

# Children's Voices:

## Exploring Interethnic Violence and Children's Rights in the School Environment

### Final comparative report

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*SLOVENIA, ITALY, AUSTRIA, ENGLAND, CYPRUS*

Zorana Medarić  
Mateja Sedmak  
Martina Rameša  
Maja Zadel  
Tjaša Žakelj  
Ana Kralj  
Donatella Greco  
Chiara Zanetti  
Birgit Sauer  
Edma Ajanovic  
Sally Inman  
Pip McCormack  
Sarah Walker  
Marios Vryonides

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### Project leader:



University of Primorska,  
Science and Research Centre  
(Slovenia)

### Project partners:



University of Vienna,  
Faculty of Social Science  
(Austria)



University of Trieste,  
Department of Social and  
Political Sciences (Italy)



London South Bank University,  
The Centre for Cross Cultural  
Initiatives (United Kingdom)



**European**  
University Cyprus  
LAUREATE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES

European University Cyprus  
(Cyprus)

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# 1 Introduction

This report presents the results of the research on interethnic peer violence in Slovenia, Italy, Austria, Cyprus and the United Kingdom (England) – five countries and five different contexts which, however, share the common processes of increasing cultural and racial diversity, which frequently result in an increase in xenophobic and racist attitudes towards ethnic minorities and migrant communities – usually reflected also in the school environment. While in the course of the research various topics were, at least in some part, addressed, such as the issue of ethnicity, processes of intercultural confrontations and the rights of children to a safe environment and free expression of their culture, one of the central activities of this collaborative international project entitled *Children's Voices: Exploring Interethnic Violence and Children's Rights in the School Environment* (co-funded by the European Commission, Directorate of General Justice, Freedom and Security, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship in 2011 and 2012) was researching the interethnic violence in schools from various perspectives, including the attitudes and experiences of children. Namely, while violence in schools and its prevention in general, have gained the attention of researchers, the interethnic and intercultural violence in the school environment is still a theme, which in many countries remains underresearched.

Even though the aim of the research is primarily explorative and due to the specific sampling (described in the methodology section), the data cannot be generalised; however, it provides an important insight into the researched topic of interethnic violence in schools through the perspectives of children, school staff and experts dealing with ethnicity and violence issues. Besides gaining the insight into the issue through the quantitative research among primary and secondary school pupils, the qualitative data, acquired through the context analysis, expert and school staff interviews as well as focus groups with children, are particularly relevant as they provide a more in-depth understanding of the issue.

Since the intersectional nature of violence has been highlighted in recent years (Kuhar, 2009; Busche et al., 2012) and confirmed also through our national research (for example, Žakelj and Kralj and Sauer and Ajanovic, 2012), in the final comparative report, the focus was laid on gender, age and ethnicity as the factors to be analysed and compared in all the five countries. In the following chapters, the research findings are presented in a comparative manner, focusing on each of the mentioned factors; however, a direct comparison between the data from the five countries should be done with care and the findings should be treated as indicative of trends existing in each national setting. Moreover, a case study of Islamophobia in the English context is presented and, finally, the existing best practices and implications for future activities for the prevention of interethnic and general violence at schools.

## 2 The five countries

The research findings of the five countries are presented in detail in the national state of the art and quantitative and qualitative research reports as well as in the book produced as a result of this research: Medarić, Z. and Sedmak, M. (eds.) (2012): “Children’s Voices: Interethnic Violence in the School Environment”. Here, the description of the national contexts and the main findings of national studies are briefly summarised.

### SLOVENIA

#### **The Slovenian context**

Slovenia is characterized by its multiethnic social environment where one nation (the Slovenians) is markedly prevalent. Out of 1.964.036 inhabitants registered in the 2002 Census, 83.06% of population was of Slovenian ethnic origin. The non-Slovenian ethnic communities can be roughly divided into two groups: historical national minorities (autochthonous, as defined by the Slovenian constitution) – including the Italian, the Hungarian and the Roma community, that also enjoy special rights, and the so called “new” national communities, the members of which belong to the nations of the former common state of Yugoslavia (Croats, Bosnians, Serbs, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Albanians). When talking about immigrants or immigrant groups in Slovenia or (in the last years) migrant workers there is a strong reference especially to the immigrants from the territory of former Yugoslavia who came to Slovenia in the time of economic prosperity and growth (in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s) and in the newest immigration flow after 2000. In the literature, there is also the reference to people, i. e. the refugees who came to Slovenia in the period of Yugoslav War, mostly from Bosnia. Only in the last years (after the Slovenian independence), there is stronger discussion about the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation migrants (again referring mostly to the immigrants from the republics of former Yugoslavia). When comparing the status of immigrants and autochthonous groups, it is important to emphasize that even though immigrants from former Yugoslavia present much bigger communities (in accordance with the 2002 population census there were 2,258 Italians and 6,243 Hungarians living in Slovenia as well as 38,964 Serbs, 3,642 Croats, 21,542 Bosnians, 10,467 Muslims, etc.), they do not have official minority status and, consequently, they do not have any special or additional political, economic or cultural rights.

