



Protect Students from Cyberbullying  
to stay safe in the Digital Era

Project number: 2023-1-PL01-KA220-SCH-000151070

## WP2: Transnational Report



Co-funded by  
the European Union



University  
of Humanities  
and Economics  
in Lodz



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Date: 26/04/2024



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the European Union

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## Project Information

Project title:	Protect Students from Cyberbullying to stay safe in the Digital Era
Project acronym:	SAFE ONLINE
Project number:	2023-1-PL01-KA220-SCH-000151070
Project coordinator	Akademia Humanistyczno-Ekonomiczna w Lodzi (AHE)

## Document Information

Document title:	WP2: Transnational Report Template
Document author:	CARDET
Version:	1.1
Date:	26/04/2024

## Document Version Control

Version	Date	Description
1	26/04/2024	Draft 1 (by CARDET)
2	26/06/2024	Final Version (by CARDET)

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## Executive Summary

The transnational report is a summary and comparative analysis of the research conducted to develop the first output of the SafeOnline - Protect Students from Cyberbullying to stay safe in the Digital Era project, which is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

Research was conducted by seven organisations in six countries (Cyprus, Poland, Italy, Greece, Ireland, France). The current state of cyberbullying was explored in all six countries, where 50 in total school leaders, in-service teachers, teacher educators, trainee teachers and pre-service teachers of primary and secondary level participated in the focus groups conducted in partner countries, and 257 responded to an online survey. The study revealed similarities and differences among countries regarding the prevalence, characteristics, preventing measures, intervention strategies, legal frameworks and regulations of cyberbullying as well as the needs and challenges that are faced in schools.

Both the desk and field research have shown that there is a consensus on the prevalence and multifaceted nature of cyberbullying among primary and secondary education students. There is a recognised need for continuous training and development for educators to effectively handle cyberbullying incidents and protect students in the rapidly evolving digital landscape. Recommendations include enhancing staff training on cyberbullying policies and procedures, providing ongoing education on technological advancements, and fostering a supportive environment for victims to come forward and seek assistance.

## Introduction

### Thematic Focus

The SafeOnline project is an EU-funded project, which will create a participatory whole-school programme to empower all school's actors to prevent cyberbullying, with focus on supporting students with fewer opportunities who are the most vulnerable target group, to secure the healthy development and success of all.

The project will develop and evaluate high quality material for school communities (students, educators, school leaders, school staff) to deal with the phenomenon of cyberbullying, via their daily practices, within and beyond the school walls. Hence, the project will support educators and students, building their self-esteem, confidence, problem solving and digital skills, since these skills will make students capable of reacting to different instances appropriately and with more confidence.

### Aims and Objectives

This transnational report is part of the first project output, the "Safeonline Support package and guide". The objective of this output is to develop a guide including guidelines and best practices on how schools can prevent and deal with cyberbullying, covering the current state of cyberbullying, practical guidelines for the school-based actions (primary and lower secondary) that the leadership teams, teachers and support staff can take to prevent and address cyberbullying such as: policies (e.g., for reporting mechanisms) procedures, right tools, support measures, and best practice examples on how schools have integrated activities to tackle cyberbullying such as projects, (digital) tools, action plans, intra- or extra-curricular activities, etc. focusing on students with fewer opportunities who might face discrimination in any form (including students with a migrant background and those facing discrimination based on gender, racial, ethnic origin, disability, age).

The consortium aims to create a practical and meaningful for the users' guide, including a collection of guidelines and best practices on how schools can prevent and deal with cyberbullying. Therefore, partners will draw on findings from the desk and field research that were

conducted for the development of this output, as well as findings from previous projects and research to:

- compare national/European level data, results, and needs related to cyberbullying behaviours with the aim to develop resources to better support schools
- empower the whole school community to understand the complexities of cyberbullying
- raise general awareness on the cyberbullying behaviours involving primary/secondary level education students with focus on students with fewer opportunities
- equip school leaders, educators with practical guidelines and best practices on how to tackle cyberbullying, by improving their professional and teaching activities

## Methodology

The seven partners of the consortium of the SafeOnline project have collaborated to produce this transnational report. In situations where two partner organisations were representing the same country, one desk research report and one field research report were written for the specific country with the contribution of both partner organisations. For the purpose of this report, researchers from CARDET and UNIC collaborated in both desk research and field research in Cyprus.

## Desk Research

The partner organisations have done their individual research on the status quo of their country regarding the prevalence and characteristics of cyberbullying behaviours, the cyberbullying preventive measures and intervention strategies and the legal frameworks and regulations to address cyberbullying. The guidelines were developed by CARDET, and all organisations contributed by providing their feedback. The following research questions guided each partner's desk research, referring to the studies collected for analysis in the context of primary and secondary education:



- **Research Question 1:** What is the prevalence (frequency) and nature (specific characteristics/forms) of cyberbullying incidents among primary and secondary education students in each partner's national context?
- **Research Question 2:** What preventive measures and intervention strategies have been identified in the literature to mitigate cyberbullying in primary and secondary education?
- **Research Question 3:** What legal frameworks and regulations exist at national level to address cyberbullying among students in primary and secondary education?

## Field Research

The field research of this project aimed at understanding the needs, challenges and best practices in schools regarding cyberbullying. To capture these aspects, it was necessary to gain the insights and thoughts of educators and thus, focus groups and surveys were used.

50 in total school leaders, in-service teachers, teacher educators, trainee teachers and pre-service teachers of primary and secondary level participated in the focus groups conducted in the partner countries, with 8 participants in the focus groups of each partner country. The Rural Hub conducted the focus group with 10 participants. A survey has also been shared with school leaders, in-service teachers, teacher educators, trainee teachers and even pre-service teachers of primary and secondary level to receive at least 50 responses in each partner country and a total of at least 300 responses cumulatively. The survey conducted in all six partner countries received a total of 257 responses. The focus group guide and the questionnaire are included in the Annex of this report.

## Limitations

In regard to the survey, not all researchers from the consortium organisations could identify and reach 50 participants. Thus, instead of 300 responses needed in total, the consortium has managed to collect 257 responses. While this data helps in portraying the prevalence and characteristics of cyberbullying behaviours in partners countries, it cannot be claimed that the data were obtained from a representative sample of teachers. It might be more likely that the data

come from a minority of those teachers who are well motivated, experienced, and interested in joining opportunities like SafeOnline.

## 1. Prevalence and Characteristics of cyberbullying behaviours in partner countries

The rapid advancements in social media and internet-enabled tools have fostered an interconnected global community where individuals engage, exchange experiences, and cultivate connections (Zhang et al., 2022). While this connectivity offers numerous benefits, it has also given rise to a darker aspect of the online realm and youth navigating the digital landscape, being involved in cyberbullying, either as perpetrators or victims (Zhang et al., 2022; Zhu et al., 2021). Cyberbullying, also known as electronic bullying, e-bullying, mobile bullying, or digital bullying, refers to the act of using electronic or digital platforms to repeatedly convey hostile or aggressive messages with the intention of causing harm or discomfort to a particular person or group (Ey et al., 2015; Hou, 2023; Sorrentino et al., 2023). The act of being harmful, repetitive, and the power imbalance between bullies and victims are considered as main elements of cyberbullying definitions (Hendry et al., 2023; Yosep et al., 2023).

### 1.1. Prevalence and Characteristics of cyberbullying behaviours in Poland

Cyberbullying concerns a repeated and hostile behaviour by a person and/or group aimed at harming others<sup>1</sup>. In Poland, surveys conducted by the NIK<sup>2</sup> (Supreme Chamber of Control) in 2017 showed that cyberbullying is a serious problem among students. Nearly 40 percent of students have encountered cyberbullying while nearly half of the students surveyed said they would not turn to anyone for help if they experienced cyberbullying, slightly more than 13 percent of students would turn to a teacher for help, and 19 percent would turn to parents.

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<sup>1</sup> Pyżalski, J. Agresja elektroniczna i cyberbullying, 2012

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nik.gov.pl/aktualnosci/nik-o-cyberprzemocy-wsrod-dzieci-i-mlodziezy.html>. (Survey conducted in 2017 by NIK)

According to the results of a nationwide social survey on youth Internet use<sup>3</sup>, teenagers admitted that they had met the following situations:

- Someone used the Internet to ridicule and humiliate their friends (58.1%) or themselves (19.4%),
- Someone used the internet to scare their friends (34.2%) or themselves (13.6%),
- Someone used the internet to blackmail their friends (24.4%) or themselves (11.1%),
- Someone used the internet to challenge their friends (59.7%) or themselves (32.2%),
- Someone used the internet to impersonate their friends (40.5%) or themselves (12.6%)
- Someone used the internet to spread compromising material about their friend (33.3%) or themselves (12.4%). (44.3%) or humiliation (43.3%).

Thus, the "Teens 3.0" report shows that teenagers' use of the Internet and phones and computers is a common phenomenon. Unfortunately, this also includes cyberbullying.

A significant proportion of respondents also observed the spread of disparaging content about someone, impersonation, threatening or even blackmailing. The role of the victim in various forms was experienced by almost half of the respondents (48.8%). Nearly one in ten respondents also said they had experienced the spreading of compromising material in the past and had been blackmailed on the Internet<sup>4</sup>.

The Blue Line Institute for Health Psychology<sup>5</sup> proves that flaming, trolling, sextortion, flood, patostreams - these are just some forms of violent behaviour in cyberspace, experienced not only by children and adolescents, but also adult Internet users.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nask.pl/pl/raporty/raporty/4295,RAPORT-Z-BADAN-NASTOLATKI-30-2021.html> (Research Report "Teens 3.0" conducted in 2021 by NASK)

<sup>4</sup> M. Bochenek, R. Lange (red.), dz. cyt., s. 62–63

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.niebieska.com.pl/aktualnosci/aktualnosci/cyberprzemoc-rodzaje-skala-zjawiska-profilaktyka-material-z-cyklu-ekspert-radzi>

## 1.2. Prevalence and Characteristics of cyberbullying behaviours in Italy

In Italy, statistical data about the frequency and nature of cyberbullying have been given by the 2021 ISTAT (National Institute of Statistics) survey on Bullying and cyberbullying. 9,4% of interviewed students (350.000 students) admitted to having witnessed or heard about cases of cyberbullying towards schoolmates during Covid-19 pandemic. These were mainly students of junior high schools (11-14) (11,7% against 7,9% of high school students). Numbers are higher among girls: 11,3 % against 7,6%. As for foreign students, the percentage rises to 12% (9% for Italians) and the number of those who do not answer is remarkably higher among foreigners 7,7% against 2,9 %.

From several articles on this issue, it comes out that the main actors involved in cases of bullying are the bullies, the victims, and the bystanders: those witnesses would have a great potential to amend the situation but, in most cases, they remain passive, for cultural habits, or because the majority does so.

According to A. Baroncelli, bullying behaviours are often connected with callous-unemotional traits and social goals orientation: the desire of social status, control and dominance over peers. Unlike traditional bullying, in cyberbullying the virtual space allows the bullies to hit the victim everywhere making the intervention of adults very difficult. In addition, the net amplifies all the acts of cyberbullying, with far more serious consequences. All agree in saying that cyberbullying today takes place through the most common social media like WhatsApp and Instagram, while Facebook seems quite out of fashion.

Another important aspect highlighted by the 2021 survey is that bullying and cyberbullying exist within a wider frame of social distress: so, it is important to consider students' everyday lives. For example, harassments are more frequent among students who feel they belong to poor families (16,2% against 8,1 % of middle-class students and 7,9% of students who perceive their family as rich) and among those whose school performance is poor: 14,8% against 8 % of the most proficient.

Evaluation of the outcomes of those who had been bullied in primary school has shown a higher risk of somatic, personality and psychotic disorders, and smoking addiction. Adults who were victims of bullying in their tender age or early adolescence are more likely to have problems in health, social relationships and work.

