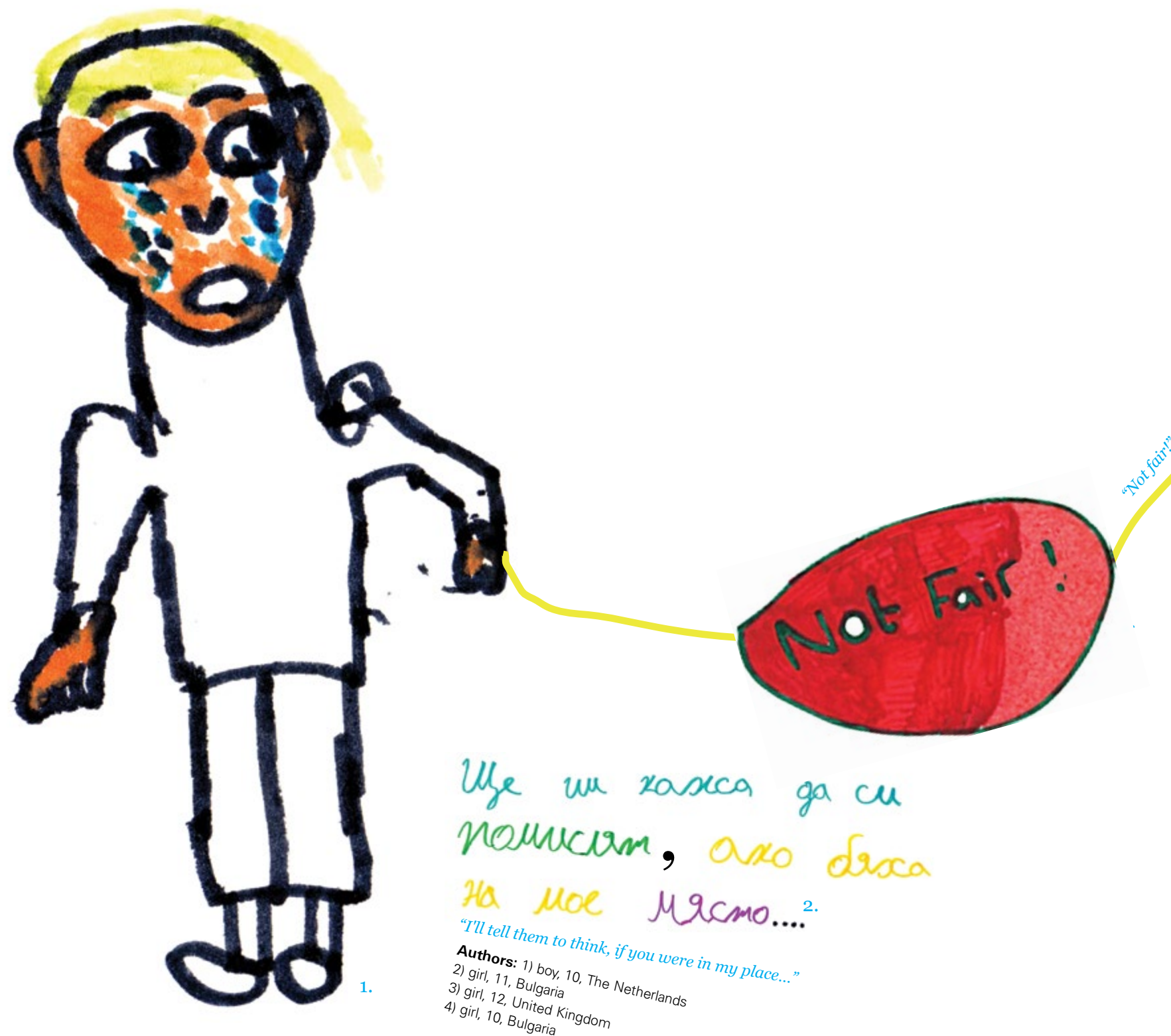
BIBLIOGRAPHY44



Author: boy, 6, Bulgaria

“Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them”

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry



WELCOME TO OUR BOOK!

All adults were once kids. Before they grew up and forgot what it is to feel, express and look at the world like a child. Grown-ups live in a world of rules and follow societal norms that are the result of centuries of cultural, historical and political shaping. School teaches children how to follow these norms and how to grow up... but often forgets to pay attention to how children see the world and feel about it. This is why our project brings seven European countries together - Bulgaria, Germany, The Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, UK - in order to provide an open space and to listen to the children’s voices. All participating countries differ strongly from one another in their historical background, diversity and ethnic contexts, standards of living, educational system and traditions of involvement of children and children’s rights in the educational systems. We went to 16 schools and met with over 514 students. The school contexts differed greatly from country to country. Some of our host-teachers for the interactive workshops were professionals who started their teaching career during authoritarian regimes, others were young professionals with substantial multicultural experience. Some of the schools were schools with a strong history of bullying and vandalism, and others were schools with an environment promoting diversity and tolerance.

Notwithstanding, all children showed that they look at the world through similar eyes, no matter where they live and study. They shared similar stories about their understanding of bullying and the problems they share at school.

The answers from the children and our findings are presented in the following pages. We tried to step in their shoes and hear about their feelings, problems and expectations regarding violence and bullying. Let’s hear what children want to tell us.

Enjoy the Book and Good Luck!



Authors: 1) girl, 10, The Netherlands;
2) boy, 13, Bulgaria; 3) girl, 12, Sweden
4) boy, 10, The Netherlands

WHAT DO WE DO?

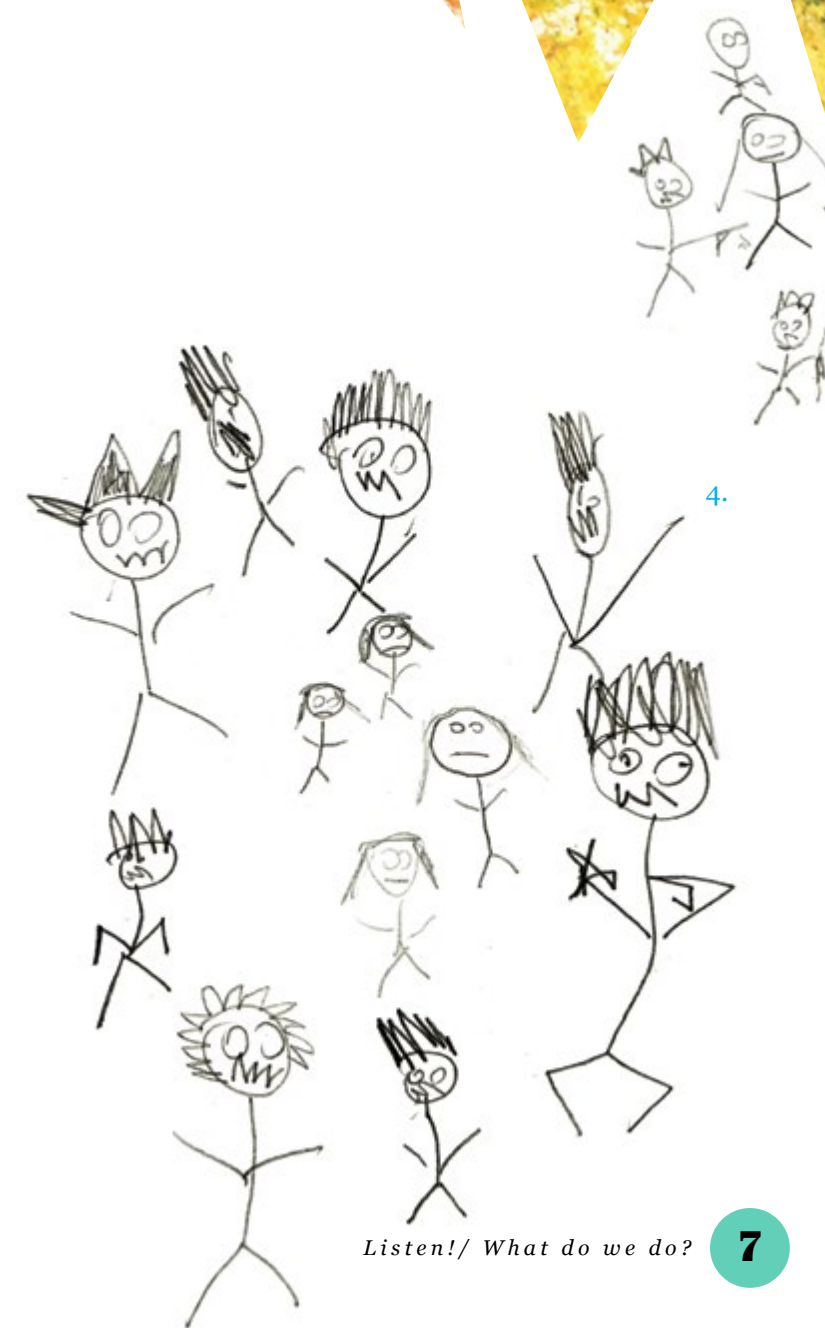
Why

School bullying is a painful experience and inevitably affects the complete development of young people. School bullying compromises the very nature of the academic process and negatively affects the learning abilities of children, which is the core goal of the school as an institution. Depending on their capacity to deal with these problems, children will shape their future relationships with people, how they will grow as individuals, and whether they feel good about themselves or whether they keep a painful wound inside that might affect their self-esteem, relationships, behavior and emotions. After all, school plays a major role in the everyday life of children.