All immigrant children – foreign citizens, children without citizenship, refugees and asylum seekers residing in Slovenia – have the right to compulsory basic school education under the same conditions as Slovenian citizens. According to the law, the Italian and Hungarian ethnic minority are entitled to education taught in their respective mother tongues and are also permitted to devise and develop their own education policies. The law determines the areas of compulsory bilingual education. There are no official data on the size of migrant population in primary and secondary schools since the ethnicity of

schooling children and youth is not registered. Some information can be gathered from various sources (Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, National Education Institute, Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia), but they give only a partial picture.

In Slovenia, there is also a lack of national topic related literature on issues of interethnic violence in schools. As Humer and Hrženjak (2010 in Sedmak et al., 2011) note, peer violence in schools became the focus of research in Slovenia only in the 1990s and it has so far been examined mostly from the psychological, pedagogical or criminological perspective. In the last years, there have been some national researches focusing on peer violence in the school environment (Dekleva, 1996; Pušnik, 1996; Pušnik, 2004; Krek et al., 2007; Mugnaioni Lešnik et al., 2008; Pavlović et al., 2008), however, none focusing specifically on ethnicity. According to Humer and Hrženjak (2010), peer violence in schools has been analysed mostly within the framework of individual and psychopathological concepts (Summarised from Sedmak et al., 2011).

### **The main findings of the Children's Voices research**

In Slovenia, the study took place in the following ethnically mixed regions: Coastal region, Ljubljana region, Prekmurje region and Jesenice region. According to the opinions of primary school pupils, secondary school students, teachers, school counsellors and headmasters, interethnic violence is often perceived as a non-issue or not an important matter of concern. Even though ethnicity is not regarded as significant factor influencing peer violence, the phenomenon of interethnic violence still does exist. While the cases of physical violence are rare in our sample, less overt, psychological forms of violence are more common. The use of ethnic slurs and social isolation were identified as quite frequent events also through the qualitative part of the study. However, it was also found that it is not ethnicity per se that instigates peer violence; it is rather used in an pre-existing conflict as means to hurt someone. In general, peer violence is determined by several factors, such as age, gender, learning problems, family upbringing, physical appearance and – above all – lower socio-economic class, which often coincides with ethnicity. In Slovenia, where the majority of the migrant population are members of nations and nationalities of the former Yugoslavia with a recent history of interethnic conflict, interethnic violence also exists among individuals or groups of migrant origin. During the interviews, experts and school staff often mentioned that youngsters from socio-economically disadvantaged families are more likely to be bullied than others. Lower socio-economic status often coincides with ethnicity or migrant status, young people of non-Slovenian ethnicities may be subjected to a “double burden” and they may bring different expectations and experiences of deprivation and frustration into the school. It is also important to identify and analyse the structural inequalities and their daily manifestations, particularly in the relation to society; for example, the current economic crisis has a the potential to have a substantial impact on the lives, rights and needs of all children and adolescents, ethnic minority and migrant children in particular (Summarised from Žakelj and Kralj, 2012).

## ITALY

### **The Italian context**

The population of migrants resident in Italy has grown considerably, especially over the last few years. This growth is such that the migrants' share of the total Italian population has almost doubled in less than ten years from 4.1% at the end of 2004 to 7.5% in 2010 (according to the latest available data, they now total about 5 millions). Within migrant populations, the share of minors is slightly growing, now reaching about 22% (two-thirds of the second generation, i.e. born in Italy). Romanians comprise by far the largest community (about one million residents, accounting for over 20% of the total), followed by Albanians (with just under 500,000, accounting for more than 10%) and Ukrainians (4.4%). More than half of foreign residents in Italy (53.4%) are Europeans, but some very large-sized communities come from outside Europe, such as Moroccans (over 400,000, about 10%) and Tunisians (over 100,000, 2.3%); altogether, African immigrants total about 22%. The Chinese community is also quite large (more than 200,000 residents), followed by Filipinos and Indians, representing about 17% of immigrants coming from the Asian continent. The share of citizens from the Americas is 8.1%, with most of these coming from Peru and Ecuador. The spread of migrants in Italy is quite inhomogeneous, with significant concentrations in the centre-north Italy, particularly in urban areas.

According to the Italian Constitution, it is the State's duty to lay down the regulatory laws of the school system and to ensure that schools of all branches and grades are available to everyone without exception. Compulsory education is planned for all children legally resident in Italy, regardless of their nationality. Statistical data show that the proportion of non-Italian students in primary and secondary schools has increased rapidly, from a few thousands in the late 80s to more than 600,000 two decades later years later; at the same time, the percentage of non-Italian pupils in the total school population grew from a tiny fraction to reach current seven per cent. The Non-European component has also increased over time; this must be taken into consideration, since integration of students from these countries is more critical: linguistic diversity adds to greater cultural distance and somatic differences. In Italy, despite a long history of studies and research in the field of migration, the field of (interethnic) peer violence has rarely been researched. Moreover, the problem of bullying has become a research topic only recently in Italy and is still frequently denied as a problem in schools.