### 1.3. Prevalence and Characteristics of cyberbullying behaviours in Cyprus

The information provided about cyberbullying in Cyprus offers valuable insights into its prevalence and characteristics within the country. The elusive nature of cyberbullying, facilitated by various online platforms like social networks and text messaging, poses challenges for detection and intervention (Hou, 2023; Yemima, 2023). Cyberbullying encompasses a wide range of behaviours, including flaming, harassment, impersonation, and threats (Hendry et al., 2023; Hou, 2023; Yemima, 2023;). The roots of cyberbullying are influenced by personal, familial, situational, and environmental factors, further complicating efforts to address the issue (Hou, 2023; Zhu et al., 2021). The consequences of cyberbullying are pervasive and damaging, affecting victims emotionally, socially, and behaviourally, with links to psychological disorders and even suicidal ideation (Hendry et al., 2023; Sorrentino et al., 2023; Zhu et al., 2021).

In Cyprus, approximately 10% of students have been affected by cyberbullying, with boys more likely to engage in perpetration and girls more likely to experience victimization, particularly through forms like flaming and denigration (Kapardis & Poyiadjis, 2018). However, no significant gender disparities were identified concerning specific types of cybervictimization. Despite the exacerbation of cyberbullying during the COVID-19 pandemic due to increased screen time, some regions have reported decreases in cyberbullying rates, possibly due to improved parental and educational supervision (Yosep et al., 2023). The prevalence of cyberbullying among adolescents presents a complex picture with varying rates across different regions and demographic groups (Hendry et al., 2023; Zhu et al., 2021).

Overall, the data underscores the urgency of addressing cyberbullying and implementing effective preventive measures to safeguard the well-being of adolescents in Cyprus. The mixed trends

observed during the COVID-19 pandemic highlight the need for ongoing research and intervention efforts to combat cyberbullying and ensure the safety and mental health of young people (Yosep et al., 2023).

## 1.4. Prevalence and Characteristics of cyberbullying behaviours in France

While scientific research studies into the peculiarity of cyberviolence in France may be lacking, the information note report by Direction de l'évaluation de la prospective et de la performance (DEPP, 2023) indicate that around 1 in 5 middle school students is a repeated victim of cyberviolence, though underreporting suggests the true prevalence might be higher. Common forms include insults, rumours, exclusion, and threats, with social media platforms and messaging apps serving as key channels. Less common forms are (identity theft, viewing sexual images or videos against one's will, threats by telephone or Internet. Notably, France sees a concerning trend of sharing embarrassing photos or videos online, often targeting students perceived as different based on appearance, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. In this trend, girls seem to be disproportionately affected (DEPP, 2023).

The correlation between cyberbullying and school climate is profound, as evidenced by a study conducted among middle school students in Île-de-France. The findings indicate the detrimental effects of cyber victimization on students' perceptions of school climate, interpersonal relationships, and feelings of security. Moreover, cyber victims often experience in-real-life (IRL) violence as well, emphasising the necessity for schools to address cyber violence seriously to mitigate traditional violence and uphold a positive school environment (Blaya, 2015a).

Understanding online victimization is thus essential for addressing offline victimization. Factors such as loneliness, depression, and low self-esteem, which are associated with traditional bullying, also correlate with online victimization (Blaya, 2015a). These factors, along with social isolation and difficulty in forming friendships, contribute to the vulnerability of online victims. Therefore, addressing cyberbullying not only safeguards students from online harm but also helps in promoting overall well-being and positive social dynamics within schools (Blaya, 2015b).

## 1.5. Prevalence and Characteristics of cyberbullying behaviours in Greece

Cyberbullying has become a pervasive issue among primary and secondary education students in Greece, concerning prevalence rates and diverse manifestations. Defined as repeated verbal or psychological harassment unleashed through digital means, cyberbullying encompasses various forms, each with its specific characteristics and impacts. Recent research conducted in 2022 by the Safe Internet Centre in Greece shed light on the prevalence and nature of cyberbullying incidents among Greek students aged 12–18. The study, which surveyed 5000 students, revealed alarming statistics indicating widespread exposure to cyberbullying behaviours. Approximately one in four children reported receiving private photos of others and experiencing online harassment. Moreover, half of the surveyed students engaged in conversations with strangers and made friends online, highlighting the susceptibility of youth to online risks. The nature of cyberbullying incidents in Greece is multifaceted, encompassing various forms identified by established categorisations such as those outlined by kids-safety (2015) and Willard (2007). These forms include:

- Flaming: Engaging in electronic rivalries characterised by harsh and vulgar language exchanged through emails or online platforms.
- Online Harassment: Repeatedly sending offensive messages aimed at causing distress or harm to the recipient.
- Cyberstalking: Engaging in persistent harassment and intimidation through online platforms, often involving threats of harm or excessive intimidation.
- Cyberthreats: Making general hateful statements intended to emotionally distress the recipient, often including threats of self-harm or suicide.
- Denigration: Sending harmful or untrue statements about a person to others or posting such material online with the intent to harm their reputation.
- Impersonation: Adopting another identity online to send harmful material or engage in deceptive behaviour.
- Outing: Sharing personal or embarrassing information about a person online without their consent.



- Trickery: Deceiving the victim into revealing sensitive information to share online, often leading to embarrassment or harm.
- Exclusion: Brutal exclusion or removal of someone from online groups or communities.
- Bash Boards: Participating in internet bulletin boards characterised by lewd and malicious hate speech targeting specific individuals or groups.
- Happy Slapping: Recording and sharing videos or images of personal attacks on unsuspecting victims, often distributed electronically as entertainment.
- Text Wars/Attacks: Forming groups to purposefully send harmful messages with the intent of causing emotional distress to the recipient.
- Online Polls: Conducting online polls or voting on harmful and derogatory topics, perpetuating cyberbullying behaviour.

Moreover, the research by Grigorakis, Perakis, and Politis (2014) provided additional insights into cyberbullying behaviours among Greek adolescents aged 11-15. Findings indicated that a significant percentage of participants received offensive comments targeting their appearance and behaviour, primarily originating from friends and acquaintances. This underscores the role of peer influence in perpetuating cyberbullying behaviours and the challenges of addressing such behaviours within social circles. Additionally, reports received by the Greek Helpline 'help-line210 6007686' further highlighted the prevalence of cyberbullying incidents, accounting for over 15% of all reports in 2015. These findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive interventions to address cyberbullying and promote a safe online environment for students in primary and secondary education. In response to the growing problem of cyberbullying, the Greek government, in collaboration with various stakeholders, has implemented comprehensive prevention and intervention measures aimed at mitigating cyberbullying incidents among primary and secondary education students.

## 1.6. Prevalence and Characteristics of cyberbullying behaviours in Ireland

In recent data on cyberbullying in Ireland, it was evident that more than 25% of primary school-aged children and 40% of secondary school students experience cyberbullying, as reported by

CyberSafeKids (Beresford et al., 2023). The findings from their annual trends and usage report revealed that, overall, girls are at a higher risk of online victimisation than boys. Moreover, 62% of teachers encountered online safety incidents, and 31% of 8–12-year-olds have unrestricted access to the internet. CyberSafeKids conducted a survey involving over 5,000 8–16-year-olds between September 2022 and June 2023, revealing that 93% of 8–12-year-olds possess their own smart devices.

The research also brought attention to the prevalence of mobile apps, with YouTube ranking as the most popular at 76%, followed by WhatsApp (39%), TikTok (37%), and Snapchat (37%). Notably, online gaming is a significant trend among young children, with 15% participating in games designed for those over 18 (18+), such as Call of Duty and Grand Theft Auto. While boys exhibit a higher inclination to play these games compared to girls (28% vs. 6%), young girls demonstrate a greater tendency to share videos of themselves online (26% vs. 18%).

CyberSafeKids survey findings revealed that 73% of 12–16-year-olds have unrestricted online access and 40% post videos on social media platforms. While younger children face more parental control at home, 31% of 8–12-year-olds claim the freedom to go online whenever they wish. It was also observed that 15% of primary school children lack established rules for online activities at home. Additionally, the study highlighted a lack of awareness among young children regarding optimal online self-protection measures, with 22% posting videos and 17% being unfamiliar with managing privacy settings.

According to an article in the Irish Times (Bowers, 2020), Irish children experienced one of the highest rates of cyberbullying in Europe during the Covid-19 pandemic. A preliminary report from DCU's National Anti-Bullying Centre indicates that children in Ireland encountered hurtful messages, mean messages being circulated or posted publicly, and frequent exclusion from group activities online. Representatives from the Anti-Bullying Centre referred to another study they conducted, which found that 28% of children had been targets of cyberbullying, while half of the surveyed children sampled reported witnessing others being cyberbullied. This information is corroborated by a government study, which found that 17% of 9-17-year-olds reported experiencing some form of bullying, whether online or offline. The highest number of reports

came from 13–14-year-olds, 22% of whom reported having been bullied in the past year (2022). Furthermore, 11% of all children said that they had experienced cyberbullying in the past 12 months with 13–14-year-olds reporting the highest incidence rates. The data suggests that girls are more likely to be bullied and to experience online safety issues (National Advisory Council for Online Safety (NACOS, 2021).

The RTE report highlights concerning findings from a new survey and a study by Barnardos regarding cyberbullying among children in Ireland. According to the survey, 60% of children would never disclose to their parents if they were cyberbullied, indicating a significant communication gap between children and parents on this issue (O'Donovan, 2022). The study further reveals that almost half of respondents would not tell anyone if they were bullied online, underscoring the reluctance of children to seek help or support. Shockingly, 62% of children have witnessed others being cyberbullied, and over half have experienced cyberbullying themselves, with 18% reporting that it affected their ability to learn and feel safe at school. Additionally, 25% admitted to cyberbullying others, highlighting the complex dynamics of online interactions among children.

The survey, conducted by the Barnardos Online Safety Programme, included seven focus groups involving over 340 children aged eight to 12, providing valuable insights into children's experiences and perceptions of cyberbullying. Barnardos CEO Suzanne Connolly emphasised that cyberbullying often occurs within peer groups, with children describing it as acts of meanness, exclusion, or virtual violence in online games. One of the most alarming findings is that children refrain from confiding in their parents due to fears of negative repercussions, such as losing access to technology or parental interference that could result in social isolation. In light of the above information, it is clear that there is a need for innovative pedagogical materials and resources to promote digital resilience and well-being among the parents, school staff, and children themselves to better equip them to face the challenges of the modern world.

## 1.7. Conclusions

The data presented on the prevalence and characteristics of cyberbullying across Poland, France, Ireland, Greece, Cyprus, and Italy offers valuable insights into the complex and multifaceted nature of this issue. Across these countries, cyberbullying manifests in various forms, including

insults, rumours, exclusion, threats, identity theft, and sharing embarrassing content online. Social media platforms and messaging apps serve as primary channels for cyberbullying, highlighting the pervasive nature of online harassment among adolescents.

Furthermore, the research underscores the detrimental impact of cyberbullying on victims' emotional well-being, social interactions, and academic performance. Victims often experience heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and social isolation, with some cases even leading to suicidal ideation. Gender disparities are also notable, with girls often disproportionately affected by cyberbullying compared to boys. The correlation between cyberbullying and school climate is evident, emphasising the importance of addressing online victimization to maintain a positive and safe learning environment. Additionally, factors such as loneliness, depression, and low self-esteem contribute to the vulnerability of online victims, highlighting the need for comprehensive interventions to address underlying mental health issues.

Despite the efforts of various stakeholders, including governments, educational institutions, and non-profit organisations, cyberbullying remains a pervasive issue with far-reaching consequences. There is a pressing need for innovative pedagogical approaches and resources to promote digital resilience and well-being among children, parents, and educators. Additionally, fostering open communication channels and providing support systems for victims of cyberbullying are crucial steps towards mitigating this growing public health concern. In conclusion, addressing cyberbullying requires a multi-faceted approach that encompasses preventive measures, educational initiatives, and mental health support services. By fostering a culture of empathy, respect, and digital citizenship, we can work towards creating safer online environments for all individuals, especially vulnerable adolescents.