We created the project, because as professionals and parents ourselves, we care about the future of children and believe that violence at school can be eliminated in order for our children to grow emotionally healthy and confident. After all, the school is largely crucial for the mental, emotional health and the cognitive development of children. The project is our attempt to stand closer to children, first as teachers, than as parents, to try to understand their emotions and fears – spoken and unspoken.

Communicating with children, parents, teachers and all other adults concerned with the wellbeing and safety of school children, showed us out the necessity for an in-depth look at the problems that children face at school, specifically seen from their point of view. This is why we developed an approach based on the experiences of children to assist teachers and other adults to understand the concerns that children have in relation to violence at school.

We hope that adults will learn to be supportive and respond without reproach towards the children. We hope that teachers and other adults will learn to identify and manage to stop aggression in the classroom at a very early stage.





1.

Author: 1) girl, 10, Sweden



2.

What

The child perspective on bullying is at the core of our project.

Our overall goal is to involve children in the prevention of bullying and in creating a safe environment at school in a participatory and empowering way.

The first step is to approach the children from different European countries and ask them *to share their views*, what they feel and think; what are their fears and expectations about safety at school.

Then we will meet with the teachers and discuss the opinions and ideas of the children. Through a series of seminars and workshops we try to step in the children's shoes together with the teachers, in order to gain experience that will motivate us to look at the children's problems. The next step is to empower *both*

children and teachers to participate together in creating a safer school environment. Each school is free to apply everything learned from the program in a flexible way and to create a unique program and approach against school bullying in their specific school context. We noticed certain differences, but there are also recurring general solutions – we already noticed them in the drawings of children coming from different countries, diverse origin and cultural background, and from different education systems.

Together with the children and with the help of their teachers, we aimed to create a sustainable approach, applicable in the everyday work against school violence or, as children themselves said, "to have tools that we can fix with".

Who

We believe that adults are responsible for creating a safe and protective environment for children and many of our activities are targeted at the adults. In order to tackle this responsibility, adults have to be brave enough and open towards the children's point of view. It is important that the adults are not afraid to get close to the children, to understand and be supportive of them in moments of conflicts, difficulties and suffering. When adults understand the children's point of view and apply their life experience and professional knowledge, they can really help children to feel safe, protected, strong and empowered.

Between 7-18 years of age, when children are highly sensitive and many changes take place, the adults closest to them are their parents and teachers, as well as additional professionals involved with their development and protection. It is these adults that we aim to address with our activities.

As part of the project, *school staff* is to be sensitized and trained in early identification of bullying as well as in intervention, referral and interdisciplinary cooperation with other professionals, child-protection systems, the

Authors: 2) girl, 10, Germany; 3) girl, 7, The Netherlands; 4) boy, 6, Bulgaria



3.



4.

family, etc., using the views expressed by children as the starting point for their actions.

Children at school expressed their opinions and shared their emotions, associated with school bullying in order to help adults understand them better. Later in the project children are to take part in interactive activities (school bullying preventive workshops). Special attention will be drawn to victims and perpetrators of bullying, who together with their parents will have access to psychological counselling/counselling programs provided by two of the organizations – Animus Association Foundation and Save the Children Romania.

For the *parents* we have prepared a leaflet that provides information on early signs of bullying and how to protect their children.

Policy makers are to be approached with messages raised by children.

Within the project we will disseminate everything we have learnt to a broader audience of specialists responsible for children's well-being – *head teachers, teachers, social workers, police officers, other key stakeholders*. We believe that this is an effective way of increasing the awareness among professionals about the emotional needs of children.

HOW DO WE DO IT?

“Every child is a unique and special individual.” (George Morrison)

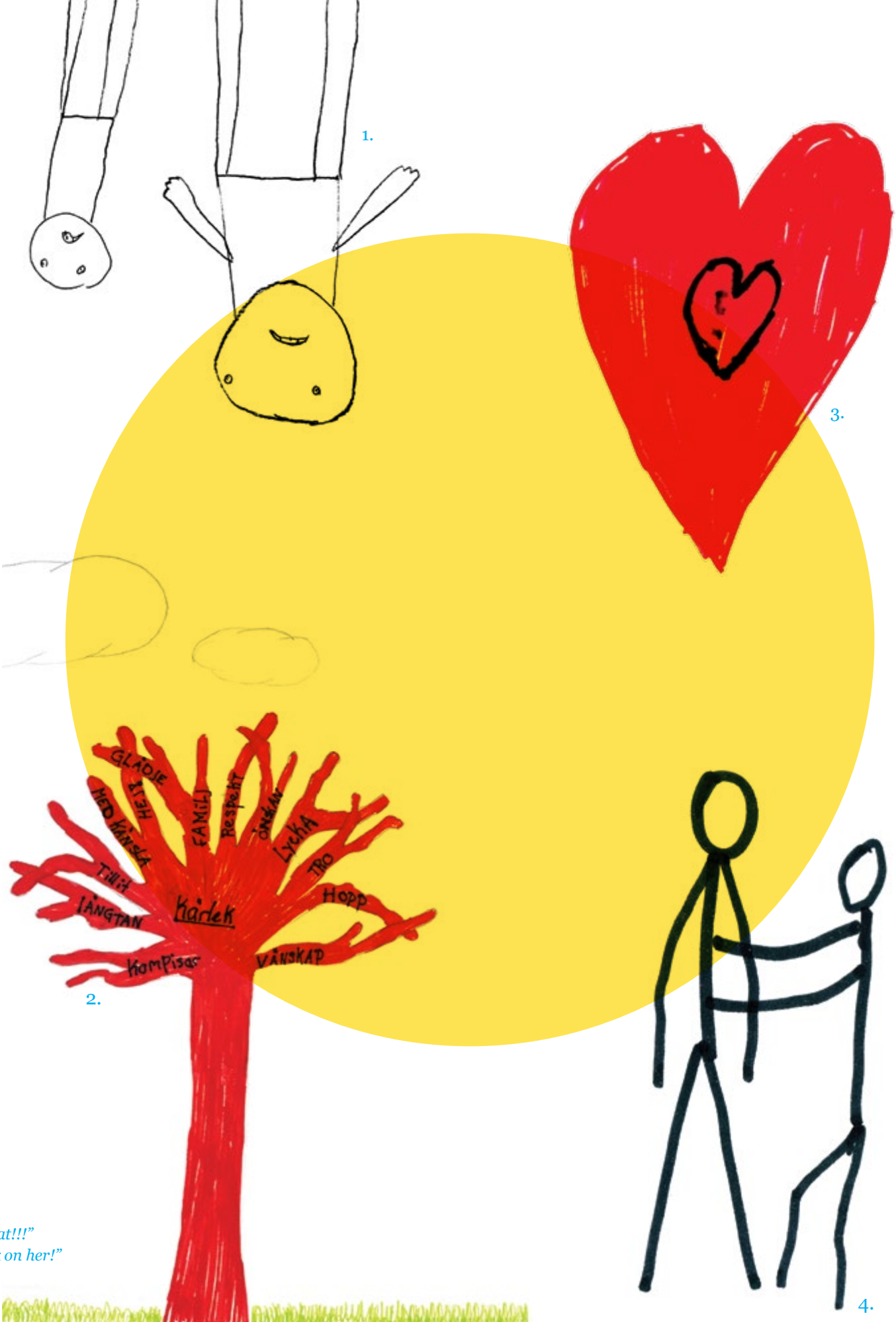
The opinions of children on bullying and violence as well as safety are expressed freely in the chapters that follow. Children were invited to express their vision, ideas, concerns, attitudes and feelings on violence and neglect, which enabled them to exercise their fundamental right to participate.

The child is at the centre

The idea of a child-centred approach is to give freedom and responsibility to the child in order to empower him/her to work from their individual standpoint and use their perspective to work towards a solution. Children and young people are active participants in their own lives and development. This means that they should be mentally and physically involved in all parts of their lives. Children and young people, as all people, are specific individualities defined by their own developmental stages, with original subjective view of reality and of their own state.



1: “Help the bullied.”
2: “Bullying is bad.”
3: “You are ugly and fat!!!”
4: “Hey! Do not attack on her!”
5: “Don’t insult her!”
6: “Stop it, now!”
Autor: girl, 11, Slovakia



How to apply child-centred approach in dealing with bullying?

The focus of child-centred approach is to enable the children in a safe and respectful manner to develop their own solution-solving attitude, thus encouraging co-operation, the development of life skills, their capacity to organise themselves, chiefly - to empower. Empowerment is seen as the process by which people learn to achieve control over their own lives and resources through self-organisation. Respectively, the children feel safe, encouraged, happy, empowered in community and their well-being rises significantly.