### **The main findings of Children's Voices research**

The research was implemented in four Italian regions: Friuli Venezia Giulia, Emilia Romagna, Veneto and the Autonomous Province of Trento. The results show that violence between peers in school is a common phenomenon, though not very widespread, which has its genesis in cultural diversity together with other factors such as differences in status or gender. An individual act of violence breaks out even in the absence of a good cause and is aimed at the construction of the group's identity. The



identification of the victim is functional to the group's definition through ethnic or gender elements that help to achieve the affirmation of one's national identity or sexual orientation. The victim is thus a powerful catalyst of the energies of the group. The main violent acts range from insults to humiliation, including physical assaults, such as spitting (widespread since it conveys intense contempt), punching, kicking, etc. (occurring much more rarely). Violence among peers is often triggered by factors or events outside the school community: interethnic wars, established tribal feuds, etc. but, above all, by local incidents (theft, robbery, rape, etc.). All these exacerbate the relationships between the different nationalities since the media spread the news in a stereotyped way, particularly when the offender belongs to another culture.

The perception of the school is generally good. The school is still respected and behaviours of boys and girls are modelled according to institutional expectations. The school is an institution and has all components values and norms of an institution and the atmosphere in school is good. Children feel protected and also believe that they can develop their personalities in order to interact properly with their classmates. The presence of many teachers who are motivated to develop intercultural topics such as human rights and social inclusion means that many schools are running intercultural projects which stimulate the reflection on diversity and lead to a greater awareness of individual rights. (Summarised from Delli Zotti and Urpis, 2012)

## AUSTRIA

### **The Austrian context**

Austria has a long tradition of migration. In Austrian history, the migration flows after World War II were mainly characterised by the so-called “guest worker” programmes with countries such as Turkey and Yugoslavia, implemented between the nineteen-seventies and the nineteen-nineties (Bauböck, 1996, 14). Immigration again increased after the nineties, partly due to the conflicts in ex-Yugoslavia, when Austria received many refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia (Tretter, 2000, 28). Furthermore, when Austria joined the European Union in 1995, the migration flows between the EU member states were facilitated and the immigration to Austria has been rising ever since. The following population figures give an additional insight into the structure of Austrian society. In 2011, 8,443,000 people lived in Austria. Migrants – people who do not possess the Austrian citizenship or who were not born in Austria – account for 17.3% (1.5 million) of the overall population. Regarding the nationality or background of migrants, German migrants are the largest group (227,000 people), followed by migrants from Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo (209,000), Turkey (186,000) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (133,000). Figures are significantly lower when looking at citizens of other European countries or non-European countries such as, for example, Romanians (75,000), Croatians (63,000) or Russians (28,000) and Chinese (15,000) – the two largest groups in terms of migrants from non-European countries (Statistik Austria, 2012, 26-27). The Austrian society is multicultural on the one

hand due to the discussed tradition of migration and on the other hand due to the fact that Austria has six autochthonous ethnic groups (Slovenian, Croatian, Hungarian, Czech, Slovak, Roma and Sinti). These groups enjoy special rights – for instance, regarding education and language – according to the Austrian Autochthonous Ethnic Groups Law (Volksgruppengesetz) from 1976. Autochthonous ethnic groups thus have the constitutional right to education in their own language.

The Austrian government began to tackle the issue of violence in the school environment only recently (in 2007) with the implementation of national strategy aimed at preventing aggression in the school/kindergarten environment (Weiße Feder, 2012; Stefanek et al., 2012). Similarly, there is little academic research and surveys on violence, particularly the interethnic one. However, some studies do focus on this issue (Strohmeier et al., 2012; Strohmeier and Spiel, 2007, 2012), but they mainly compare the differences between Austrian and migrant children and youngsters and do not go into detail regarding the reasons or differences among the different ethnic groups (Strohmeier and Spiel, 2005, 10).

### **The main findings of Children's Voices research**

In Austria, the research has been implemented in the federal states of Vienna, Salzburg, Upper Austria and Carinthia. The research findings show that schools can be perceived as “protected spaces” where teachers or the school as such can ensure that tolerance is working better than in the society as a whole. By organising journeys, multicultural events and outdoor trips, the schools apply good practices in terms of anti-violence and fostering of tolerance. These activities help pupils to get to know each other better and thus to break down stereotypes and strengthen the team spirit among pupils. Nevertheless, interethnic violent situations also occur in the school environment, and especially the prejudices and stereotypes towards certain ethnic groups such as the Roma and Sinti find their way into schools. Violence at school is determined by several factors, namely age, gender, classroom situation and to a lesser extent by ethnicity/nationality. In the case of the interviewed Austrian pupils, the factor of ethnicity/nationality determines or causes violence to a restricted degree only. Rather, violent situations like disputes during sports might also, in the case of violent dynamics, provoke violent interethnic (verbal) practices. However, pupils of certain ethnic backgrounds, namely the Roma, Sinti and Kurds, do experience violence due to their ethnicity.