## 2. Cyberbullying preventive measures and intervention strategies

### 2.1. Cyberbullying preventive measures and intervention strategies in Poland

In the national context of Poland, cyberbullying prevention is included in the school's complex policy, which is called the school education and prevention programme. Each school is required to write an annual strategy of preventive activities addressed to students, teachers and parents. The strategy involves informational activities, but also developing social competencies against risky behaviour.

An essential component of any programme is **media education** - which is about providing students with the knowledge and skills to use communication technology. Making students aware of the numerous risks coming from inattentive use of the Internet and modern communication tools, while teaching them the principles of responsible and safe use of these technologies is important in preventing cyberbullying.

**Witness prevention programmes** - The active response of this group of students to acts of cyberbullying, and in particular not to support the abuser's actions by commenting on, spreading, or linking to offensive materials, providing support to victims, can significantly reduce the harmful potential of acts of aggression.

#### Establishment school response

Procedures for responding to cyber-threats should be specified in school regulations, and teachers should be prepared to take specific actions and interventions depending on the type of incident. Disclosure of peer violence at school (including online) obliges educational staff to take certain actions, including:

- establish the circumstances of the incident;
- secure evidence;

- inform the parents of the students - participants of the incident, etc.

### **Workshops and preventive meetings for pupils**

E.g. Lesson activities "Stop cyberbullying" – dedicated for teenagers

During the workshop, pupils should learn:

- what are the forms of cyberbullying,
- what the feelings and consequences of online violence could be for victims of cyberbullying,
- what are the possible consequences of online violence for the abusers,
- how a victim of cyberbullying should behave and where they can seek help,
- how witnesses of cyberbullying should behave,
- how to behave to reduce the risk of becoming a victim of cyberbullying.

Educational materials for parents:

### **E.g. How to keep children safe online**

Guidebook to be downloaded on line, which includes the following information:

Cyberbullying, dangerous contacts, harmful content, sexting and other risky behaviours, where to seek help and report illegal content.

## **2.2. Cyberbullying preventive measures and intervention strategies in Italy**

Legislation requires close cooperation between schools and the Postal Police, specific training for school staff, an active role of students and former students, as well as support in the re-education process of the minors involved. Regional school offices finance interesting projects developed by school networks.

Support from the family is essential for the victims, who often suffer from being neglected instead. Also, the quality of the relationship with teachers is important as well as a positive school environment, as an effective prevention of bullying acts. In the case of cyberbullying though, it will be easier to come to a solution if the majority of classmates support the victim.

### 2.3. Cyberbullying preventive measures and intervention strategies in Cyprus

In the national context of Cyprus, efforts to address cyberbullying and promote cybersecurity among students and educators have been ongoing. According to Cyprus Times (2021), from 2001 until 2021 over 800 visits to schools have been conducted, with more than 80,000 individuals participating in these initiatives. Facilitated by a semi-governmental telecommunications authority in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Youth, these visits aimed to raise awareness about the risks associated with online activities and acknowledgement of cyberbullying and its consequences and provided guidance on responsible internet usage. Collaboration between schools and mental health agencies can further enhance preventive efforts, embracing diversity, embodying mutual respect among students and emphasising the importance of peer support in reducing cyberbullying incidents (Zhu et al., 2021)

Bystander intervention is identified as a feasible approach in the online environment, facilitated by joint efforts from educators and the availability of resources such as cyberbullying research centres and educational games addressing cyberbullying. These interventions highlight the importance of multi-faceted approaches involving healthcare professionals, educators, and website developers. Website developers are urged to intervene through technological updates and media initiatives to create safer online environments and protect users' privacy. (Hou, 2023)

Community-wide initiatives are crucial in creating a cyberbullying-free environment. Public awareness campaigns targeting both youth and adults can help increase understanding of cyberbullying and its impact. These initiatives should focus on enhancing digital literacy, promoting responsible online behaviour, and providing support for cyberbullying victims (Zhang et al., 2022). From a broader perspective, governmental and community-level initiatives are crucial



in developing and delivering anti-cyberbullying programmes, particularly targeting primary prevention and awareness-raising activities for children and adolescents. An example of such initiatives are the seminars, experiential workshops, and lectures on the topic of cyberbullying to students, educators, parents, and the broader community being offered by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute. Information and supportive educational materials are also available on a dedicated website (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Youth, 2015; Ασφάλεια στο διαδίκτυο, 2021). Finally, there is an increased need for clearer anti-cyberbullying policies and measures to address online risks effectively. While social media platforms have enhanced policies, promoting non-anonymous interactions, integrating media education into cyberbullying programmes remains essential (Sorrentino et al., 2023).

## 2.4. Cyberbullying preventive measures and intervention strategies in France

In France, the French Ministry of National Education and Youths plays an active role in providing resources and training on digital citizenship, cyberbullying awareness, and online safety for teachers and students. Schools are also required to have anti-bullying plans addressing cyberbullying specifically. Recently, the French ministry of national education and youth launched an [anti-harassment policy](#) to reinforce the fight against harassment in schools (cyber-harassment inclusive), this latest initiative builds on the [pHARe programme](#) (Programme de lutte contre le harcèlement à l'école), a previously launched 2021 to prevent and address all forms of harassment in schools, including cyberbullying. While addressing all forms of harassment, the programme specifically includes strategies to tackle cyberbullying. Preventive actions included in the programme are:

- annual awareness-raising sessions for all students from elementary to high school.
- training for students, teachers, staff, and parents on identifying, reporting, and responding to cyberbullying situations.
- development of school anti-harassment plans with specific measures for cyberbullying.
- providing security to teaching teams by guaranteeing the traceability and predictability of public action.



- guaranteeing that 100% of reported situations are addressed.

Regarding intervention strategies, the programme outlines procedures for reporting incidents, investigating allegations, and providing support to victims and perpetrators. This includes anonymous reporting mechanisms and specialised teams for handling harassment cases. pHARe programme also emphasises collaboration between schools, families, local authorities, and platforms like social media to create a coordinated approach to preventing and responding to cyberbullying.

As part of the pHARe programme the popular [Safer Internet Day](#) also known as "**Journée de la Sécurité Interne sur Internet**", organised by non-profit "[Internet Sans Crainte](#)" serves a key catalyst for awareness and fight against cyberbullying. All through February and March, various events and activities are held across schools in France to promote online safety and digital citizenship. These include educational workshops for students and teachers, awareness campaigns aimed at the public, and competitions and initiatives involving schools and youth organisations. "3018" is also a toll-free number and a mobile application for any information on or to report a case of cyberbullying. It is a free, anonymous, and confidential number of available 7 days a week, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.

French NGOs, [Enfance](#) & [Céméa](#) are key players in driving education and awareness about cyberbullying among young school children and providing support for cyberbullying victims. Through their interventions, they champion preventive efforts in the form of workshops & resource tools for children, teenagers, parents, and teachers, raising awareness about cyberbullying, online risks, and safe digital practices. Despite these interventions, research gaps and challenges still exist in evaluating the effectiveness of implemented measures and strategies. (Blaya, 2015b).

## 2.5. Cyberbullying preventive measures and intervention strategies in Greece

In the national context of Greece, the Ministry of Education launched a campaign in 2016 to educate students about the dangers of cyberbullying and encourage them to report any incidents they witness or experience. This campaign included the distribution of information materials to schools and the creation of a hotline for reporting cyberbullying incidents. By raising awareness and providing students with avenues for reporting, this initiative aimed to prevent cyberbullying and promote a culture of reporting and intervention. Additionally, the Ministry of Education developed guidelines for schools to follow when dealing with cyberbullying incidents. These guidelines provide a clear framework for investigating and disciplining students who engage in cyberbullying behaviours. By establishing procedures for addressing cyberbullying, schools can effectively intervene and prevent further incidents. Furthermore, organisations such as "To Hamogelo tou Paidiou: Child's Smile" have launched campaigns and developed educational materials to raise awareness about cyberbullying and promote positive online behaviour among young people. These efforts complement the government's initiatives and contribute to creating a safer online environment for students.

## 2.6. Cyberbullying preventive measures and intervention strategies in Ireland

During the research to determine possible preventative and intervention strategies that have been identified in Ireland for cyberbullying mitigation in primary and secondary education, it was found that although cyberbullying incidents often happen outside of school grounds, pupils/students can also engage in cyberbullying at school. The resulting fallout and consequences in terms of changes to peer relationships, bullying, and mental health implications can filter into the school environment (Mazzone et al., 2020). Overall, research suggests that tackling bullying and cyberbullying should be a combined effort of students, parents, and educators, i.e., a whole-school approach. The intervention should be targeted at all school members, including students who are not directly involved in bullying, as well as school staff. Research suggests that adults working in schools need more concrete tools for bullying prevention for children and adolescents, as much as they need clear guidelines to intervene when bullying is detected. This suggests that an anti-bullying programme based on a whole school approach, including an online safety component should become a specific part of the national curriculum for primary and post-primary

schools. Based on these considerations, it is suggested that the following points will be taken into consideration:

- Each school should have an annual audit tool in place, which would assist the teachers and principals with their anti-bullying policy to keep it up-to-date and relevant.
- Minimising the impact of cyberbullying is a team effort and therefore requires all parties to work together including research centres, children's welfare organisations, and the government.
- It is essential to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the online safety, anti-bullying, and cyberbullying prevention and intervention programmes delivered in schools.
- Enhancing engagement with social media and other online platforms is vital to provide schools with effective ways to report cyberbullying and work on take-down measures.
- Extra support systems are needed for children belonging to minority groups who might not have access to social support services such as supportive peer groups and school health centres.

To assist the school staff and teachers in the fight against cyberbullying, the following cyberbullying-related recommendations were suggested to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science (Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (ASTI), 2021):

- Review the current Anti-Bullying Procedures for schools to ensure these represent current bullying prevention and intervention research and the societal landscape in which children and adolescents are now developing in, in particular the digital landscape. Online safety messages need to be designed in such a way that they resonate with, and are understood, by young people.
- To ensure a coordinated and evidence-based approach to responding to and preventing bullying including cyberbullying the number of middle-management leadership posts in schools should be increased.
- Introduction of a national CPD programme for teachers with particular emphasis on preventative approaches and restorative practices.

- Anti-bullying prevention and intervention should be embedded into existing school policy and school curricula to avoid overload. The current practice where schools are relying exclusively on policies without enabling teachers to implement the policy is a deeply flawed approach to innovation in our schools.
- To summarise the above, research suggests that there is a definite need to improve the situation with cyberbullying in schools and the main suggestions revolve around how to better equip the schools (including the staff, parents, and children) to plan, deliver and maintain the bullying prevention and intervention in schools.

## 2.7. Comparisons of preventive measures and intervention strategies in the different national contexts and conclusions

In Poland, preventive measures against cyberbullying are integrated into school policies, emphasising annual strategies for activities involving students, teachers, and parents. There's a significant focus on media education and building social competencies among students to counter risky online behaviour. Moreover, active engagement of witnesses in preventing cyberbullying is prioritised, enhancing the overall effectiveness of prevention efforts.

Italy's approach to cyberbullying prevention involves close cooperation between schools, authorities, and families. Legislation mandates specific training for school staff and active involvement of students in prevention initiatives. The emphasis is on fostering positive school environments, support from families, and encouraging peer support for victims. These support structures and positive relationships within schools and families play a crucial role in effective prevention and intervention.

Cyprus implements ongoing efforts to raise awareness about online risks and promote responsible internet usage through school visits and collaborative initiatives. Preventive measures include encouraging bystander intervention, enhancing community-wide initiatives, and developing clearer anti-cyberbullying policies. Recognising the importance of community

involvement and comprehensive policies underscores Cyprus's commitment to combating cyberbullying effectively.

France's Ministry of Education plays an active role in providing resources and training on digital citizenship and cyberbullying awareness. Schools are required to have anti-bullying plans, with recent initiatives specifically targeting cyberbullying. Intervention strategies include annual awareness-raising sessions, training for students and staff, and developing school anti-harassment plans. Collaboration between schools, families, and local authorities is crucial for a coordinated approach to prevention and response.