The institute of Child Protection Studies (2015) points out the following four topics that are relevant to child-centred practice:

- recognising developmental stages and potential problematic milestones of childhood and adolescence including assisting children and young people as early as possible – early in the life of the child and early in the life of the problem;
- taking into account the developmental needs of children and young people in all interventions;
- providing children and young people with appropriate opportunities to participate in all aspects of child protection interventions which affect them; and
- promoting a collaborative approach to the care and protection of children, including the strengthening of networks that are critical to their wellbeing.



Authors: 1) girl, 6, Bulgaria; 2) girl, 12, Sweden; 3) girl, 6, Bulgaria; 4) boy, 12, Bugaria; 5) boy, 10, The Netherlands

THE WORKSHOPS

Who participated

In the seven project partner countries, 34 workshops were conducted in 16 primary and secondary schools with 514 students altogether (age 7 to 18 years old)

- Bulgaria** 7 workshops, 3 schools and a children’s monitoring and advisory group, 94 students, 7 – 18 years old
- Germany** 4 workshops, 4 schools, 73 students, 8 – 16 years old
- The Netherlands** 3 workshops, 2 schools, 39 students, 10 – 11 years old
- Romania** 5 workshops, 1 school and in the frame of National Forum for Children, 114 students, 10–11 years old
- Slovakia** 6 workshops, 2 schools, 50 students, 10 – 17 years old
- Sweden** 5 workshops, 2 schools, 84 students, 10 – 16 years old
- United Kingdom** 4 workshops, 2 schools, 60 students, 8 – 10 year old



1.

What did the children participate in?

Our methodology had one common point of departure: the perspective of the children and adolescents! Participation is not merely the act of taking part in a given process, but moreover taking a share, having responsibility and chance to decide and change. Our approach is guided by the keynote that participation should be empowerment. Therefore the facilitators did not just ask the children on what their needs might be as for their safety and wellbeing in school. The workshop methods reflecting the child-centered approach let the children actively bring their ideas, to imagine, reflect, dream of, and express their voices, views, and perspective: *“Listen to me! I have a lot to tell you!”*.

That is how we adults cannot overhear their voices. The workshops were not just a need assessment on their experiences with bullying, but they called upon the readiness and commitment of the children to explore and re-create the social realities of the school life. The children pondered not only on “what makes them sad, upset or angry about bullying?”, but engaged proactively in imagining “what a world and school without bullying should look like”, with ideas about “what should the others change, so they feel safe in the school?” and “what can they do so bullying does not happen?”

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2.

Authors: 1) girl, 10, The Netherlands; 2) girl, 10, Bulgaria; 3) girl, 9, Bulgaria; 4) boy, 13, Bulgaria; 5) boy, 9, Bulgaria; 6) boy, 6, Bulgaria

How did they participate?

The exercises offered by the facilitators relied completely on the readiness of the children to participate and share their views. A combination of following methods was used:

Graphic-creative techniques

- drawing, modeling, crafting (modeling clay, PlayMais) on situations of bullying
- collages from magazines showing the feelings of those who are bullied and those who bully,
- creating images: “a world with bullying, a world without bullying”,
- creating posters “my super school”,
- creating anti-bullying buntings with messages to adults

Visual creative techniques

- photo-voice creating photo on the ideas, associations and messages of the children about bullying and their needs to be protected

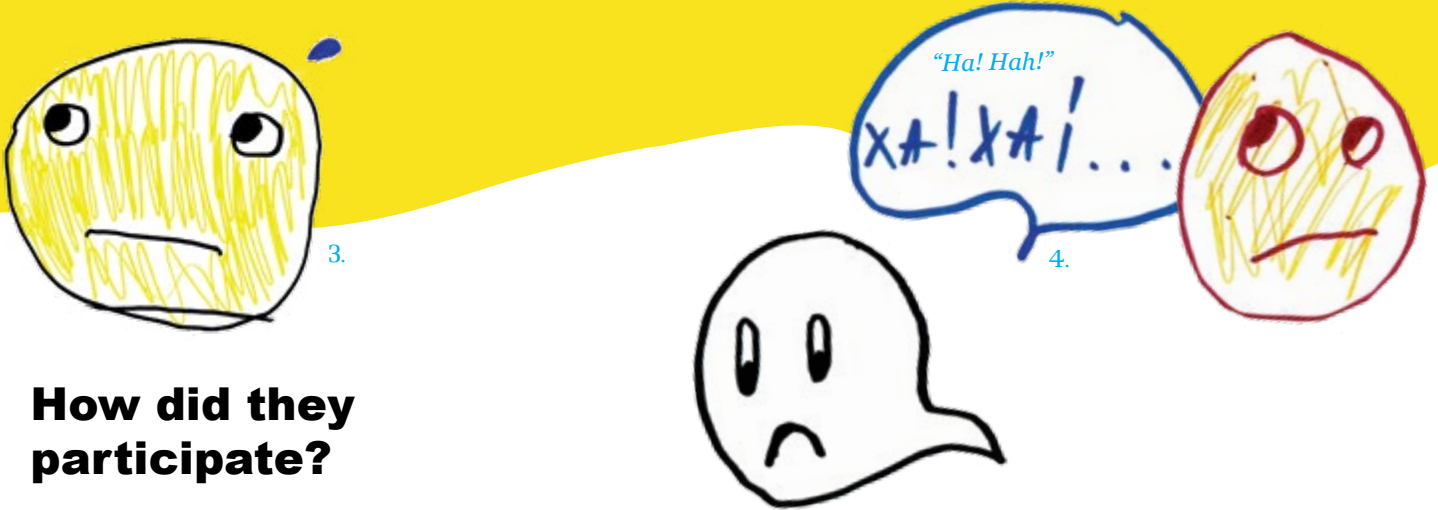
Interactive group work techniques

Interactive group work techniques consisting of various exercises, and fostering self-esteem and creating positive group climate, where empathy and trust are at the center of the activities through building rapport, promoting awareness and respect for the protection of personal boundaries: “what bullying means to me”

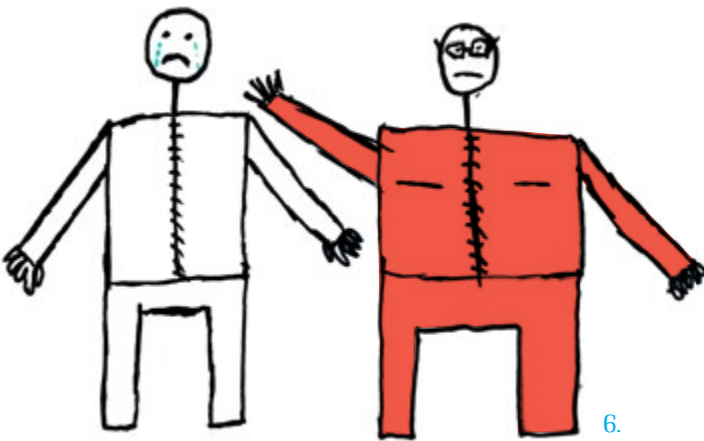
What did we learn?

We learned that we need to be patient. The answers to some of our questions were not coming at the first meeting, but sometimes during the following encounters with the children. Time is needed in order to answer a question and the answer comes as a process, it’s not an end in itself.

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Authors: girls and boys, 8, The Netherlands



6.