Although schools and teachers in Austria organise useful events to foster tolerance among pupils, the schools' possibilities to implement sufficient anti-violence measures, as for example to employ school psychologists or social workers, are determined by the lack of financial resources. During interviews, the teachers and experts stressed that there are neither sufficient resources for teacher training nor for the employment of experts who would be able to deal professionally with violent situations or intercultural issues when they occur. Thus, it needs to be stressed again that teachers need assistance in this regard (Summarised from Sauer and Ajanovic, 2012).

## ENGLAND

### **The English Context**

While the UK has a long history of immigration, also due to its colonial past, there have been significant changes in the ethnic composition of the UK over the past two decades; data from the last Census conducted in 2001 shows that the number of people coming from an ethnic group other than “White” grew by 53% between 1991 and 2001, from 3.0 million in 1991 to 4.6 million in 2001 (Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2001). Both immigration and natural increase of the non-“White British” population contribute to a substantial change in population, which varies considerably across the local authorities of the UK (Wohland et al., 2010). The data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on population estimates by ethnic group reveals that the size of the majority “White British” group remained constant between 2001 and 2009, while the population of those belonging to other groups has risen from around 2.5 million to 9.1 million over the same period (ONS, 2011). The largest absolute growth is seen in the “Other White” group. This is strongly driven by net international migration, particularly of people born elsewhere in Europe; however, there is also a substantial net inflow of people from the “Old Commonwealth” countries of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa (ONS, 2011). In addition to economic migrants, the UK receives a number of asylum seekers each year. According to UNHCR statistics, there were 269,363 refugees in the UK as of January 2010 (UNHCR, 2010). Historically, there has long been a Muslim presence in the UK. However, largely due to post-World War II migration, the British Muslim community has grown from some twenty thousand in 1950 to around two million at present or about 3% of the population (Suleiman, 2009). Muslims are the largest religious minority in Britain, accounting for just over half of the country’s non-Christian religious population. The Muslim population of London is highly ethnically diverse but in northern England, Muslim people are predominantly Pakistani (with much smaller Indian and Bangladeshi components in particular towns). The Muslim population is the youngest and most rapidly increasing faith group in England (Beckford et al., 2006).

In England, all education is conducted in English, although many schools, especially in inner cities, will have a multilingual intake of children and, in some cases, staff. The annual schools census language data provides an indication of the range of languages to be found amongst children in the population. Muslim children of school age are numerically disproportionately present in the British education system, making up nearly 6% (588,000) of the school population from under 3% (1.8m) of the national population (Halstead 2005, in Meer, 2009, 382). In some local authorities, Muslim children comprise a significant presence within school districts and wards. This is partially the result of concentrated settlement patterns by first-generation migrant workers and is sometimes intensified by “white flight” to the suburbs (Finney and Simpson, 2009 cited in Meer, 2009, 382). Muslim pupils throughout the British education system come from diverse ethnic backgrounds, which mirror that of

the Muslim population as a whole. Alongside Pakistani (40%) and Bangladeshi (20%) backgrounds, pupils also come from Turkish and Turkish Cypriot; Middle-Eastern; East-Asian; African-Caribbean (10%); mixed race/heritage (4%); Indian or other South Asian (15%) backgrounds, as well as a not insignificant number of white converts and Eastern-Europeans (1%) (Burgess & Wilson, 2004 cited in Meer, 2009, 384). The vast majority (cca. 97%) of Muslim children are educated in state schools (i.e. non-religious), making up nearly 6% of the overall school population (Meer, 2009). The remainder are educated in state-funded and independent Muslim faith schools (Muslim Council of Britain, 2007 in Tinker, 2009, 540). In addition to state-funded Muslim schools, there are over 120 independent Muslim schools in Britain. There have been independent Muslim schools in Britain since 1979. The size of Muslim schools varies considerably, ranging from 5 up to 1,800 pupils, and they are in a variety of locations, some in purpose-built accommodation and some in private homes or in mosques. In state-funded Muslim schools, all staff must be fully qualified; but this does not apply to the independent sector. All state-funded Muslim schools and the majority of independent schools follow the national curriculum but a few offer an entirely Islamic curriculum (Tinker, 2009). In England, bullying is recognised as a significant problem in schools, and has been explored and discussed more frequently than in other countries. Whilst there is very little literature available on interethnic violence in schools in England, several questionnaire studies have focused explicitly on the degree and frequency of peer victimization and bullying among ethnic minority children.