In Greece, the Ministry of Education launched campaigns to educate students about cyberbullying dangers and encourage reporting. Guidelines for schools outline clear procedures for addressing cyberbullying incidents. Organisations like "To Hamogelo tou Paidiou: Child's Smile" contribute to raising awareness and promoting positive online behaviour. The country emphasizes a collaborative approach involving schools, families, and organisations to create a safer online environment.

In Ireland, cyberbullying prevention efforts involve a whole-school approach, targeting students, parents, and educators. Recommendations include annual audits for school anti-bullying policies, enhanced engagement with social media platforms, and extra support systems for vulnerable children. Initiatives like the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education provide guidance for improving anti-bullying measures. Continuous evaluation of prevention programmes is essential to adapt to evolving online risks.

In terms of preventive measures, Poland and Italy stand out for their emphasis on comprehensive school policies and media education. France and Greece prioritise collaboration between schools, families, and authorities, while Cyprus focuses on community-wide initiatives. Ireland's approach centres on a whole-school strategy and ongoing evaluation of prevention programmes. Each country's approach to cyberbullying prevention and intervention reflects a commitment to creating safer online environments for students. While strategies vary, there's a common thread of collaboration between schools, families, and authorities. Emphasising education, awareness,

and support structures is crucial for addressing cyberbullying effectively across diverse socio-cultural contexts. Ongoing evaluation and adaptation of prevention efforts are essential to keep pace with evolving online risks. Last, in most partner countries, there is a need for educators and teachers to receive concrete solutions, tools and procedures and not only general suggestions and recommendations regarding the prevention and handling of cyberbullying in schools.

### 3. Legal frameworks and regulations to address cyberbullying.

#### 3.1. Legal frameworks and regulations to address cyberbullying in Poland

Based on the legal basis in Polish education system, the following applies:

- Law on the Education System of September 7, 1991. - Article 33(1), (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1457, 1560, 1669 and 2245)
- Regulation of the Minister of National Education dated February 14, 2017. On the core curriculum for preschool education and general education in particular types of schools (Journal of Laws of 2017, item 59).
- Regulation Minister of National Education of August 9, 2017. On the principles of organisation and provision of psychological and pedagogical assistance in public kindergartens, schools and institutions

These basic documents require schools to ensure the safety of all students through preventive education and developed procedures for responding to various risk situations.

The general education curriculum and the way it is implemented provide a reference point for the development and implementation of **educational and preventive programmes** in schools.

School prevention and education programmes include, for example, procedures for responding to the cyberbullies, steps of the procedures, types of psychological and pedagogical support that the school should provide.

Helpline.org.pl - team established to prevent and stop violence against children and adolescents using the Internet and cell phones. It is a joint project of the Nobody's Children Foundation and the TP Group Foundation, co-financed by the European Commission under the "Safer Internet" programme. It offers help to parents and children affected by cyberbullying.

### 3.2. Legal frameworks and regulations to address cyberbullying in Italy

In recent years, legislative efforts have been made to address the growing concern of cyberbullying, recognising its detrimental effects on students' well-being and the need for comprehensive prevention and intervention strategies. Key decrees and laws, such as Decreto prot. n. 256 del 12/02/2024 and Decreto prot. n. 1176 del 18/05/2022, have allocated funds specifically aimed at combating cyberbullying, as mandated by Law n.234/2021. Additionally, Law 107 of 2015 laid the groundwork for fostering digital competencies among students, while Law 71 of 2017 introduced strategic objectives focused on addressing cyberbullying in all its forms. The 2021 updating of the Guidelines for prevention and contrast of Bullying and cyberbullying further enhances efforts by providing school leaders, teachers, and staff with new tools to understand, reduce, and combat negative acts that harm students. These legislative measures underscore a concerted effort to safeguard students and promote a safe and positive school environment free from cyberbullying.

### 3.3. Legal frameworks and regulations to address cyberbullying in Cyprus

While cyberbullying has been connected in several instances to illegal actions and behaviours (Zhang et al., 2022), anti-cyberbullying policies that are key to eradicating this issue have been noted as lacking, weak and inadequate. In Cyprus, the Ministry of Education's Observatory for School Violence holds primary responsibility for studying, preventing, and reducing violence within schools (Kapardis & Poyiadjis, 2018). In 2012, the Observatory recommended creating a national strategy to combat school violence and implementing a comprehensive intervention programme involving the Ministry's Educational Psychological Services and the Pedagogical Institute. Even though no such strategy has been developed yet, the Ministry issued a circular in early 2015 addressing school bullying incidents (Kapardis & Poyiadjis, 2018). This highlights the opportunity for the proposed strategy to extend beyond the Ministry's circular and encompass cyberbullying and cybervictimization. Although the law is not yet proven to be a deterrent, there are some policies that could be applied, drawing inspiration from other countries like the USA and



Canada, where cyberbullying laws and specialised units have been established (El Asam & Samara, 2016). These frameworks offer support to victims, clarity to schools and parents, and clear authority for intervention. As such, the implementation of comprehensive legal measures becomes paramount in safeguarding individuals from the harmful effects of cyberbullying, ensuring a safer and more responsible digital environment for all.

### 3.4. Legal frameworks and regulations to address cyberbullying in France

The issue of cyberbullying is a concern for the French government therefore, the government has legal frameworks and regulations in place to address cyberbullying among students in primary and secondary education. An important law is the [law n°2018-703 of August 3, 2018](#) (Article 11-41). According to this law, acts constituting cyber-harassment, cyberstalking, or online harassment fall under the purview of Article 222-33-2-2 of the French Penal Code.

According to article [222-33-2 of the Penal Code](#), cyber-harassment is an aggravating circumstance of moral harassment, when the facts were committed through the use of an online public communication service or through of a digital or electronic medium. Cyber-harassment can therefore be defined as the act of harassing a person using a tool or means of digital communication or on the internet, whether on any site or social network.

It is a punishable offense, and the sanctions vary depending on the situation and on the seriousness of the consequences of the harassment on the person concerned:

- When the perpetrator is an adult and the victim is over fifteen years old, he risks up to two years of imprisonment and a fine of 30,000 euros. If the victim is under fifteen years old, then the maximum penalty is increased to 3 years in prison and a fine of €45,000.
- When the author is a minor, [specific rules](#) apply if he is under 13 years old. If he is over thirteen and the victim is over fifteen then the maximum penalty is increased to one year in prison and a fine of 7,500 euros. If the victim is under fifteen years old, then the sentence is increased to 18 months and a fine of 7,500 euros.

Secondly, France also has put in place the [Law for a School of Trust \(2019\)](#). It generally aims to strengthen public education in France by promoting confidence, respect, and engagement within the school community. While the School of Trust Law (2019) is not solely focused on cyberbullying, it implements several key measures to address and counter this issue in French schools in the following ways:

### **1. Strengthened Reporting and Intervention:**

- a. The law makes it mandatory for school staff to report suspected cyberbullying incidents to the school principal.
- b. Schools are required to have a clear and accessible procedure for reporting cyberbullying, making it easier for students and others to come forward.
- c. The principal appoints a designated staff member responsible for coordinating anti-bullying measures, including cyberbullying.
- d. This staff member works with the victim, the perpetrator, and their families to mediate and resolve the situation.
- e. Depending on the severity, disciplinary measures can be implemented, ranging from warnings to exclusion.

### **2. Protecting Privacy and Victims:**

The law outlines the need to protect the privacy of victims and witnesses during the reporting and investigation process.

- a. It allows for anonymous reporting in certain cases to reduce fear of reprisals.
- b. Victims of cyberbullying can access psychological support through school services or external resources.

Overall, the School of Trust Law provides a framework for French schools to create a safer and more inclusive digital learning environment for all students. By strengthening reporting procedures, promoting awareness, and fostering collaboration, the law aims to effectively address cyberbullying and support both victims and perpetrators.

[Article L111-6](#) of the French general education code also addresses school violence and bullying (both within & outside school), including disciplinary measures and reporting requirements. Generally, a complaint can be filed online to the police or gendarmerie and perpetrators are also subject to the Article 222-33-2-2 of the French Penal Code.

More recently in February 2022, the French Parliament adopted a stricter law "[LOI n° 2022-299](#)" of 2nd March 2022 that criminalises school and university bullying, including cyberbullying. Under this stricter law, the text, as adopted, provides for a new offense of "school harassment", punishing pupils, students or staff of educational and university establishments found guilty of school harassment. The maximum penalties incurred are ten years in prison and a fine of 150,000 euros in the event of suicide or attempted suicide by the harassed victim. A course of "awareness of the risks linked to school harassment" may also be ordered by the judge.

To better combat cyber-harassment on social networks, parliamentarians authorised the seizure and confiscation of mobile phones and computers that have been used to harass a pupil or student. Guarantees are provided. To protect victims who are minors, investigation and information may be subject to a sound recording. Finally, the text includes the fight against school bullying among the objectives assigned to internet players (platforms and internet access providers - ISPs) and establishes the obligation to moderate school bullying content on social networks.

In conclusion, cyberbullying in French schools presents a multifaceted challenge with profound implications for students' well-being and the overall school climate. Despite efforts from various stakeholders, including French government bodies, NGOs, and educational institutions, to address this issue through preventive measures, intervention strategies, and legal frameworks, cyberbullying persists as a pervasive threat. The prevalence of cyberbullying and scarce scientific research on this topic underscores the urgent need for continued research, evaluation of existing interventions, and adaptation of strategies to effectively combat this form of harassment.

The implementation of laws such as the Law for a School of Trust (2019) and the recent legislation criminalising school and university bullying demonstrates a commitment to fostering

safer educational environments and holding perpetrators accountable. However, ongoing training, evaluation, and collaboration among educators, parents, policymakers, and technology companies remains essential to develop comprehensive approaches that protect students, promote digital citizenship, and foster positive online behaviours. Moving forward, sustained efforts are necessary to enhance awareness, improve reporting mechanisms, provide support for victims, and educate students on responsible internet use. By prioritising the well-being and safety of students, French schools can cultivate inclusive environments conducive to learning and personal growth, where every individual feels respected, supported, and empowered to thrive both online and offline.

### 3.5. Legal frameworks and regulations to address cyberbullying in Greece

Per Article 39 of the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, administrative, social, and educational measures are determined to prevent, deter, and tackle the phenomenon of school bullying. These measures include the establishment of committees or working groups to address school bullying and the coordination of prevention actions by multidisciplinary teams. Schools have implemented various measures to address cyberbullying, including:

- Establishing school committees against bullying and intra-school violence.
- Reinforcing protection measures in areas surrounding schools where delinquent behaviours are observed.
- Organising regular communication meetings between students, teachers, and parents to address bullying concerns.
- Providing help from students to resolve conflicts through student mediation programmes.
- Conducting special discussions and programmes to educate students about respecting others' rights and avoiding cyberbullying behaviours.

Moreover, the Ministry of Education collaborates with the Ministry of Citizen Protection to update educational materials and produce relevant resources for schools. This joint effort ensures that schools have access to up-to-date information and support to address cyberbullying effectively.

Finally, the role of parents and teachers is crucial in preventing and addressing cyberbullying. Parents can set rules and guidelines for technology use, encourage open communication with their children, and provide support if they witness or experience cyberbullying. Teachers can incorporate lessons about cyberbullying into the curriculum, foster a positive online culture, and intervene promptly when cyberbullying occurs. Greece has also implemented legal frameworks and regulations aimed at combating bullying (including cyberbullying) and promoting a safe digital environment for young individuals. These efforts encompass national legislation and international agreements, reflecting a multifaceted approach to cyberbullying. At the European Union level, directives such as Directive 95/46/EC and Directive 2002/58/EC play a crucial role in establishing regulatory frameworks for protecting personal data and privacy in electronic communications. These directives provide guidelines for member states, including Greece, to protect individuals' personal data and privacy rights in online environments.