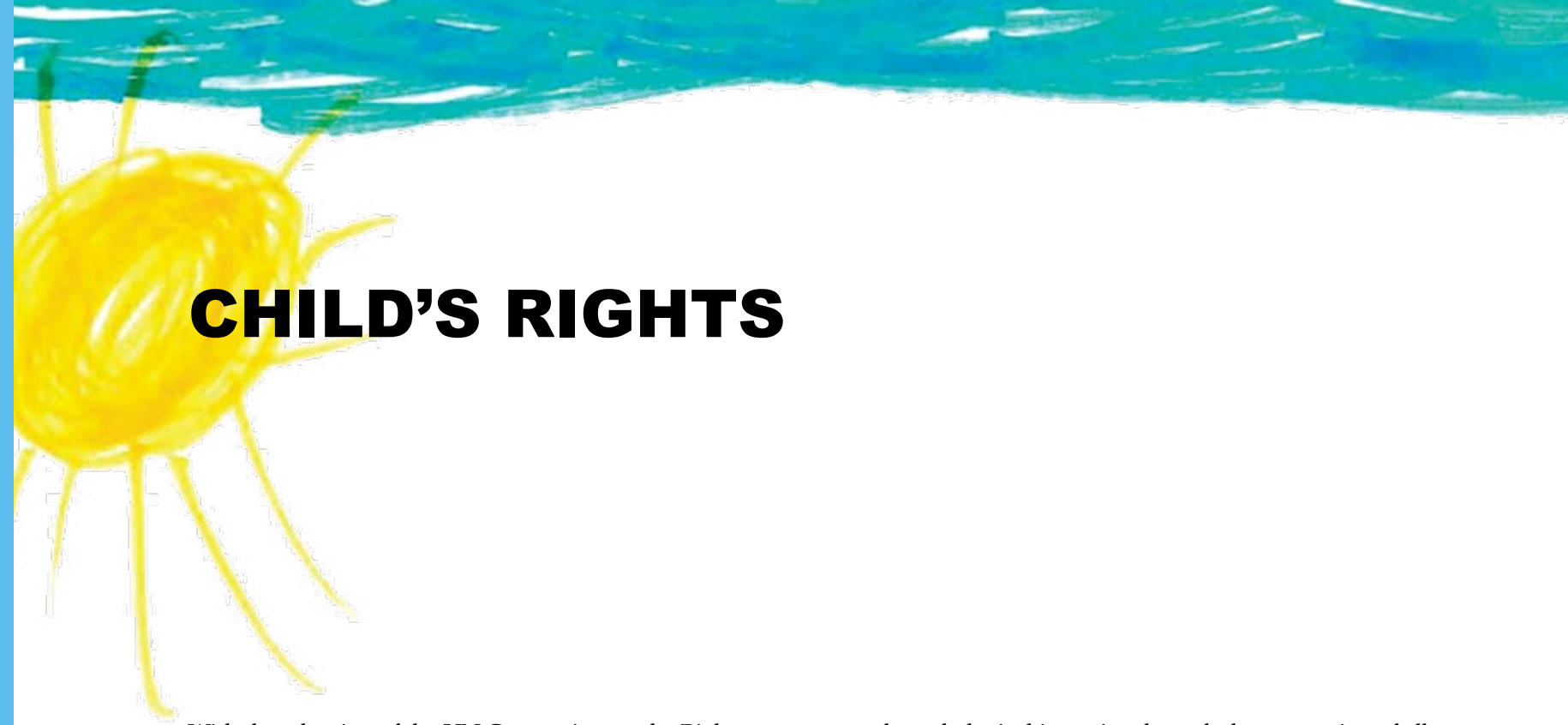
Author: girl, 10, United Kingdom

**THE ONLY THING
STRONGER THAN
FEAR IS
HOPE** ♥

*"The only thing stronger
than fear is hope."*

(girl, 14, Sweden)

CHILD'S RIGHTS



With the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 all children worldwide were promised the same rights. The Convention changed the way children are seen – in other words, they were now viewed and treated as human beings with a distinct set of rights instead of as passive objects of care and charity.

Children have a right to protection. There has been consent on this for a long time. However, for the healthy development of the child, it is important not only to receive protection but also to feel valued and to have opportunities to participate: to learn to form opinions, to have the confidence to express opinions and above all, to be taken seriously.

Central to a child-centred approach is the right of the child to develop physically as well as mentally, emotionally, cognitively, socially and culturally ³. In any decision affecting a child it should be determined which outcome is in the best interest of the child and thus protects the development of the child to the fullest extent ⁴. To determine this it is very important to take the child's opinion into consideration, in accordance with the age and maturity of the child ⁵.

According to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, securing and promoting children's fundamental rights to respect for their human dignity and physical

and psychological integrity, through the prevention of all forms of violence, is essential for promoting the full set of child rights in the Convention on the Rights of the Child ⁶.

The experience of bullying and violence is inherently disempowering for children, when their rights have been violated in their school, the place where they spend most of their time for more than 10 years and should feel safe and secure. This is where children make their first steps towards independence, where they encounter the first instances of compliance with others and with the general rules of human behaviour.

It is therefore essential that education, as part of the service system, is open to respond to the needs and difficulties of the children during this highly sensitive period of human development. Children, who experience abuse, have a right to be supported in their physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration ⁷.

³ Art. 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

⁴ Art. 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

⁵ Art. 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

⁶ General Comment No. 13 (2011), The right of the child to freedom of all forms of violence, Committee on the Rights of the Child, UN

⁷ Art. 39 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Where did the word *bully* come from? Mid 16th century: probably from Middle Dutch *boele* - lover. Original use was as a term of endearment applied to either sex; it later became a familiar form of address to a male friend. The current sense dates from the late 17th century.

According to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary



Bullying is one of the most subtle forms of violence. Bullying is violence, but not every act of violence is bullying etc. When looking at bullying perhaps the best known definition is by Dr. Dan Olweus PhD, a Swedish research professor of psychology affiliated with the University of Bergen's Research Center for Health Promotion (HEMIL) in Norway. In his 1978 book titled, *Aggression in the Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys*, Olweus said:

"A person is being bullied when he/she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons. Negative action is when a person intentionally inflicts injury or discomfort upon another person, through physical contact, through words or in other ways."

*Olweus himself reiterated his original definition in his book, *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do* (1993)

Authors: 1) girl, 10, Bulgaria; 2) girl, 10, Romania
3) girl, 14, Bulgaria; 4) boy, 10, Germany



The following are examples of bullying behaviours. **Remember**, bullying is a pattern of behaviour that is repeated over time against the same person(s) with a noted power differential:

1. Saying hurtful and unpleasant things
2. Making fun of others
3. Using mean and hurtful nicknames
4. Completely overlooking someone
5. Deliberately excluding someone from a group of friends
6. Hitting, kicking, pulling hair, pushing or shutting a person inside
7. Telling lies
8. Spreading false rumours
9. Sending mean notes
10. Trying to get other students to dislike another person



Author: girl, 14, Sweden

CHILDREN'S VOICES

IN WORDS AND IMAGES

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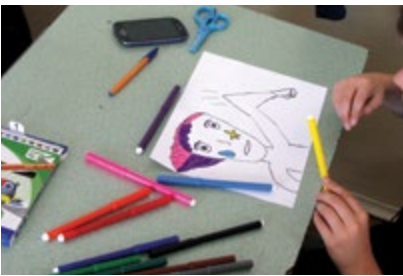
"The bullying starts already in 2nd and 3rd grades; in 5th or 6th bullying is already established it is kind of *official*." (girl, 11, The Netherlands)

"They scream and shout at me – yesterday and the day before, and today also! There are kids who want to show off in front of the other, to look 'cool' when they shout at me I'm a baby." (girl, 11, Bulgaria)

"You can be bullied for the color of your skin and hair. You can be bullied for the clothes you wear or that you don't have so much money." (boy, 15, Sweden)

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Authors: 1) girl, 10, Bulgaria; 2) girl, 13, Germany
3) boy, 10, The Netherlands; 4) boy, 10, The Netherlands;
5) girl, 11, Romania



FACES OF BULLYING

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"...The perpetrator of violence hits with a fist and while one part of him enjoys that, yet the other part of him is not satisfied. Because in this way he releases his nerves, but at the same time realizes he is doing something bad."

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Author: boy, 11, Bulgaria



COMMENT: People are neither good nor bad. The world is not colored only in black and white. Bullying is, first of all, communication, coming at a very high price for both parties.

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WHAT DO BULLYING AND VIOLENCE MEAN TO ME?

“Every bullying situation is different. It can be one person bullying a group. A group bullying one person. One person bullying another person.” (boy, 11, Sweden)



Authors: girls and boys, 10, Netherlands

“It’s when you intimidate someone.”
“It’s repeated again and again every day.”
“Yes, people can gang up on you at school and a group of people can make you feel trapped.”
“Yes, I have been bullied. It’s not nice and feels like a maze that you can’t get out. Bullies can make people gang up on you. I was threatened that I would get punched if I tell anyone.” (focus group with girls and boys, 8 – 10, United Kingdom)

“I feel exposed.” (girl, 14, Sweden)

“Bullying can be when your friends turn against you and you don’t want to go to school anymore.” (child, 9, United Kingdom)

“The bullying is frequent psychical and physical harming of somebody.” (boy, 15, Slovakia)

“Pushing or hitting anyone every day.”
“Taunting people often – hitting them and surrounding them.”
“Saying horrible things like their hairs a mess rather than hitting. It’s when you do nasty things over and over again not just once.” (focus group with girls and boys, 8 – 10, United Kingdom)

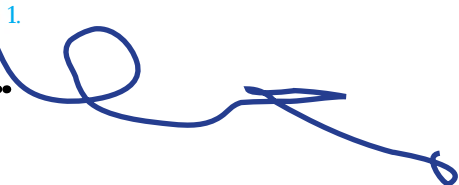
“To be teased and laughed at by the others.”
“To pummel a new classmate!”
“To get my things destroyed by other classmates.”
“When all blame me for something that I have not done.” (focus group with girls and boys, 8 – 10, Germany)

“To get beaten by several children and nobody helps me/sticks to me.” (boy, 8, Germany)
“At school girls would often tell each other: ‘you are no longer my friend’.” (boy, 9, Germany)
“To be told swearwords. To be shouted at, harassed, and pushed.” (girl, 14, Germany)



Authors: 1) boy, 7, Bulgaria; 2) children, 10, The Netherlands; 3) boy, 7, Bulgaria; 4) boy, 10, The Netherlands; 5) child, 12, Sweden 6) child, 10, United Kingdom

“Ha-ha, you wear glasses... Nerd!”