### **The main findings of Children's voices research**

Despite a vast tapestry of interethnic relations available for analysis in England due to its long history of immigration, interethnic violence in the school environment has been analysed through the lens of Islamophobia due to the evidence of increased hostility and prejudice towards them in the last decades (also in light of world and home events over the past two decades – terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, London bombings in July 2005 and resulting counter-terrorism strategies). The research, implemented in London, the South East, West and East Midland (for the purposes of the research, treated as one region) and Yorkshire and the Humber, shows that in contrast to the increasingly Islamophobic discourse prevalent in wider society in the UK, children's experiences and perceptions of violence in their fieldwork schools were, in the main, not affected by their religious background and Islamophobia was not found to be a feature of the pupils' school lives.

The most frequent form of violence experienced in the quantitative sample was name-calling, with a lower level of violence experienced in sixth forms than primary schools. In sixth forms, there was no association between religious background and experiences of violence. Primary school quantitative data, however, did reveal an association between religion and experiences of violence, with those from a Muslim, Sikh and "Other" religious background reporting higher frequencies of name-calling and rumour-spreading. Further, those from an "Other" religious background also experienced higher levels

of physical violence. Children from a Christian or no religious background experienced lower levels of all forms of violence.

Both Muslim and non-Muslim pupils overwhelmingly stated their school to be a place that promoted equality, where students could be themselves and “wear their culture”. Within the school environment, pupils perceived religions to be equally respected and religious accommodation was high, as qualitative data revealed. Religious background was not associated with disclosure patterns and pupils were confident that were they to suffer any violence, teachers would deal with it appropriately. Thus, pupils’ perceptions of institutional levels of violence can be said to be low within the school sample. The qualitative data reinforces the findings in other literature (e.g. Henze et al., 2000; Tippett et al., 2011; Ofsted, 2012) that a dual approach of zero tolerance and the overall inclusive ethos of schools are key mechanisms in preventing violence.

The participating schools in England showed a strong ability to address interethnic violence and had high levels of religious accommodation and an inclusive ethos. However, these schools may well skew data in that all were very multicultural with a strong Muslim presence. The fact that they had agreed to take part in the research could imply that they were more committed to race equality since one would assume that schools suffering from problems of interethnic violence would be less likely to wish to participate in a project of this nature. In fact, evidence from the experts and elsewhere suggests that there are still schools that do not routinely provide the ethos and structures found in the fieldwork schools and where Islamophobia may be an issue. Thus, the picture might not be the same in different sorts of schools (e.g. less urban, faith schools; schools with a higher proportion of white pupils). It would thus be interesting to conduct research into other types of school – perhaps those in less multicultural settings – to ascertain whether there are any differences. In conclusion, the findings show that schools can make a difference to the lives of children and young people, where they provide safety, a sense of belonging, and a valuing of diversity. But we may be in a position whereby pupils experience a form of equality in schools that is at odds with the wider society, in light of previous research findings on the prevalence of Islamophobia in the UK. Since identity-based bullying is a social issue (Tippett et al., 2011; Ofsted, 2012), preventative measures need to also involve the wider community. Schools can only do so much within the particular space in which they operate. (Summarised from Inman, McCormack, Walker, 2012)

## CYPRUS

### **The Cypriot context**

The Statistical Service data show that migration in Cyprus has gradually increased over the last ten years. Specifically, in 1998, 8,801 people were designated as immigrants whereas in 2009 the number of immigrants reached 11,675 people. The peak of migration movements in Cyprus occurred in 2005,

during which year 24,419 people immigrated to Cyprus. Some of the recorded reasons explaining what led people to immigrate to Cyprus were educational or employment opportunities and/or long-term permanent settlement. In the 1990s, a large number of people from Asian countries immigrated to Cyprus looking for better living conditions. They worked as child/elderly caretakers and/or domestic workers. However, the current data show that in 2009 the highest number of immigrants was from Romania (a total of 1,410 Romanian citizens) and Greece (1,221 Greek citizens). Official records also demonstrate that there has been an increase in the number of illegal immigrants arriving in Cyprus. Specifically, the data derived from the Police Annual report show that in 2007, 7,770 people migrated illegally to the Republic of Cyprus. In 2009, the number of illegal immigrants increased to 8,037. However, the numerical data show that there was a decrease in the number of illegal immigrants to the Republic of Cyprus in 2010; however, the number is not significantly different from 2009, when 8,005 people immigrated illegally to Cyprus.