By adhering to these directives, Greece demonstrates its commitment to upholding fundamental rights in the digital sphere. Furthermore, the Convention on Cybercrime, also known as the Budapest Convention, serves as a landmark international treaty aimed at combating cybercrime, including cyberbullying. While Greece has signed the convention, ratification is pending. The convention seeks to harmonise national laws, improve technical cooperation, and establish an effective regime for international cooperation in combating cybercrime. By ratifying the Budapest Convention, Greece would enhance its ability to address cyberbullying through coordinated efforts at the international level. Additionally, the 3rd Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a mechanism for submitting complaints to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in cases of violations related to cyberbullying and online harassment. This protocol offers a framework for addressing grievances at the international level when national mechanisms are insufficient or ineffective. However, its ratification and implementation remain limited among EU member states, including Greece, highlighting the need for further action to strengthen child protection measures in the digital age.

In the Greek legislation, "cyberbullying" is not mentioned. However, such actions can still constitute violations and even criminal offences, leading to significant consequences for the perpetrator. While terms like "bullying" are not specifically defined in the Greek Penal Code, the

manifestation of such behaviours can serve as grounds for punishment under relevant legal provisions. Law 4322 of 2015 introduced amendments to Article 312 of the Greek Penal Code, marking the first explicit recognition of behaviours akin to bullying in the offline world. However, concerning minors, punishment was only applicable if the age difference between the perpetrator and the victim exceeded three years. In such cases, reformatory or therapeutic measures were imposed, recognising the age-related aspects of criminal responsibility. Minors under the age of 15 are deemed criminally irresponsible, while those between 15 and 18 may face reformatory or punitive measures, depending on the circumstances. Subsequent amendments through Law 4619/2019 further refined the legal framework related to harassment and bullying. Under the revised provisions, actions leading to mental distress, particularly if the victim is a minor or otherwise unable to defend themselves, are punishable. This amendment reflects a more nuanced approach to addressing online harassment and bullying, considering the potential psychological harm inflicted on victims. Moreover, online harassment and bullying often involve the unauthorised dissemination of personal data, such as the posting of photos or videos without consent. Such actions constitute misdemeanours under the Greek Criminal Code, highlighting the legal consequences of such behaviours. Despite these legislative and regulatory measures, challenges persist in enforcing laws and protecting students from cyberbullying. There is a need for enhanced cooperation between government agencies, educational institutions, and civil society organisations to implement comprehensive strategies for preventing and addressing cyberbullying effectively. By prioritising the safety and well-being of students in primary and secondary education, Greece can create a safer digital environment where young individuals can thrive and develop positively.

### 3.6. Legal frameworks and regulations to address cyberbullying in Ireland

Based on an article (Daly, 2022) in Law Society it is clear that legal remedies are required to tackle harmful content online. Cyberbullying and online harassment have been increasing in ferocity and frequency over recent years, particularly during lockdown. Studies have shown that harmful online interactions and incidents can cause very real, lifelong harm to the victims. Irish legislation has been evolving in recent times to meet a chorus of calls for reform. The Harassment, Harmful

Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 came into law on 10 February 2021. The act creates new offences in relation to harassment and harmful communications, both online and offline, and provides for the anonymity of victims of those offences. Known as 'Coco's Law,' this act prohibits image-based abuse and carries significant penalties. In terms of cyberbullying, this law also provides stronger measures against harassment. While this helps with punishing the people responsible for their acts the impact on school children bullying each other is minimal as kids are often unaware of the legalities of their actions. However, including this information in the curriculum when delivering cyberbullying programmes would certainly have a positive impact on some cases of cyberbullying.

In December 2022, the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022 was signed into law. It aims to improve online safety for children. The Online Safety Commissioner (OSC) is part of Coimisiún na Meán. The OSC will regulate online services and will have enforcement powers to deal with disputes. Coimisiún na Meán came into operation on 15 March 2023. It is currently developing Ireland's first Online Safety Code. The Code will: establish important rules that online platforms (like social media) will have to follow; make sure platforms are responsible for protecting the safety of their users; impose severe fines (up to €20 million) on platforms that do not meet these safety requirements. While this regulation is a step in the right direction in achieving more of a safer online world it does not prevent the need to equip the children themselves with relevant digital skills in protecting themselves from online harm.

Besides the two recent legal Acts, there is also a national framework Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying: Ireland's Whole Education Approach to preventing and addressing bullying in schools (Government of Ireland, 2022), while this document provides a collective vision and clear roadmap for how the whole education community and society can work together to prevent and address bullying in our schools it lacks actual up to date information how schools can update their existing anti-bullying procedures in cyberbullying context, the current related document (Government of Ireland, 2013) has not been changed since 2013.

While it is great to see that new relevant legal acts are being introduced to make sure that the anonymity of victims is provided and the creators of harmful content are subjected to significant



penalties as well as the online service providers being held responsible for protecting the users, the importance of providing the children with resilience and high self-esteem is the paramount cornerstone in raising the future generation in this highly digitalised world.

### 3.7. Comparisons of national legal frameworks and conclusions

Analysing the legal frameworks of the countries involved in the SafeOnline project, specific legislations and initiatives on the issue of cyberbullying in schools are highlighted and several important insights from each country's legal frameworks and regulations to address cyberbullying derive. **Poland** has established a legal basis for addressing cyberbullying through laws on the education system and regulations from the Minister of National Education. Schools are required to ensure student safety by providing preventive education and implementing response procedures. Additionally, programmes like Helpline.org.pl offer support to victims of cyberbullying, demonstrating efforts to address this issue comprehensively at both systemic and practical levels.

**Italy** has made recent legislative efforts to combat cyberbullying, with specific decrees and laws allocating funds for this purpose. The country has also focused on fostering digital competencies among students and addressing cyberbullying comprehensively through updated guidelines. These initiatives underscore Italy's commitment to safeguarding students and promoting a safe school environment free from cyberbullying.

**Cyprus** faces challenges in addressing cyberbullying, with efforts noted as lacking, weak, and inadequate. While the Ministry of Education has issued circulars addressing school bullying, comprehensive strategies are yet to be developed. Inspiration can be drawn from countries like the USA and Canada, where cyberbullying laws and specialised units have been established, to inform future policy development in Cyprus.

**France** has enacted robust legal frameworks to address cyberbullying, including laws on cyber-harassment and school harassment. The Law for a School of Trust strengthens reporting and



intervention procedures in schools, while recent legislation criminalises school and university bullying, demonstrating a commitment to fostering safer educational environments. These legislative measures underscore France's proactive approach to combating cyberbullying and promoting a positive school climate.

**Greece** has implemented legal measures to prevent, deter, and tackle school bullying, although specific mention of cyberbullying is lacking. Collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Citizen Protection ensures access to up-to-date information and resources. However, challenges persist in enforcing laws and protecting students from cyberbullying, highlighting the need for enhanced coordination and comprehensive strategies.

**Ireland** has introduced significant legislative measures to address cyberbullying, including the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 and the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022. These laws aim to improve online safety for children and hold online platforms accountable for harmful content. While national frameworks provide a roadmap for preventing and addressing bullying in schools, there may be a need for more specific guidance on cyberbullying prevention and intervention.

**Poland, France** and **Italy** have made significant strides in addressing cyberbullying through specific legislation and funding allocation. In contrast, **Greece** and **Cyprus** face challenges with inadequate legal measures and the lack of comprehensive strategies. **Ireland** has introduced recent legislation and frameworks, but there may be a need for more specific guidance on cyberbullying prevention and intervention. Overall, comprehensive legal frameworks, adequate funding, and collaboration between stakeholders are essential to effectively combat cyberbullying and promote a safe and positive school environment.

## 4. Data analysis from the field research

### 4.1. Methodology

This section will provide details about the process followed in undertaking field research and gathering data on the Cyberbullying in schools, on Dealing with cyberbullying incidents, and Preventive measures and intervention strategies in schools/communities. In particular, the SafeOnline survey aimed to better understand the current state of cyberbullying and the diverse perspectives on the challenges and opportunities related to addressing cyberbullying in schools, by asking school leaders, teachers, teacher educators and trainee teachers, to provide their feedback.

The six partner countries adopted the common methodological guidelines developed by CARDET and agreed by the partnership and the project's field research protocol. All partners conducted focus groups and an online questionnaire-based survey by using Google Forms, in which participated school leaders, teachers, teacher educators and trainee teachers. The field work research was carried out in the period February – March 2024. All respondents had carefully explained the aims of the project and the research and how the results from the SafeOnline survey would be used. They had been assured that confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed. Regarding the focus groups, they were conducted either face-to-face or via Zoom. The focus groups' participants proceeded to sign a consent form or provide the corresponding oral consent which was audio recorded. They were also asked to give prior permission for audio recording. General Data Protection Regulations had been adhered to.

A qualitative exploration of the SafeOnline survey was made and all answers received were matched with answers with the relevant questions; commonalities were identified, and any other unique information was considered. The project's survey was organised around the following set of topics:

- Cyberbullying in schools
- Dealing with cyberbullying incidents
- Preventive measures and intervention strategies in schools/communities

## 4.2. Profile of the participants

The number of the school leaders, teachers, teacher educators and trainee teachers who participated in the focus groups and questionnaire-based online survey is 307. In particular, 50 teachers participated in the focus groups that have been conducted by the SafeOnline Consortium in partner countries. Moreover, 257 individuals have participated in the questionnaire-based online survey. The following table represents the number of participants in the survey for each partner country.

Partner country	Number of participants in the focus groups	Number of participants in the questionnaire-based online survey
Poland	8	52
Italy	8	53
Cyprus	8	50
France	8	23
Greece	8	54
Ireland	10	25

Regarding gender, the participant population in the questionnaire-based online survey is predominantly female, with 196 out of 257 being female teachers.

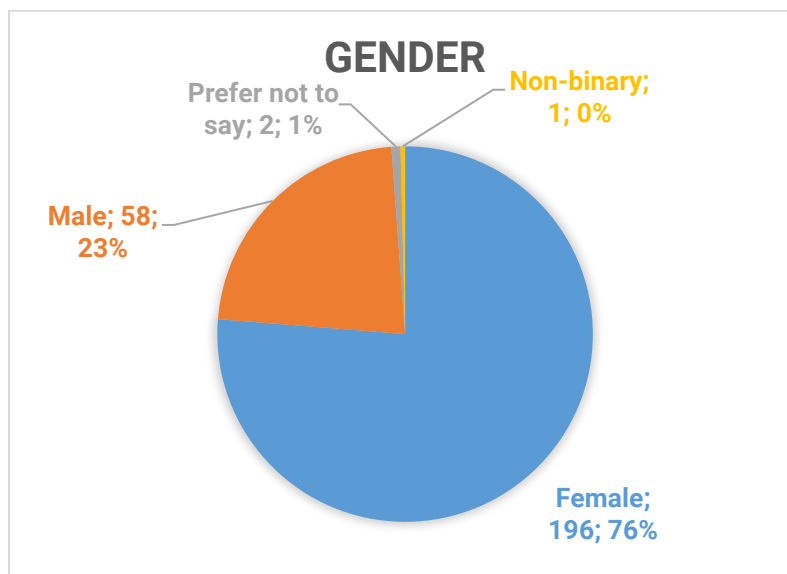


Figure 1: Gender of Survey Participants.

With regard to age groups, the majority of participants (N=74) fall within the 40-49 age group, followed by the 30-39 age group (N=67). The age groups of 50-59, 25-29 and 60+ follow with a total of 65, 28 and 20 participants respectively. The age group under 25 was the least selected (N=3). This finding is also consistent with the participants' years of experience as most of them have more than 20 years of experience (N=79).