“Physical wounds heal, but words leave thick traces even after the years passed.”

(boy, 15, Romania)



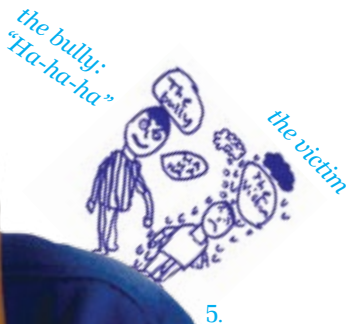
Author: boy, 9, The Netherlands



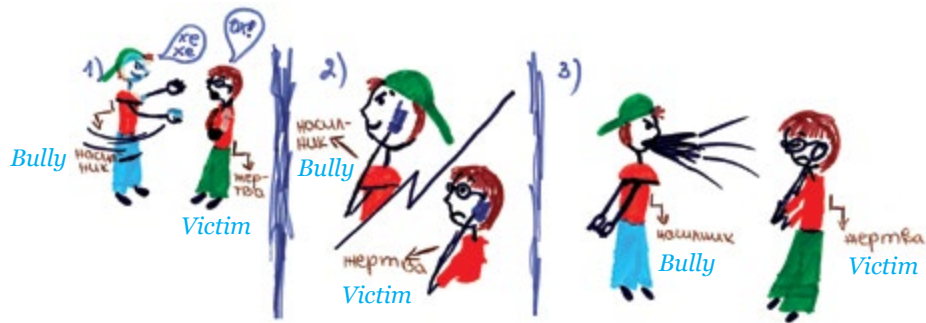
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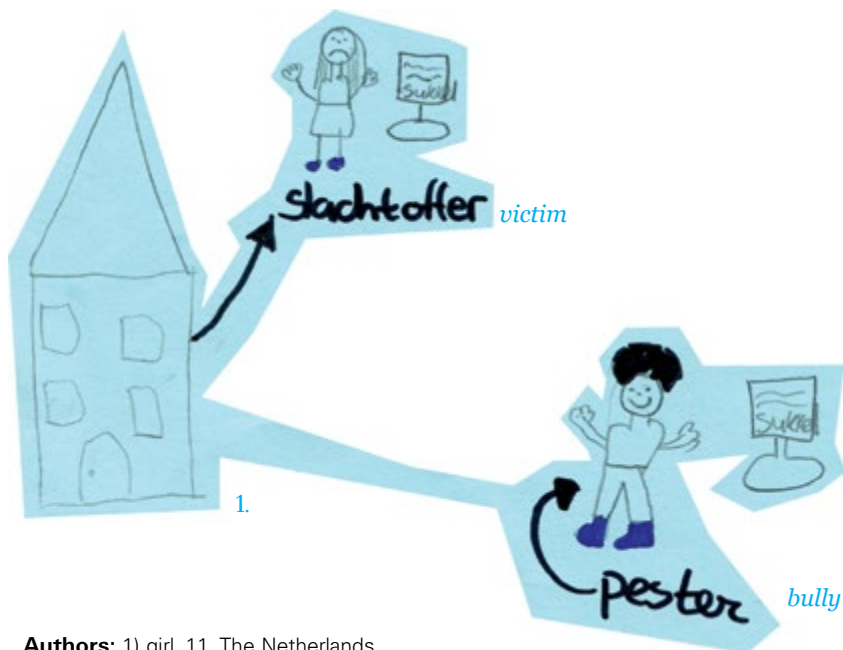
Author: boy, 12, Bulgaria

“...You use the phone to text your friends but a phone could also be used against you.” (child, 10, United Kingdom)

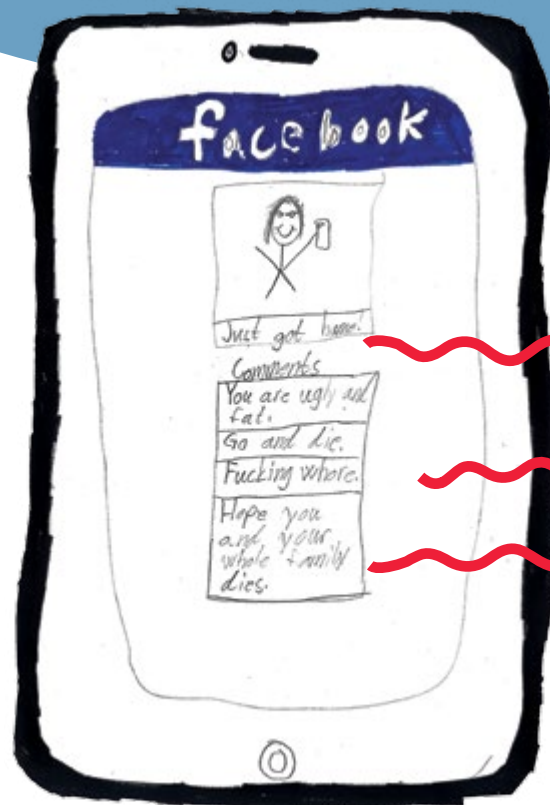
“Teenagers can text nasty things to friends on their mobile phones.” (child, 10, United Kingdom)

“The cyber-bullying is more frequent for older children and the most common behaviour, if someone started the bullying, others will join-in to ridicule the victim.” (child, 11, Romania)

“There is cyber bullying.” (child, 12, Sweden)



Authors: 1) girl, 11, The Netherlands
2) boy, 12, United Kingdom
3) girl, 6, Bulgaria



Author: boy, 12, Sweden

COMMENT: In the past three decades the technological evolution has changed the way people communicate between themselves. Hence, cyber communication presents one more platform for developing interpersonal relations and bullying is transferred into a realm of cyber bullying.



2.

“The girls send an anonymous love letter to a boy and laugh at him after he has read it and gets embarrassed.” (Boy, 10, Germany)

“Just go home!”

comments:
“You are ugly and fat.
Go and die.
F****g w***e.
Hope you and your whole family dies.”



3.

COMMENT: We noticed that despite the numerous visual references to sexual harassment, there is not even a single child touching on the topic in their voice message. We see this as an extremely difficult and painful topic that troubles children to verbalize it. We believe this is due to the lack of context in the school environment that could provide ground to discuss issues of sexual relationships.

“Any detail, no matter how small, can be transformed in a reason for bullying.”

(girl, 15, Romania)

“I was bullied by a boy for 2 years. A friend tried to help me then he got bullied. It’s still going on! The teachers don’t listen and the bully doesn’t listen to the teachers.”

(focus group with girls and boys, 11 – 12, United Kingdom)

“Bullying is not nice, you can get really hurt; it can make you cry and have no friends”
“Because they are the captains (in football games) they think they can decide on everything and everybody.
If someone does not follow, they will be pummelled.”

(focus group with girls and boys, 9 – 10, Germany)

“If you don’t give me your 5 euros, I won’t be your friend anymore.”

(girl, 9, Germany)



Authors: 1) boy, 10, The Netherlands; 2) boy, 8, Bulgaria; 3) girl, 11, Slovakia; 4) boy 8, Germany; 5) girl, 12, United Kingdom; 6) boy 10, Romania; 7) girl, 6, Bulgaria 8) boy, 12, Bulgaria; 9) boy, 13 , Bulgaria

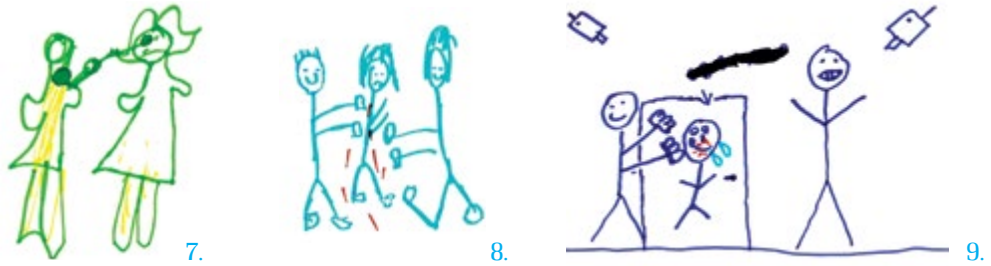
“Don't bully.”
DONT BULLY



“The little ones are afraid of the older ones.”

(boy, 8, Germany)

COMMENT: Children cannot self-regulate their relations with other children and need an outside structure, with clearly set rules that could oppose the "law of the jungle". If school fails to provide this set framework, violence and fear inevitably thrive.



How would you feel if you were bullied?