In the Republic of Cyprus, the enrolment in primary and secondary public schools is free for all students. The official language of instruction is Greek in all secondary public schools. Regarding the interethnic school attendance, until the 1990s, only certain selected ethnic minorities tended to be visible in the Cypriot student population, such as Maronites, Turkish Cypriots, Armenians and Latins. Currently, the Greek Cypriot students constitute 86.05% of the student population in primary schools, whereas the four main minority groups constitute just 0.54% of this population. These percentages are very small but significant since the members of these groups hold political positions that influence legislative decisions regarding the educational issues. This privileged position was granted to these communities in the 1960 Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus in order to protect their historical heritage. In previous years (2008/2009), the data derived from the Statistical Service of Cyprus, indicate that a total number of 5,094 foreign students were enrolled in public primary schools in Cyprus. Some nationalities of the foreign students who registered in primary schools during the academic year of 2008/2009 were Bulgarian (n=485), Greek (n= 620), Pontian Greek (n=881), British (n=519), Romanian (n=377), Georgian (n=460), Russian (n=320) and Syrian (n=208). Statistics also show that a total number of 3,351 foreign students enrolled in secondary education. Most students are Pontian Greeks or came from Greece (n=656), Bulgaria (n= 235) and Russia (n=206). However, the current statistical information (2010/2011 academic year) shows that the total number of foreign students enrolled in public schools is increasing. In Cyprus, due to its history as well as the recent immigrant trends, the issues of racism and discrimination in schools have frequently been discussed, but there are only a few studies focussing on the frequency of (interethnic) peer violence.

### **The main findings of Children's Voices research**

In Cyprus, the study was implemented in Nicosia, Larnaca, Limassol and Paphos. The findings from the research present a picture which on the whole suggests that interethnic violence is not a major

concern for the Cypriot public educational system. However, the growing economic uncertainty, which is often connected with the presence of migrant groups in the country, could become a source of potential tension. Policy interventions are essential for diffusing potential conflicts because the combination of factors, which are often unrelated to education and multiculturalism, can produce the conditions for violence in schools. Examples from such initiatives include the Strategic Planning (2007) and the Zones of Educational Priority (2003) programmes, which were launched by the Ministry of Education in Cyprus. In 2007, a “strategic planning” initiative was developed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, designed to improve the quality of the educational system. The primary goal of the Ministry was to increase the awareness regarding multiculturalism and diversity in the school environments. Also, it aimed to adapt the educational materials to the students’ needs and therefore to support them regardless of any differences in their ethnicity or socio-economic and religious status. Additionally, in 2003, the Ministry of Education and Culture announced one of its supportive programmes, named the Zones of Educational Priority, which aimed to provide assistance and guidance to all students who necessitated more attention and guidance. One of the goals of this programme was to help students gain trust and self-confidence with their participation in certain programmes within their schools. Also, this educational reform acknowledged the issue of multiculturalism in schools and aimed to inculcate a more effective and positive awareness on the part of students and teachers on this issue. Currently, the Zones of Educational Priority are extended and applied in many schools in Cyprus. Their major goal is to assist students from different ethnic backgrounds to be easily integrated into public school environments. More recently, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched an Emergency Intervention Team, which provides a response to school requests when they are dealing with issues of violence and all forms of delinquency. During the 2010-2011 academic school year, the team responded to 101 emergency cases in Cypriot schools, where five of these cases related to individual foreign students and one involved a group of foreign students (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2011). The provisions and procedures followed by this Team involve all students of a school without making exceptions based on gender, age, ethnicity, religion, etc. (Summarised from Vryonides and Kalli, 2012)

### **3 Conclusion**

Despite the historical and contextual differences of the five case studies, a few common points emerged through the study.

First, school contexts can make a significant difference in preventing violent behaviour as well as discrimination and segregation by creating a safe environment for children to communicate and express their culture as well as promoting the values of intercultural and non-violent communication

and constructive and peaceful solution of conflicts. Maintaining a consistent school-wide attitude towards (interethnic) violence through the policy of zero tolerance in response to violence and transmitting the values of solidarity, tolerance and respect is seen as an efficient way to prevent violent behaviour in schools. Examples of good practices found through the research show that schools really can make a difference. It is important to mention, however, that despite the initiative and hard work, school staff members sometimes lack sufficient resources or training to deal effectively with the issues of (interethnic) school violence.

Second, the intersectional nature of violence has to be highlighted since the ethnic background per se is often not an important motivator of peer violence; instead, peer violence is frequently influenced by a combination of factors, such as gender, age, physical appearance, socio-economic class and personality traits. Ethnic background (nationality) is in many cases used as a means of differentiation or a stated reason for hurting someone when a conflict has already emerged. The research findings confirm one of the rare previous researches in this field (YiES, 2005). It has to be also recognised that the reasons for peer violence mainly lie in a combination of different factors, such as the experience of discrimination, socio-economic deprivation and structural violence (Hrženjak and Humer, 2010). This interplay of factors is an important issue that school staff as the key creators of an overall school atmosphere, which significantly influences the relationships between children, should be aware of.

Third, despite the schools' potential for fostering important changes (or even playing the role of "protected space", as observed in the Austrian case), to some extent, schools and the attitudes of children reflect the situation in wider society. Violence in the society permeates school life and children are affected by ongoing or persistent conflicts, such as, for example, in the case of Cyprus or the former Yugoslavia. Also, in the present situation of economic crisis, social tensions around immigrants commonly arise. Since schools are not cut off from local communities and the wider society, societal feelings of growing concern about the presence of immigrants or the prejudices and stereotypes towards them can also be observed in schools. Although the national contexts are very diverse and, consequently, solutions for reducing interethnic violence in schools should be as well, an all-inclusive approach to the problem is indispensable for the effective prevention of school violence.