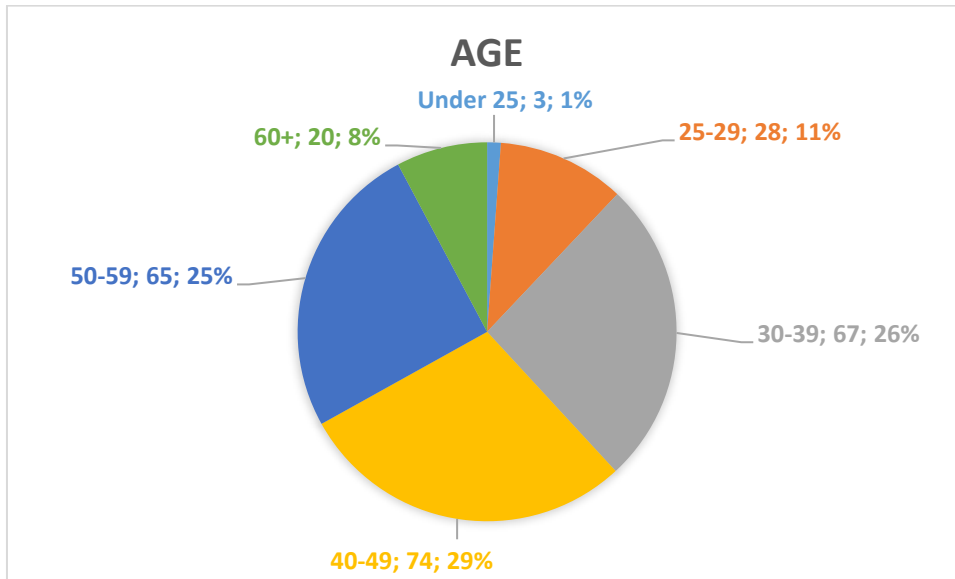


Figure 2: Age of Survey Participants.

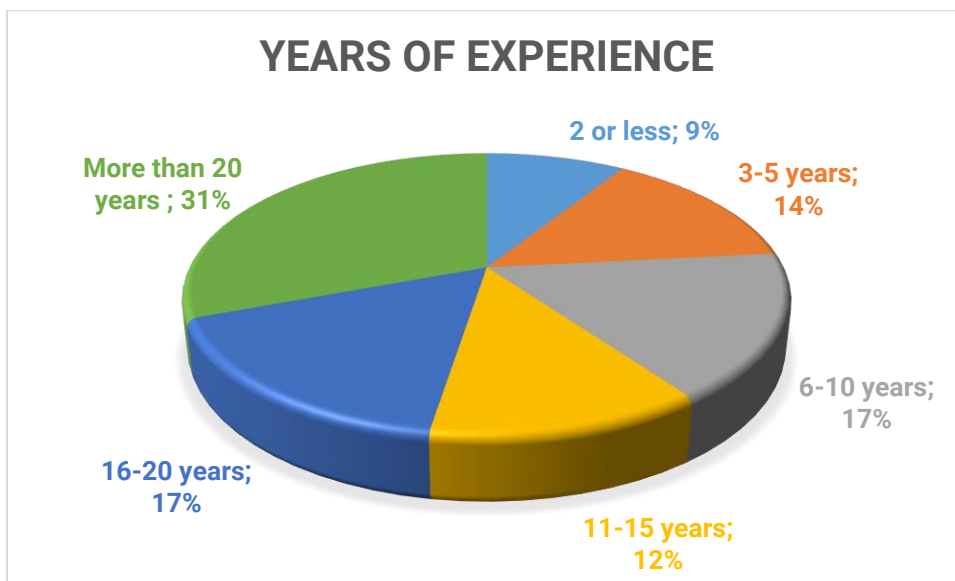
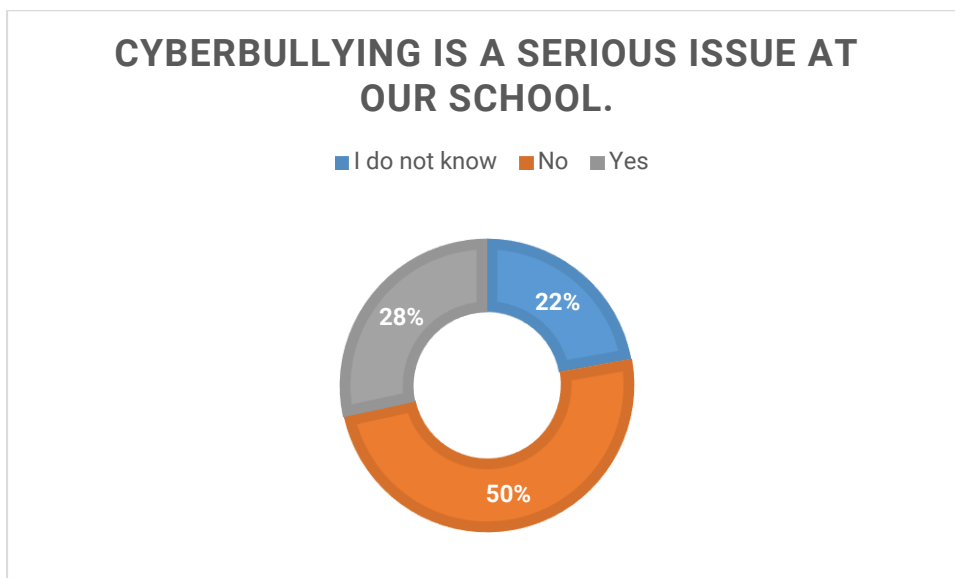


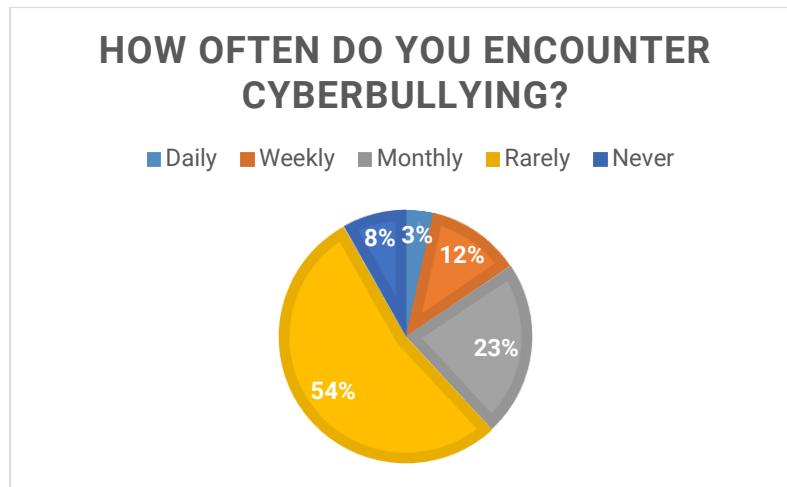
Figure 3: Years of Experience of Survey Participants.

### 4.3. Cyberbullying in schools

After the demographic data, the next section of the questionnaire concerned the topic of cyberbullying in schools. The first question was related to whether the subject is considered a significant/big problem at the schools. In **Poland**, there is no agreement on the specific question with 36.5% reporting yes, 32.7% no and 30.8% do not know. In **Italy**, the majority of the participants (66%) do not consider cyberbullying as an important problem at their schools, while in **Cyprus** 27 participants reported no, 11 reported yes and 12 participants reported they do not know. In **France** most participants (38.1%) responded that they do not know whether the subject is considered a significant/big problem at the schools while 33.3% reported no. Among respondents in **Greece**, only 15 acknowledged cyberbullying as a major issue within their school, while 31 disagreed and 7 remained uncertain. Only in **Ireland**, the majority of the respondents (45.8%) acknowledge that cyberbullying is an important issue in their school/community. Interestingly, regarding the frequency of observed cyberbullying cases, the participants in all partner countries reported that they rarely encounter instances of cyberbullying. This indicates a varying level of awareness and perception among educators regarding the severity of the problem. Overall, from the survey responses of all partner countries cyberbullying is considered by the majority as not a serious issue at schools (N=127, 50%) and as a phenomenon that it is rarely encountered (N=138, 54%).



**Figure 4:** Cyberbullying at schools.



**Figure 5:** Frequency of Cyberbullying incidents at schools.

When it comes to the channels through which cyberbullying occurs, in **all partner countries** most participants reported that it often or always occurs through social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc.). Another commonly used method is instant messages. This is in line with the focus group findings in **all countries**, which highlighted the role of social media in facilitating cyberbullying, noting the ease with which individuals can target and harass their peers from behind the veil of digital anonymity. Respondents identified common characteristics associated with cyberbullies. These included traits such as low educational level, introversion, low self-esteem, and social isolation.

Overall, the findings from the questionnaire shed light on the varying perceptions and levels of awareness regarding cyberbullying among educators across partner countries. Given the central role of social media in cyberbullying incidents, it is imperative for policymakers, educators, and technology companies to collaborate on strategies aimed at promoting responsible digital citizenship and enhancing online safety. Recommendations include implementing robust educational programmes that teach students about respectful online behaviour, digital literacy, and the potential consequences of cyberbullying. Moreover, social media platforms should prioritise the development and implementation of effective moderation tools, reporting mechanisms, and user policies to swiftly address instances of cyberbullying and protect users from harm. By fostering a culture of empathy, accountability, and positive engagement online,

stakeholders can work together to mitigate the prevalence and impact of cyberbullying, creating safer and more inclusive digital environments for all.

#### 4.4. Dealing with cyberbullying incidents

In **Poland**, the incidents reported by participants regarding cyberbullying encompassed a range of harmful behaviours, including verbal bullying, name-calling on social media, social exclusion, sharing inappropriate content, and false accusations. These actions had significant negative impacts on the victims and posed challenges for both participants and parents. Teachers responded to these incidents by engaging in conversations with pupils and partners, providing lessons on Internet safety and the consequences of cyberbullying, restricting internet access, conducting workshops with students involved, and involving psychologists when necessary. School management addressed the incidents through disciplinary conversations, conversations with tutors, assistance from pedagogues and psychologists, individual conversations with students, and involvement of parents and school specialists.

In **Italy**, responses to questions regarding cyberbullying incidents varied, with some participants indicating that no incidents were reported to their school, while others recounted specific instances of harassment, exclusion, and inappropriate messages circulated on social media platforms. Teachers reacted to these incidents through various interventions, including discussions with students, informing parents, and involving school authorities when necessary. School leadership handled the situations by convening responsible parties, informing families, and taking disciplinary measures in line with school policies.

In **Cyprus**, participants provided diverse responses when asked about incidents of cyberbullying reported to the school, showcasing a range of experiences and perspectives on the prevalence and nature of such incidents. Similar to Italy, some participants citing specific instances such as threatening messages, insulting posts on social media, and derogatory videos, while others indicated a lack of awareness or recollection. These incidents ranged from verbal abuse to the dissemination of offensive content online, underscoring the diverse forms of cyberbullying prevalent among students. In handling these incidents, participants consistently highlighted the importance of communication and involvement of stakeholders, including school administration

and parents. Supportive measures, such as providing psychological support to victims and guidance on managing the situation, were prioritised. School leadership responded proactively by informing parents, involving law enforcement where necessary, and promoting awareness and education about online safety, emphasising the need for swift action and communication to address cyberbullying effectively within educational settings.

Similarly, in **France**, responses reflect the diverse nature of such occurrences. Examples ranged from abusive messages received on social media platforms like TikTok to instances of fat-shaming comments, offensive memes, and threatening messages circulated among peers. In handling these incidents, educators took various approaches, including comforting and advising the victims, addressing the issue during class sessions, and involving school counsellors or administrators to investigate and provide support. School leadership also responded differently to each incident, with actions such as reporting to parents, organising school-wide assemblies to address cyberbullying, mandating empathy exercises for bullies, and implementing disciplinary measures for offenders.

In **Greece**, educators respond to cyberbullying incidents with a range of strategies aimed at addressing the issue effectively. Engaging in discussions with both victims and perpetrators emerges as a prevalent approach, with 17 respondents underscoring its significance in understanding the dynamics and impacts of such incidents. Furthermore, notifying guardians is deemed essential, as mentioned by 27 respondents, ensuring that parents are involved in addressing the issue collaboratively and facilitating the implementation of support measures both at school and home. School management plays a pivotal role in coordinating responses and implementing preventive measures, as emphasised by 25 respondents, highlighting the importance of a coordinated effort involving educators, administrators, and other stakeholders in managing cyberbullying incidents effectively.

In **Ireland**, insights into schools' responses to cyberbullying incidents reveal a predominant occurrence of hurtful messages or comments via social media platforms, particularly Snapchat and TikTok, as reported by nineteen respondents. Exclusion from social media groups and the circulation of derogatory images online were also noted forms of cyberbullying aimed at



diminishing the victim. In response to these incidents, schools commonly informed parents and escalated the matter to the principal. Other measures included addressing the perpetrators directly, organising whole-school presentations on cyberbullying, adhering to anti-bullying policies, and conducting bullying surveys within the school community, with each approach mentioned by one participant.