“No, I can't, I don't want to talk about it...” (girl, 12, Bulgaria)

“Strange feeling inside...”
“I would feel sad.”
“I would feel excluded.”
“I feel pain in my stomach if I have to go to school.”
“I have the feeling that no one helps me.”
(focus group with girls and boys, 8 – 10, The Netherlands)

“You can feel what have I done wrong to be bullied?”
“You can feel alienated.”
(focus group with girls and boys, 8 – 10, United Kingdom)



“Children can't sleep.” (Girl, 10, The Netherlands)



“Those who bully hurt the feelings of others without realizing that the harm will stay in time. It will be remembered.” (girl, 12, Bulgaria)

“The bully might feel you are a fly to be stamped on hammering you down until you leave school.” (child, 10, United Kingdom)



COMMENT: There is great risk that in the future children, who are victims of bullying at school and fail to feel rehabilitated, may seek to repeat the same traumatic situation in the future in an attempt to repair it and create a happy ending for themselves.

Authors: 1) boy, 10, The Netherlands; 2) boy, 10, The Netherlands; 3) boy, 15, Slovakia; 4) boy, 11, Sweden; 5) girl, 14, Germany; 6) girls, 13, 14, Bulgaria

Autor: boy, 10 , Romania



“I don't want to see any bullying...”

“They get sick because they sit in their little corner and cry and do not want to eat anymore... they are getting sick because they feel sad.” (child, 11, The Netherlands)

“The quiet bullying hurts.” (girl, 10, Sweden)



What does bullying do to the perpetrators?



Author: girl, 10, Bulgaria

Are bullies heroes?

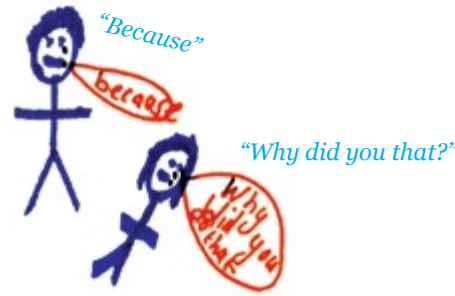
“They are cowards, not heroes at all. They are afraid that somebody might oppose them. If anybody scares them, they will be meek as a kitten. They abuse, so that they don’t feel less than the others. I have never seen a bully bother with somebody older or bigger than them.”

“They feel proud of themselves. Most of the times they just try to get rid of their own complexes. They pick on someone who is different.”

“They want everyone to be afraid of them and not to bother them, to feel that they are ‘big bosses’ and nobody will bully them.”

(focus group with girls and boys, 13 – 15, The Netherlands)

“They think they are better than the rest; they think they are better/superior than their victims.” (child, 11, The Netherlands)

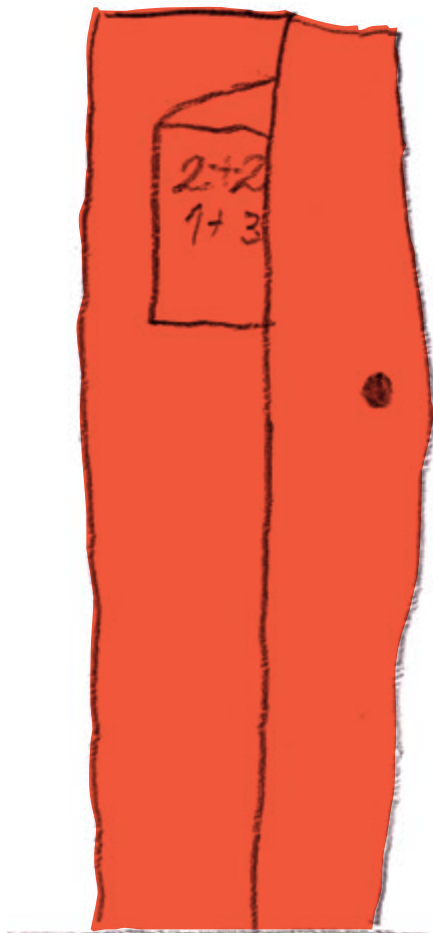


2.



1.

COMMENT: Both adults and children hate to feel weak and small. One way to get rid of mental pain is to inflict it on someone else. Making another person feel vulnerable and cry helps to get rid of the crying baby inside yourself.



“No child deserves to be bullied.”

(girl, 7, Bulgaria)



3.

Authors: 1) girl, 8, The Netherlands; 2) boy, 12, United Kingdom; 3) girl, 14, Germany; 4) girl, 10, Bulgaria

“I want them to feel what I felt...”

(child, United Kingdom)



4.

Why do they bully others?

“Sometimes you bully because you are angry and you do something wrong and you feel guilty and do not want to go to school.” (girl, 10, The Netherlands)

“They want to be part of a group, or they are afraid not to be.” (girl, 10, The Netherlands)

“They wouldn’t feel anything because they don’t know they are being a bully.”; “They might feel powerful.” (focus group with girls and boys, 8 – 10, United Kingdom)

“Someone who has been bullied becomes a bully later!”

“They bully because maybe something worse happens at home.”

“They try to be funny, but they are not.”

“They want to make other people angry or afraid.” (focus group with girls and boys, 10 – 11, The Netherlands)

“They have a problem that they cannot solve or share with others.” (girl, 15, Bulgaria)

How do witnesses of bullying feel? What can they do?



Author: boy, 12, Sweden



Authors: girls, 13, 14, Bulgaria

COMMENT: Children, who bully other children, usually suffer from insecurity, fear and internal damage, which is not adequately addressed in their families. These feelings are unbearable and painful, and by making someone else suffer for them, they try to get rid of the inner pain. However, the price they pay for this temporary relief is very high. By cutting out these unbearable feelings and emotions, they tear off parts of themselves. And this inevitably leads to depletion of their personality and hampers their future development.

Authors: 1) girl, 10, Bulgaria; 2) girl, 6, Bulgaria ▶

“Children ask themselves: why do the others look at it and do not help me?”

(girl, 11, Netherlands)

“There are some bystanders who only sit aside and laugh at.”
“When you try to help, they start to pick on you.”
“We need to turn to a teacher or parent, when we witness something like this.”

(focus group with girls and boys, 11–12, Bulgaria)

“When I was in 6th grade, I would cry from anything that offended me and the others were having fun to pick on me.” (girl, 10, Bulgaria)
“If I tell my dad, he would punish for being weak.”

(boy, 11, Bulgaria)



Author: girl, 10, Germany



1.

“Angry, I wanted to stop it but I was worried I might get bullied too.”
“They really want to help (or at least some of them) but they are afraid not to be bullied themselves. They are afraid of the bully/bullies. But there are also children who do not want to help. And there are also children who help; they stand up for the victims and are not afraid to defend them.”

(focus group with girls and boys, 10–11, The Netherlands)

“I’m worried if I tell a teacher the bully might hit me too.”
“I use self-defence – I ask them: How would you feel if you were bullied?”
“Stand up to bullies, tell someone straight away.”
“I used to bully someone in year 3. When I saw other bullies bullying him I realised it wasn’t nice. I stopped and now I’m his friend.”

(focus group with girls and boys, 8–10, United Kingdom)



2.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT DO I NEED FROM ADULTS?



Author: girl, 12, Romania

“Ask us often how it is and how we are doing.” (boy, 10, Sweden)

“It is important that parents are notified by the teacher or the school principal about what is going on. When the principal gets involved, who is in charge of the whole school, everything changes.” (girl, 15, Bulgaria)

“Don’t think” it is not my students. Someone else can solve it.” (child, Sweden)

“We want the teachers to clearly mark when things are wrong. In the lower classes it is easier to tell on a friend or go to talk to a teacher. It is easier then to detect bullying. Teachers need to act early to prevent bullying in the higher classes.” (child, Sweden)

“I have trouble answering your question...” (girl, 15, Bulgaria)

“Teachers need to talk more and get the students trust. The students can seek support from each other and talk to adults together.” (child, Sweden)

“I didn’t know what to do to help so I told a teacher.”
“Children might need a counsellor to talk to.” (child, United Kingdom)

“I would advise the adults to take the problem seriously. Sometimes they overlook the issue, when in reality there is a serious problem.” (girl, 15, Bulgaria)

“The adults need to see more and faster.” (boy, 13, Sweden)

1: “You smell so ugly!!!! Pfiu-u-u!”

2: “All right, Alexandra, I’m coming with you!”

3: “Don’t cry, come with me! You look really pretty!”