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# METHODOLOGY

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European University Cyprus  
University of Primorska, Science and Research Centre

Marios Vryionides  
Martina Rameša

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# 1 Introduction

The research methodology followed a two-stage sequential mode, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research started with a quantitative study, surveying children in the school environment, followed by a qualitative study, organized in the form of focus groups with two groups of 5-6 school children per school and interviews with the school staff. An additional insight into the field of interethnic relations, peer-to-peer violence and similar was apprehended through interviews with experts from governmental and non-governmental organizations dealing with similar topics.

The mixed-method mode consisted of a survey conducted in primary and secondary schools in each respective country. A common questionnaire was used, although slightly modified in each country to meet the specific characteristics of national setting. The questionnaire consisted of around 40 questions, covering demographic data, normative statements on equality and multi-ethnic background, experiences of violence, perceptions on violence, etc. All participating countries translated the questionnaire in their national languages and carried out pilot studies in order to test their appropriateness in their national contexts. In the second phase, a qualitative research was carried out through semi-structured individual interviews with teachers, headteachers, headmasters, educators, counsellors, administrators as well as group interviews with pupils, aiming to provide in-depth understandings about the way young people perceive, experience and feel about the issue.

## 2 Quantitative research

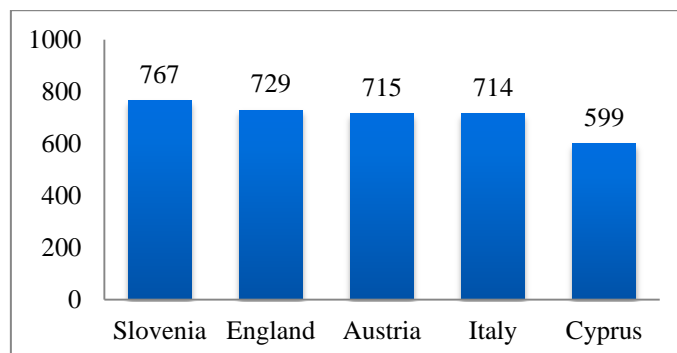
The sample selected in each country was not representative of the pupil population. It was rather a purposive sample that met certain theoretical prerequisites specified by the project and agreed upon by all partners. In order to tackle the issue of interethnic violence, the schools were selected according to specific criteria in the project description, in particular that they were set in multicultural regions, chosen according to:

- closeness of the border (border region),
- urbanity of the area (highly urban areas), and
- “attractiveness” of the region for migrants (region with a high level of migration – economic migrants).

The implication of this mode of sampling is that any direct comparisons between the country data from the five participating countries should be done with extreme care. Even in cases when such comparisons are made, the results need to be treated with caution and as indicative of trends that exist in each national setting.

All partners reached the agreed target number of survey participants, with the exception of Cyprus, as some participating schools had a very small numbers of pupils. A total of **3,524 participants** were reached within the survey.

**Figure 1: Number of survey participants per country**



The overall breakdown by the type of school shows an even share of primary school (50.1%) and secondary school pupils (49.9%). The overall sample is also well-balanced according to gender, as it included 47.5 per cent of male and 52,5 per cent of female participants. The smallest part of participants (16.3%) came from suburbs, somewhat more (20.6%) from villages and the biggest share came from the urban areas. It should be emphasised that a large share of pupils from urban areas is a reflection of the purposive manner of composing the sample.

**Table 1: Breakdown by kind of school**

	SLOVENIA		ITALY		AUSTRIA		ENGLAND		CYPRUS	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
<b>Primary school</b>	390	50.8	362	50.7	350	49.0	422	57.9	234	40.6
<b>Secondary school</b>	377	49.2	352	49.3	365	51.0	307	42.1	356	59.4
<b>Total</b>	767	100.0	714	100.0	715	100	729	100.0	599	100.0

Below, the sampling of each participating country is presented and followed by tabular representation of the structure of primary school and secondary school samples per each country.

In the subsequent paragraphs, samples of each country are presented briefly. Primary and secondary sample will be presented in more detail (numerically) later on in the end of the chapter.

## *Slovenia*

In Slovenia, 767 pupils completed the questionnaire in 8 primary schools and 9 secondary schools. The schools were selected in four regions, namely: Coastal region, Ljubljana region, Jesenice region and Prekmurje region. The overall gender breakdown was the following: 50.2% of male pupils in

49.8% of female pupils. In primary schools, the age ranged between 9 and 14, with 77.2% of pupils being 10 years old and 19.2% 11 years old. In secondary schools, the majority of pupils were aged 17 (71.2%), followed by 18 (15.2%) and 16 (12.2%).

Overall, 65.7% of pupils included in the survey were of Slovenian ethnic background and 34.3% were of other ethnicities, of those most were of Hungarian, Croatian, Serbian, Bosniac and Macedonian nationality, including a large share of mixed ethnicities.