From the field research in **all partner countries**, it was common that cyberbullying has a negative impact on victims' lives and school performance. Specifically, responses from the focus groups and survey underscored the profound negative impact on school climate, highlighting increased tension, fear, and mistrust among students, ultimately disrupting peer relations and hindering academic engagement. Victims commonly experienced severe emotional distress, such as anxiety, depression, and isolation, leading to physical symptoms and increased absenteeism. Additionally, participants noted a direct correlation between cyberbullying and academic performance decline, with victims struggling to concentrate and achieve. Despite the challenges in detecting cyberbullying, teachers expressed frustration and emphasised the need for improved policies and training to effectively address these incidents and support affected students. The accounts also revealed instances of manipulation and responsibility shifting among those reporting cyberbullying incidents, further complicating intervention efforts.

## 4.5. Preventive measures and intervention strategies in school/community

While there is a **general consensus** that schools are adequately educating children about safe internet use and equipping them with knowledge on how to stay safe online and recognise cyberbullying, opinions diverge regarding the effectiveness of existing policies, particularly in terms of providing teachers with appropriate training to identify and address cyberbullying incidents. For example, in **Greece**, of the respondents, only 22 agreed that the educational staff at their school know how to intervene in cases of cyberbullying appropriately while, only 16 educators agreed that their school has a formal process for investigating cyberbullying and only 10 educators agreed that their school offers staff training on cyberbullying policies and procedures. Similarly, in **Cyprus**, while most participants reported that their school has a formal

procedure or policy for investigating cyberbullying and a continuum range of consequences for cyberbullying incidents, they do not agree that their school offers training to staff in policies and procedures related to cyberbullying. Most teachers, neither agree nor disagree or disagree that the current preventive measures in their school effectively address cyberbullying. In a similar way, participants in **France**, equally agree or neither agree nor disagree that current preventive measures effectively address cyberbullying. On the contrary in **Poland** and **Italy**, according to the respondents, the overall situation seems to be better both on the education of schools and teachers as well as on the effectiveness of current measures. In **Poland**, only in the question about whether teachers in schools know how to intervene/help in a cyberbullying situation in an appropriate manner, respondents equally somewhat disagree, somewhat agree and agree about this. In **Ireland**, while most participants agree or strongly agree that schools have formal procedures or policies with a continuum/range of consequences for cyberbullying incidents, most of them stated that schools do not offer training to staff in policies and procedures for cyberbullying incidents and a significant number of them neither agree nor disagree that the existing measures for the prevention of cyberbullying at schools are effective.

Given these varying perspectives, it's understandable that when asked about what additional resources or training would help them in addressing cyberbullying more effectively, participants in focus groups and surveys highlighted several significant additional resources and training needs that could be useful towards this direction.

### 1. Ireland:

- **Additional Support for Teachers:** Respondents emphasise the need for extra support for teachers in identifying and addressing cyberbullying.
- **Education for Students:** There's a call for educating students on cyberbullying to mitigate its occurrence.
- **Resources Needed:** Suggestions include easily accessible online materials for teachers, students, and parents, guest speakers at schools, and regular CPD courses for teachers.

### 2. France:

- **Education and Awareness:** Respondents stress the need for more education and awareness on the consequences and nature of cyberbullying.
- **Tools for Reporting:** Suggestions include providing tools for children to report incidents anonymously.
- **Training in Communication:** Training in nonviolent communication to improve dialogue with both victims and bullies is highlighted.
- **Awareness of Privacy Settings:** Training on how to change privacy settings for safer online interactions is recommended.
- **Involvement of Authorities:** Some respondents mention involving the police in addressing cyberbullying.

### 3. Poland:

- **Training and Law Support:** Respondents emphasise the need for training, law support, and training by qualified individuals.
- **Increased Public Awareness:** There's a call for increased public awareness, including specific penalties for cyberbullying to deter perpetrators.
- **Preventive Measures:** Suggestions include integrated classes, student teams, cooperative methods, trips, and outings to prevent cyberbullying.

### 4. Cyprus:

- **Psychological Support Services:** Respondents advocate for psychological support services within schools.
- **Educational Initiatives:** Suggestions include intra-school initiatives to educate students, create informative materials, and hold seminars or classes on cyberbullying.
- **Comprehensive Training:** Calls for comprehensive training and awareness-building efforts involving educators, students, parents, and the wider school community.
- **Parental Education:** Emphasis on the importance of parental education, collaboration, and preventive measures.

- **Positive Relationships:** Highlighting the importance of building positive relationships between family/social environments and school environments to address cyberbullying effectively.

## 5. Italy:

- **Real Experiences:** Emphasis on getting to know about real experiences of cyberbullying.
- **Family Education:** Highlighting the need for educating families who often underestimate cyberbullying.
- **Confrontation and Trust:** Suggestions include classroom confrontations between victims and bullies, building trust between students and teachers, and testimonies from repentant victims and bullies.
- **Teacher Support:** Recommendations for supporting teachers in emotional intelligence and social skills.
- **Legal Information:** Calls for more information on legal aspects of cyberbullying.
- **Student Training:** Training students on how to behave in cyberbullying situations.
- **Infrastructure Improvement:** Suggestions include providing faster devices and internet connections in schools.
- **Workshops and Peer Training:** Advocacy for workshops and creating a larger network of schools for peer training and resource sharing.
- **Psychological Support:** Advocating for psychological help and guidance for both teachers and students.
- **Involvement of Families and Communities:** Highlighting the importance of involving families and other community organisations in addressing cyberbullying effectively.

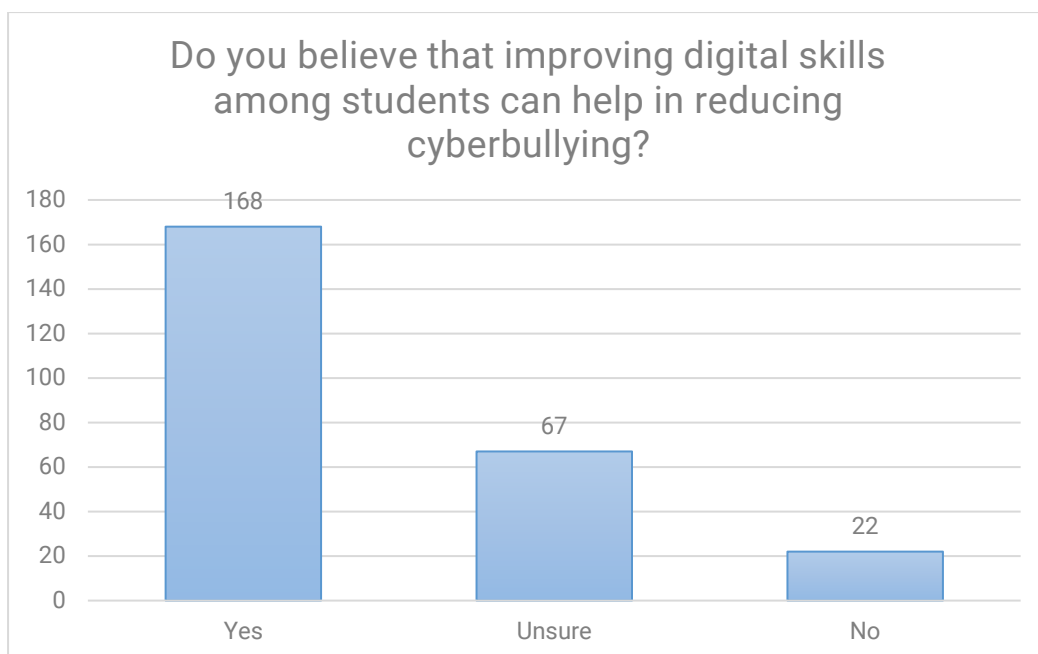
## 6. Greece:

- **Continuous Education and Professional Development:** Participants emphasised the importance of ongoing learning and growth, particularly in the areas of empathy, active listening, and collaborative problem-solving.

- **Proactive Communication and Collaboration:** There was agreement on the significance of proactive communication and collaboration with parents and stakeholders to address cyberbullying effectively, fostering a sense of partnership and shared responsibility.
- **Integration of Training:** While attendance at seminars on cyberbullying was noted, there was a need for more comprehensive and integrated training opportunities within formal education and professional development.
- **Role of School Principals:** School principals were highlighted as instrumental in fostering a culture of empathy, respect, and inclusivity, and establishing clear policies and protocols for addressing cyberbullying.
- **Additional Support and Resources:** Participants stressed the need for additional support and resources, including training and evidence-based programmes, to enhance schools' capacity to address cyberbullying effectively.

Overall, across the responses from **all countries**, several common themes emerge regarding addressing cyberbullying effectively. Participants stressed the importance of ongoing learning and growth, particularly in areas such as empathy, active listening, and collaborative problem-solving. Continuous education and professional development were deemed vital for enhancing preparedness to handle cyberbullying cases. Moreover, proactive communication and collaboration with parents and stakeholders were emphasised to address cyberbullying effectively. Building trust between students and teachers, providing legal information and psychological assistance to victims and perpetrators, and improving school infrastructure and resources for prevention and intervention were also highlighted as crucial aspects. Additionally, participants highlighted the importance of understanding the real experiences of cyberbullying and educating families and communities about its impacts and consequences. Collaboration among schools, families, and community organisations was underscored as necessary for creating a comprehensive approach to combating cyberbullying. Integration of cyberbullying training into formal education and professional development, clear policies and protocols for addressing cyberbullying, and the need for additional support and resources were also noted. These themes underscore the multifaceted nature of the issue and the necessity for coordinated efforts involving various stakeholders to create safer online environments for students.

Importantly, the majority of survey participants (N=168), agree that improving digital skills among students can help in reducing cyberbullying. It can be argued that by improving digital literacy, students will be better equipped to understand the implications of their online behaviour, recognise and appropriately respond to cyberbullying incidents, and employ safer internet practices. This consensus underscores the critical role that digital education plays not only in skill development but also in promoting a safer and more positive online experience for students.



**Figure 6:** Digital Skills of students

## Discussion and Conclusions

In synthesising the findings from the literature review, focus group discussions, and questionnaire responses regarding cyberbullying in the partner counties' educational context, several key themes and insights emerge, providing a comprehensive understanding of this pervasive phenomenon. Across all the sources of data, there is a consensus on the prevalence and multifaceted nature of cyberbullying among primary and secondary education students. The literature review reveals alarming statistics, indicating widespread exposure to various forms of cyberbullying, such as flaming, online harassment, cyberstalking, and denigration. Importantly, insights from the field research conducted in Poland, Cyprus, France, Greece, Ireland and Italy underscore the evolving dynamics of cyberbullying, exacerbated by the pervasive influence of technology and digital platforms. Educators, as frontline witnesses to students' experiences, acknowledge the detrimental impact of cyberbullying on victims' well-being, academic performance, and overall school climate, but they highlight several challenges and needs that should be addressed to effectively prevent and handle cyberbullying incidents.

While instances of cyberbullying have often been linked to illegal activities and behaviours (Zhang et al., 2022), the effectiveness of anti-cyberbullying policies varies. Poland, France and Italy have taken significant steps towards addressing cyberbullying through dedicated legislation and funding initiatives. However, Greece and Cyprus encounter challenges due to insufficient legal measures and the absence of comprehensive strategies. Although Ireland has recently introduced legislation and frameworks, there remains a need for more targeted guidance on cyberbullying prevention and intervention. In summary, robust legal frameworks, adequate funding, and collaboration among stakeholders are crucial for effectively combating cyberbullying and fostering a safe and supportive school environment.