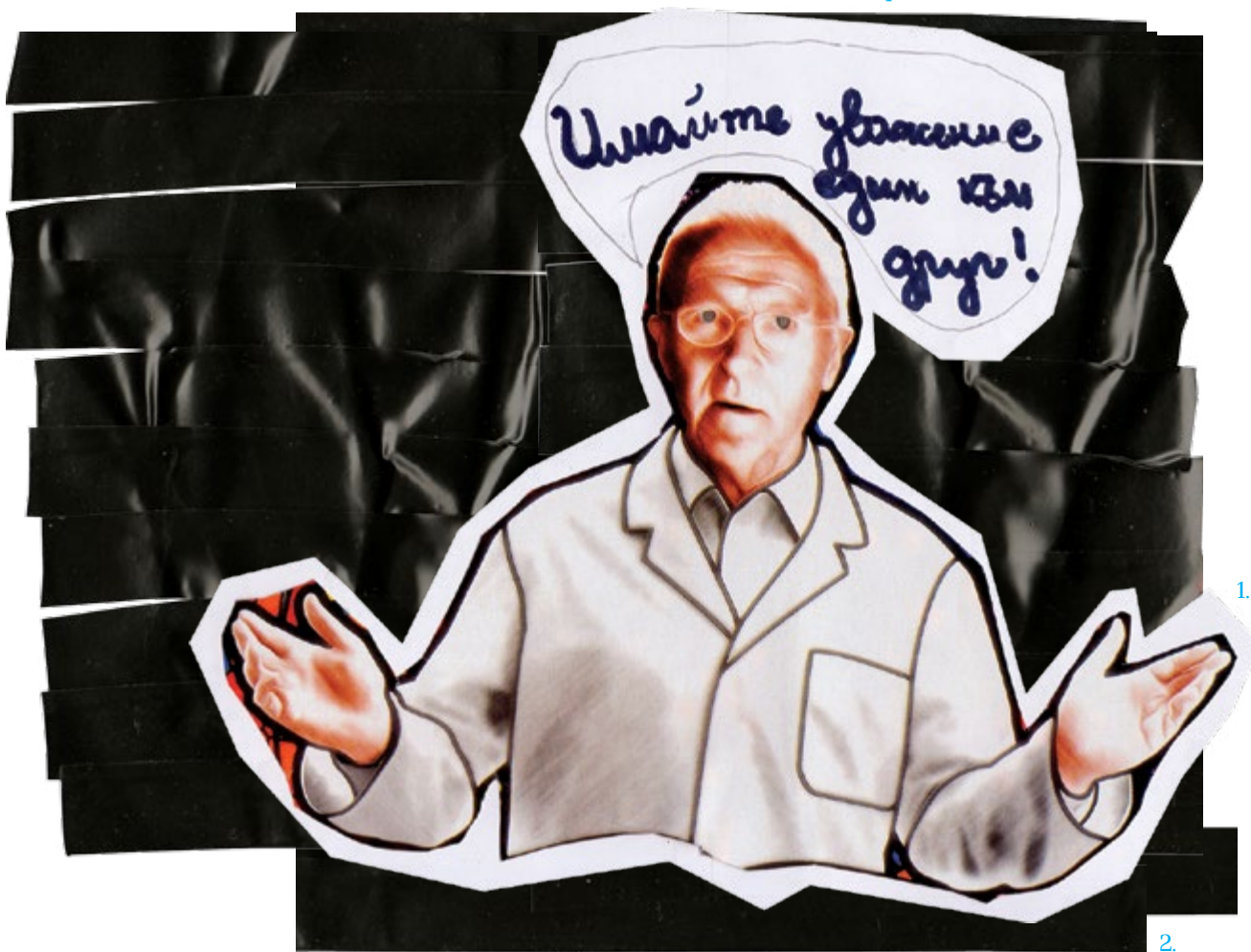
4: “Let’s not make fun anymore of children who are poor or without help!”



Author: boy, 6, Bulgaria

COMMENT: Those children that are victims of bullying might enter the spotlight and feel “special” because of all the attention directed towards them from teachers, parents and the other students. This might hamper them to get away from the role of a vulnerable one.

“Respect each other!”



Authors: 1) girl, 12, Bulgaria; 2) girl, 10, The Netherlands; 3) boy, 11, Bulgaria



“No, you can’t, you ugly stinky kid.”

“Magician, can I see your magic?”



Author: boy, 14, Bulgaria

“Instead of inaction and watching on bullying, stand up for weaker!”

(girl, 12, Slovakia)

“When we need their help and go to ask them the teachers or educators would often tell us: ‘You know that I don’t like snitches. You are old enough to sort this out among yourselves’. But maybe we cannot cope with this alone, because it can be a difficult matter, then we need them as adults. And when they do not come [to help], because they think we would snitch, then we are laughed at by the bullies and all others. Then they can start beating as they know that the teachers/educators would not come anyway.”

(girl, 10, Germany)

Помогни
на
нуждаещия
се!

“Help the one
that needs help!”

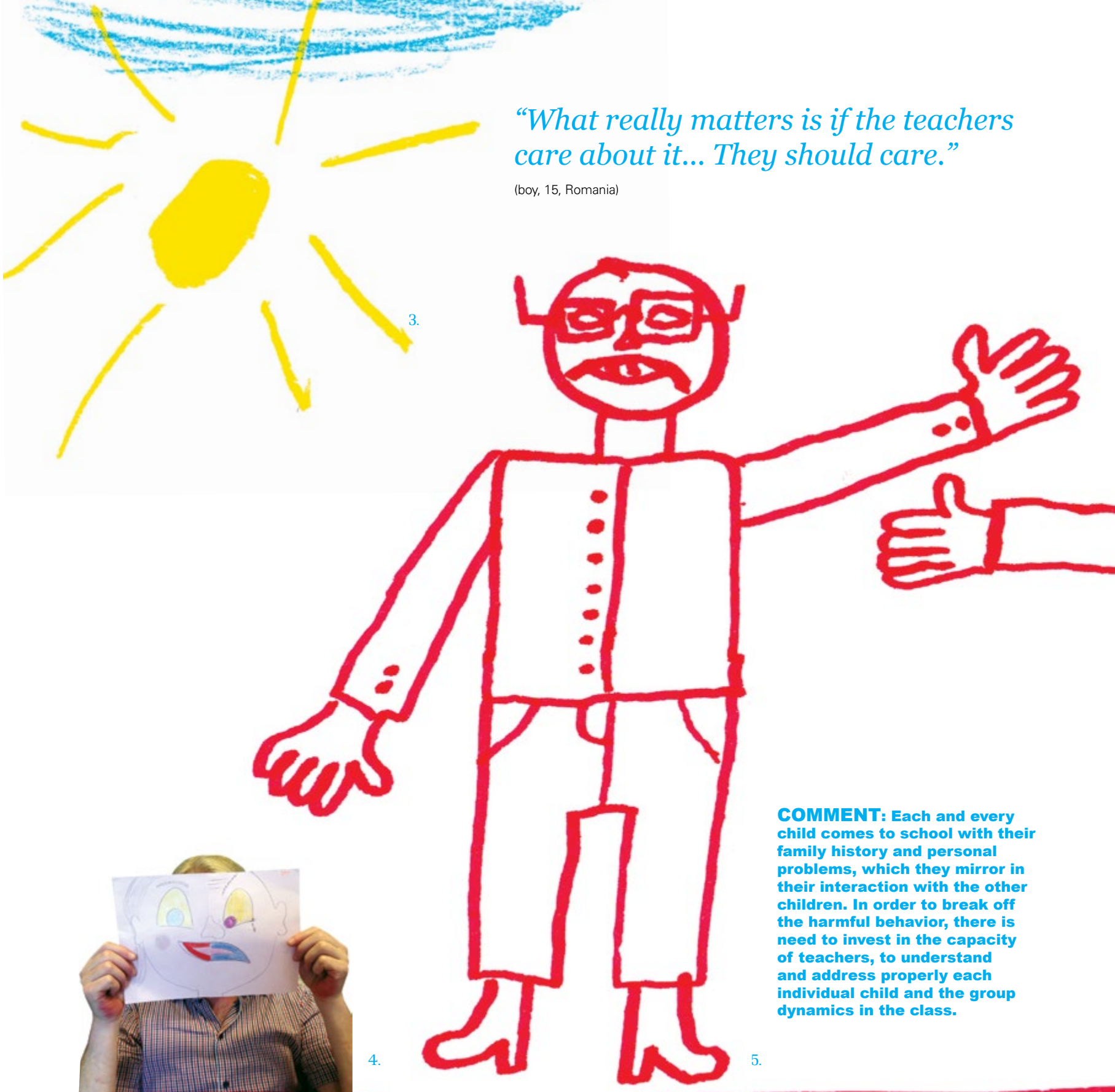


Authors:

1) boy, 10, The Netherlands;
2) girl, 12, Bulgaria

“What really matters is if the teachers care about it... They should care.”

(boy, 15, Romania)



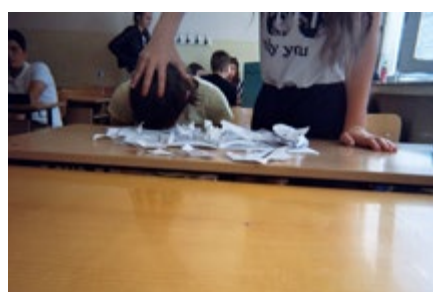
COMMENT: Each and every child comes to school with their family history and personal problems, which they mirror in their interaction with the other children. In order to break off the harmful behavior, there is need to invest in the capacity of teachers, to understand and address properly each individual child and the group dynamics in the class.

Authors: 3) girl, 6, Bulgaria; 4) drawing: boy, 10, on the photo: a teacher, The Netherlands; 5) boy, 14, Bulgaria



"We need school rules to feel safe and help from the teachers."