**All countries** emphasise proactive approaches to effectively address cyberbullying, as identified through literature reviews, focus group discussions, and questionnaire responses. Governments and non-governmental organisations have initiated various awareness campaigns and educational programmes to promote positive online behaviour. Educators play a crucial role in fostering empathy and respect through classroom discussions and collaboration with

stakeholders. However, challenges persist in identifying and responding to cyberbullying incidents, with gaps noted in staff training, investigation processes, and collaboration with families. Educators express concerns about the adequacy of current prevention measures and stress the importance of ongoing evaluation and adaptation to address the evolving challenges of cyberbullying. They require concrete tools and procedures rather than general advice to effectively tackle cyberbullying in schools.

Drawing from the above insights, the report can propose several recommendations to serve as a roadmap:

**Strengthen Legal Frameworks:** To effectively combat cyberbullying, partner countries should advocate for comprehensive national legislation that defines cyberbullying, outlines consequences for perpetrators, and includes provisions for victim support and clear reporting procedures for schools and law enforcement agencies.

**Increase Funding:** To strengthen prevention efforts, governments should allocate funding for national awareness campaigns and school-based programmes, while also investing in training educators to identify, handle, and report cyberbullying incidents.

**Develop Training Programmes:** Relevant training programmes should be designed for teachers to be able to identify signs of cyberbullying, implement strategies to promote digital citizenship and responsible online behaviour, follow clear reporting procedures and utilise effective intervention techniques.

**Foster Continuous Learning on Technology:** Ongoing professional development opportunities should be encouraged in order for the teachers to stay informed about the latest technological advancements and their potential implications for cyberbullying. This could involve workshops on emerging social media platforms, online gaming environments, and evolving cyberbullying tactics. By equipping teachers with the knowledge to navigate these evolving digital spaces, they can better educate students on responsible online behaviour and effectively identify and address cyberbullying incidents that may arise from new technologies.



**Encourage Collaboration:** To foster a collaborative approach, clear communication channels between schools, parents, and law enforcement should be established. This can be achieved by developing school-based cyberbullying response teams with educators, parents, counsellors, and law enforcement involvement as needed. Additionally, promoting parental involvement through workshops and resources on cyberbullying and online safety strengthens the network of support for students.

**Ongoing Evaluation and Adaptation:** To ensure the effectiveness of anti-cyberbullying efforts, ongoing evaluation is crucial. Thus, the existing prevention and intervention strategies should be regularly assessed to identify areas of improvement. Feedback should be also regularly gathered from educators, students, and parents to understand their experiences and concerns. By analysing this data, schools can continuously adapt their programmes and staff training to address the evolving challenges of cyberbullying.

**Provide Clear Procedures and Tools:** Teachers should be empowered with the resources needed to effectively handle cyberbullying. Clear and concise guidelines outlining the steps to take in response to cyberbullying incidents as well as online reporting platforms that streamline the reporting process could be helpful. Most importantly, teachers should be equipped with practical tools like lesson plans, student activities, and communication templates. These resources will enable them to integrate digital citizenship education into the curriculum, promote responsible online behaviour, and foster positive interactions among students.

**Cultivate a Supportive Environment:** Building a school culture that values empathy and respect is key to preventing cyberbullying. By promoting inclusivity, kindness, and responsible online communication, schools can create a safe and supportive environment where all students feel valued and protected.

In conclusion, the findings from the national reports collectively highlight the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to combat cyberbullying in partner countries' educational settings. While progress has been made in raising awareness and implementing preventive measures, concerted efforts are required to address gaps in staff training, incident reporting mechanisms,

and collaboration with families. By prioritising the safety and well-being of students and fostering a culture of empathy and respect, schools can create a supportive environment where all students feel valued and protected from the harmful effects of cyberbullying and they can thrive academically and emotionally, free from the harmful effects of cyberbullying.

## Annex

### Focus group

#### Description

Each partner will conduct a focus group with members of the target groups – 8 members per partner. The focus group shall not exceed 30 – 40 minutes. The aim is to collect data regarding gathering diverse perspectives on the challenges and opportunities related to addressing cyberbullying in schools (current state, best practices and intervention strategies). The research questions take the form of semi-structured questions, and each partner can slightly adjust the list according to their needs.

Make sure that you do not “direct” participants to specific answers.

The target groups include:

- School leaders, in-service teachers, teacher educators, trainee teachers and even pre-service teachers (e.g. university students who are studying to become future teachers) of primary and secondary level, teaching various subjects, at public and private schools.

#### Semi-structured Questions

Please adjust the below suggested list of semi-structured questions based on your target group needs.

1. Are you familiar with the term cyberbullying?
2. In your experience, what are the most common forms of cyberbullying incidents observed in school communities?
3. How do you think cyberbullying affects the overall school climate, student well-being, and academic performance?

4. What challenges do teachers face in identifying and addressing cyberbullying incidents, especially considering the dynamic nature of online platforms, such as social media?
5. How effective do you find the existing preventive measures in your school/community for addressing cyberbullying?
6. Are there specific strategies or interventions you have found successful in preventing or mitigating cyberbullying incidents?
7. How equipped do you feel in terms of knowledge and skills to handle cyberbullying cases effectively?
8. Have you attended any seminars to help you identify and address cyberbullying incidents?
9. What role do school leaders play in creating a safe online environment, and what additional support or resources do they need?

## Steps and Tips

### Before

- Reaching out to the target groups - recruitment of participants
- Translation of questions
- Choose the technology to be used for focus groups and ensure that it works properly
- Send consent forms and participants' list to be signed either virtually or traditionally
- Look into whether it is ok to record the focus group discussion, otherwise take notes
- Prepare as a focus group discussion host. You may for example watch these videos (even though they refer to f2f FGDs, most of the practices are transferable to an online setting as well):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scyTIRNDu\\_A&t=144s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scyTIRNDu_A&t=144s)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Auf9pkuCc8k>

### During

- Inform the participants about the project, study purpose
- Ensure confidentiality and anonymity

- Let them know that there are no wrong answers, only differing points of view. They are free to share their opinions. Negative comments are crucial, too.
- Thank the participants for their time

### After

- Transcribe recording and save according to the rules and regulations of your organisation (if you use a technological tool and recording is approved by the participants, opt for the automatic transcription mode which provides a good basis for the final transcription)
- Summarise the findings in English and document them in the Report.

## Questionnaire

### Description

To better understand the current state of cyberbullying and the diverse perspectives on the challenges and opportunities related to addressing cyberbullying in schools, we will also gather the target groups' opinions through an online questionnaire. The questionnaire should be completed by 50 participants (at least) of the project target groups in each partner country. The questionnaire is in English, but it can be translated into national languages (partner's responsibility). Thus, in the next subsection we present both the link to the online questionnaire and the content of the questionnaire for translation purposes.

The collected data will be analysed, presented and discussed accordingly in your reports (see National report Template).

### Form and items

Link to online questionnaires (all countries)

### Online Form Description

This survey is conducted as part of the Erasmus+ Programme – “Protect Students from Cyberbullying to stay safe in the Digital Era - SafeOnline” (Project Number: 2023-1-PL01-KA220-SCH-000151070). SafeOnline aims to empower primary and secondary school students, particularly those with fewer opportunities, to effectively respond to cyberbullying, enhance the capabilities of educators, and improve digital skills and well-being among students through innovative pedagogical materials and resources.

To better understand the current state of cyberbullying and the diverse perspectives on the challenges and opportunities related to addressing cyberbullying in schools, we ask school leaders, teachers, teacher educators and trainee teachers to provide us with some feedback through this survey. We kindly ask you to answer honestly and base your answers on your experiences. The estimated time to complete this questionnaire is 10 minutes.

GDPR: All data gathered through this survey will be strictly used explicitly for the research. The responses will be handled in a discreet manner, and responses are completely anonymous. The answers will be saved in a properly secured place, with no authorisation to anyone apart from the Research Team. Our consortium complies with the GDPR regulation and the protection and processing of personal data.

### **Consent\***

By clicking the "Agree" button, you indicate that: you have read all the information above, the privacy policy and you agree to participate voluntarily, you are at least 18 years old. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, please click the "disagree" button.

- Agree
- Disagree

### **Section 1: Demographic data**

Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- I prefer not to say

Age:

- Under 25
- 25-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60+

Position held:

- Primary school teacher
- Primary school head-teacher
- Secondary school teacher
- Secondary school head teacher
- Teacher Trainer
- Teacher Trainee
- School leader
- Other (Please specify your role)\*

Type of Institution:

- Private
- Government (Public)

Years of experience:

- Two or less
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- More than twenty years

## Section 2: Cyberbullying in schools

Cyberbullying is a significant/ big problem at our school.

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

How often do you encounter instances of cyberbullying?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Rarely
- Never

Cyberbullying most often occurs via:

Instant messages

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I do not know

Blogs

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I do not know

Forums

1	2	3	4	5	6
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Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I do not know
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E-mails

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I do not know

Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok etc)

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I do not know

How often do you think cyberbullying occurs with school computer use?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I do not know

Cyberbullies typically/usually exhibit which of the following characteristics? (Choose all that apply):

- Above average academically
- Average academically
- Below average academically
- Depressed
- Introvert
- Extrovert
- Low self-esteem
- High self-esteem
- Socially isolated
- Highly social

Incidences are most often reported by:

The victim

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I do not know

A friend of the victim

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I do not know

A student/ peer

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I do not know

A parent

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I do not know

The bully

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I do not know

**Section 3: Dealing with cyberbullying incidents**

In the last year, please provide details of one incident related to cyberbullying that have been reported to your school that you are aware of.

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How did you react/handled the above incident?

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How did the school leadership react/handle the above incident?

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Think of the above incident and reply to the following questions:

	Yes	No	I don't know
Did the student know who was cyberbullying them?			
Was the student being cyberbullied by someone at your school?			
Did they tell a school staff member about the cyberbullying?			
Did they tell a friend about cyberbullying?			
When students experience cyberbullying, do they seem to want to stay away/avoid and make excuses not to go to school?			
When students experience cyberbullying, do they find it harder to concentrate on school work?			
When students experience cyberbullying, do their academic grades suffer?			

Do you feel that students in your school are comfortable or empowered to step up and inform a trusted adult about cyberbullying that is occurring to them?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

How much do you believe cyberbullies in your school community are aware of the emotional impact their actions may have on the victims?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all aware	Slightly Aware	Moderately aware	Very aware	I do not know

In your opinion, how aware are students in your school about the potential consequences of engaging in cyberbullying?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all aware	Slightly Aware	Moderately aware	Very aware	I do not know

**Section 4: Preventive measures and intervention strategies in your school/community**

*The following items describe statements about the prevention and intervention of cyberbullying in the school community. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements by circling your response.*

At my school we teach students acceptable computer and Internet use during the school year

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

At my school we teach students about how to recognize cyberbullying and threats to their online safety.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

Teachers in my school know how to recognize cyberbullying issues.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

Teachers in my school know how to intervene/ help in a cyberbullying situation in an appropriate manner.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

My school has a formal procedure or policy for investigating cyberbullying.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

My school has a formal procedure or policy with a continuum/ range of consequences for cyberbullying incidents.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

My school offers training to staff in policies and procedures for cyberbullying incidents.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

Current preventive measures in my school effectively address cyberbullying.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

In my school there is effective collaboration between teachers, school leaders, and parents in implementing intervention measures for cyberbullying.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know

Do you believe that improving digital skills among students can help in reducing cyberbullying?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

What additional resources or training do you believe would help you address cyberbullying more effectively?

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Any other comments or suggestions?

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Thank you for your feedback.

## Steps and Tips

### Before

- Identification of participants for the questionnaire study (50/partner country)
- Translate questionnaire and cover letter if needed.
- Create an online version of the questionnaire using a digital tool approved by your organization
- Make sure you include the description, translated as needed, and ask participants to consent (GDPR compliance)
- Check that the online questionnaire works properly.

### Data Collection

- Send invitations by e-mail, including a cover letter, the deadline, and a link to the questionnaire to the participants.

### After

- Export the data to an excel file and upload it into the internal folder
- Document the results in the national report template

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# Safe Online

**Protect Students from Cyberbullying  
to stay safe in the Digital Era**

Project number: 2023-1-PL01-KA220-SCH-000151070



Co-funded by  
the European Union



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