(child, 10, United Kingdom)



Authors: girls, 13, 14, Bulgaria



"Hey, give me back my hat!!!"



Author: boy, 10, Netherlands

Author: girl, 11, Slovakia

WHAT DO I NEED TO FEEL SAFE AT SCHOOL?

"Sometimes you don't dare to talk to the teachers so it is good if the teachers take the first step."

(child, Sweden)

"I need someone to help me if I've got a problem."
"I'd go and tell a teacher but I wouldn't go back to the bully with the teacher as sometimes bullies lie and they might try and get you into trouble. You need to keep yourself safe." (child, 9, United Kingdom)

"In our school there is one pupil/student who is assigned the task to pay extra attention to all kind of incidents in and outside the school. And it works!" (child, 10, Netherlands)

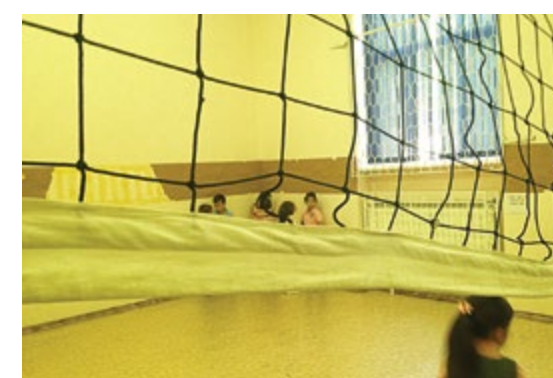
"When I came to the school for the first time I wanted to have friends to feel safe." (boy, 13, Slovakia)

"You can call Childline; there are posters up in our school."
"You need to be able to trust the person you go to. You don't want them going to the bully." (child, United Kingdom)

"Too little is spoken over bullying; if it happens - it is a reaction to a specific incident. We need to talk again and again." (boy, 10, The Netherlands)

"We have school playground buddies; they can help you and make you feel safe." (child, 8, United Kingdom)

COMMENT: It is easier for children to give advice to another child instead of helping themselves.



Authors: children, 6, Bulgaria

Трябват ти добри приятели.

"You need good friends."

(girl, 12, Bulgaria)

- To have nice teachers/educators!
- To be respected!
- To be well treated!
- To be liked by the others!
- Not to be offended by anybody!
- Not to be laughed at during the breaks!
- Not to be hit by the others!
- Not to be lied to!
- Not to be bored!
- Not to be forced!

(focus group with girls and boys, 9 – 10, Germany)

мама се ръбемба
"This is how I feel."

- 1: "Shut up!"
- 2: "Leave her alone."
- 3: "You're so silly."
- 4: "Shut up, I will hit you!"
- 5: "You are the stupidest and the ugliest person ever. Ha-ha-ha!"
- 6: "Aren't you gonna shut up! You bother me!"
- 7: "Shut up! All you do is cry."
- 8: "You are ugly!"



Author: girl, 10, Bulgaria

"The bully needs to understand how the victim feels and what consequences actions like this are."

(girl, 12, Sweden)

"I would then try to mediate the conflict. They (the bullied children) have to go to school, to learn, they need to feel fine. Because they should not have the feeling: 'I must go to school', but have to feel like going to school: 'I can't wait to go to school!'" (boy, 9, Germany)

"I find the *trust-teacher* a very good idea, because sometimes I have problems, which I don't like to share with my friends, and then I can go to her... But I ask myself, why there is only one trust-teacher. All teachers can indeed be *trust-teachers*." (boy, 9, Germany)

"Follow-up. It is important to follow-up the situation. The victim needs to know that it is taken seriously and the perpetrator needs to know and understand the school does not take situations like this lightly."

(children, 12, Sweden)

"The most important is to let teachers and the principal know what's going on. There have to be put more surveillance cameras."

"There must be punishments in order to stop the bullying."
(focus group with girls and boys, 12–15, Bulgaria)

"It's tough because some children really have a problem that they cannot solve or share." (girl, 15, Bulgaria)

"We must make sure bullying is brought to the surface." (child, Sweden)

COMMENT: Often both the bullies and the victims have similar internal landscapes. Some children put a "bully armour" in order to disguise their weakness and to avoid becoming victims. The mask of a bully is a shield that hides their vulnerable inside. Most perpetrators of crimes against persons have been victims of violence in their childhood.



Author: boy, 12, Bulgaria

"I would feel much safer, if children at school don't hide behind their masks of bullies."

(boy, 14, Bulgaria)

CHILDREN'S STORIES



Author: boy, 10, The Netherlands

Authors: girls and boys, 12, United Kingdom

To Be Cool

A nine-year-old girl from Germany deliberates: „The bullies think they can reach their goals in being cool and making troubles, but it can be that they have some problems at home and therefore they think they can achieve something better, maybe they do not have a nice childhood and feel therefore in such a way in school. They hope they can reach a lot because they are cool and look nice. But this can change later, as they can maybe have a “black heart” by acting asocial and thinking only about themselves. And I want to tell what *cool* in fact is: that you have lots of friends, that you are very sociable, that you do not pummel the others, and that the others like you.”

Why do Children Bully Other Children?

A nine-year-old German boy describes his classmates who often use to cause anger and bullied repeatedly him and other children. “Those who bully think they could do all what they want. They want to be the best and the coolest. Though they do not know whether they are the best and the coolest ones. Because what matters is not the way you look like, but your inward world. The bullies think that being cool means being asocial, hit and pummel the others. They are interested only to win and to rule over the others. If you do not obey them, they are going to pummel you. Once I complained to the teacher about their intimidation and then they said immediately ‘Oh, no, we did not do that, he lies’. And afterwards they hit me even harder.”

Authors: 1) boy, 12, The Netherlands; 2) boy, 11, The Netherlands; 3) girl, The Netherlands 4) boy, The Netherlands; 5) boy, 11, The Netherlands 6) boy, 12, The Netherlands 7) boy, 10, The Netherlands; 8) boy, 10, The Netherlands



The Trick to Laugh

Andrei, aged 9, from Romania was afraid to go to school because some of his classmates were teasing him because he had trouble reading out loud and for his old mobile phone. Andrei started having stomach ache every morning before school. Sometimes the aching was so intense, he had to skip school and stay at home. This didn't solve his problem, because he had to face his classmates again the moment he went back to school. Andrei decided to share his problem with his parents and they went together to the school counsellor. The counsellor suggested a tiny tip: whenever somebody was bullying Andrei, he had to imagine that the bully is wearing the funniest clothes ever, so that instead of getting upset and crying, Andrei could ignore the bully. Andrei joined a support group where together with other kids where he learned to change the way he reacted around bullies. He mastered the trick to laugh every time when somebody was teasing him. The bullies, surprised by his smile, would leave him. Andrei started feeling more and more confident. His stomach ache disappeared as well.



Respond to Bullying

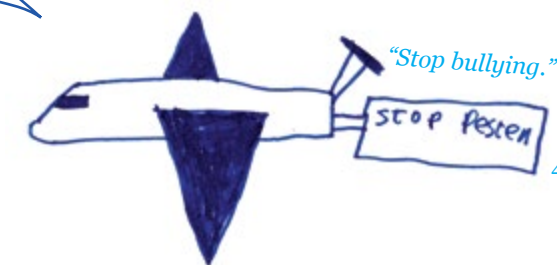
A 13-year old girl from Bulgaria shared: In general physical violence is not very common in my school, because all children know that there are set rules for the bullies. For example everybody knows that those who fight with each other will be obliged to do community service after that. They will have to do something like cooking and serving in the cafeteria and have to wear cook's hats with flowers and other funny designs. Or, they have to do gardening. In this way the bullies are obliged to care for the others and feel responsible.



Finding the Courage to Tell Others

13-year old boy from Slovakia wrote his story in imaginative context with imaginative happy ending. Chang Jang is a Vietnamese. He used to live in a slum until he and his family moved to England. His mother signed him up to a prestigious school in the town of Oxford. His problems started when he took a school bus to school for the first time. Everybody looked at him as if it was obvious he came from a different country. They would not allow him to sit down. In school they began to call him "crazy", "crank", "asshole", "yellow pig", etc... During lunch time they stood on his things, messed with his food and poured lemonade on his head. This continued for months and Chang Jang was scared because the other children threatened to beat him up if he told anyone what was happening. One day he overcame his fear and told his parents about the bullying. He called a Child safety line and also told his teachers at school.

Authors: 1) boy, 10, The Netherlands; 2) boy, 8, The Netherlands; 3) girl, 10, The Netherlands; 4) boy, 8, The Netherlands; 5) girl, 10, Bulgaria



Pesten ^{bullying}

COMMENT: Depression and aggression are two sides of the same coin. The victims of bullying don't feel only pain and suffering, but their frustration and impuissance create hatred and anger. If the situation does not get resolved quickly, this could lead to the accumulation of huge anger and cruel fantasies.





Autors: girls and boys, United Kingdom

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