### *Italy*

In Italy, the field study was carried out in 16 schools in four selected regions of Northern Italy: 8 primary schools and 8 secondary schools. 714 questionnaires were collected: 362 in 17 classes of primary schools and 352 in 20 classes of secondary schools. The gender composition of the sample was well-balanced, as there were overall 50.2% male and 49.8% female pupils included in the sample. The age in the Italian primary schools sample ranged between 9 and 13, with 79.5% of pupils being 10 years old and 17.6% eleven years old. In the secondary schools, the age of participants varied from 17 to 23 and was generally more diverse, 44.4% were 17 years old and 38.7% were 18 years old.

The majority (79.4%) of the Italian survey respondents were of Italian nationality, whereas 11.2% were of other European background and 9.4% were of non-European origin.

### *Austria*

In Austria, in 16 schools – 32 classes with 715 pupils were asked to fill in the adapted questionnaire during a school lesson. The gender breakdown of the Austrian sample was as follows: 57.5% female and 42.5% male pupils. Most pupils of the primary school sample were 11 years old (54.2%) and 12 years old (38.1%). In the secondary school sample most pupils were 17 (48.8%) or 18 (32.8%) years old. It should be noted that the Austrian sample focused on 11-12 years old pupils instead of the 10-11 years old because in Austria the latter start a new school (Lower/New/Academic Middle School) at that age. For that reason, the interpersonal and interethnic relations among the pupils could not have been established in the new class environment by the time the research was carried out. Therefore, the 11-12 year olds were included in the sample to ensure the comparability of the pupils' data among the project partner countries.

Regarding the ethnic background of the pupils included in the Austrian sample, there were overall 51.5% of children of the Austrian ethnicity and 48.5% of other or mixed nationalities. The most often mentioned ethnic backgrounds besides the Austrian were Bosniac, Turkish, Serbian, Slovenian, Croatian and Albanian and a considerable number of other and mixed ethnicities.

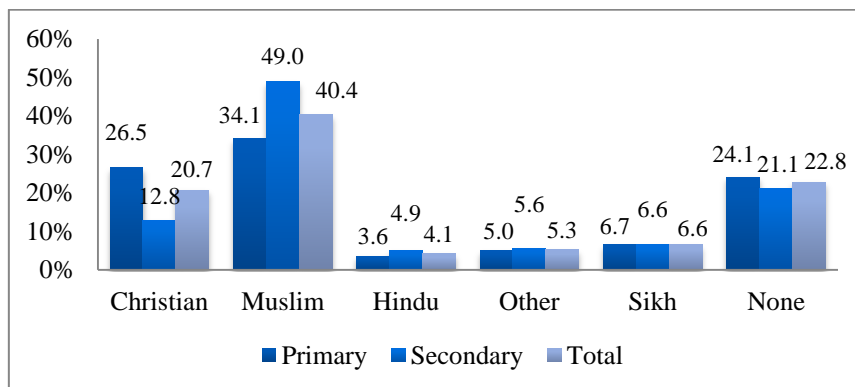
## England

In England, the data collection took place in five different regions: London, South East, West Midlands, East Midlands, and Yorkshire and the Humber. In each region, the questionnaire was administered in four schools, two primary schools and two secondary/sixth form centres. The selected schools were all non-selective, mixed gender state schools. The gender breakdown was as follows: the quantitative research included slightly more female (54.2%) than male (45.8%) survey participants. The age in the English primary schools sample ranged between 9 and 11, with 66.8% of pupils being 10 years old and 21.8% 11 years old. In the secondary schools, the age of participants varied from 16 to 19. Among those, more than a half (57.5%) were 17 years old and 27.5% were 18 years old.

In the case of the English study it was felt that because of the considerably diverse nature of cultures in England, it would be wise to focus on just one particular ethnic group; therefore, it was decided to focus on Muslims. Albeit acknowledging the heterogeneity of their community, Muslims are an ethnic group who, as evidence suggests, particularly suffer from prejudice and discrimination. All selected schools therefore needed to be in areas with a large Muslim/Asian population. In light of this, an understandably small share of White British pupils was gathered (25.1%). The second largest ethnic group was Pakistani at 16.9%, followed by Indian at 13.9%. This reflects the fact that the schools with a high proportion of Muslim pupils were chosen purposefully.

An important point of interest for the English researchers was the religious affiliation. Overall, 40.4% of the sample were Muslim, reflecting the choice of schools in the areas with large Muslim populations. This was followed by Christian (20.7%), Sikh (6.6%), Hindu (4.1%), other (1.1%) (including Jehovah's Witness, Taoist, Zoroastrian), Buddhist (0.7%) and Jewish (0.3%). 22.8% of the respondents stated that they were not religious and 3.2% chose not to declare their religion. The graph below outlines the religious make up of respondents, broken down by type of school.

**Figure 2: Religion per type of school**



## *Cyprus*

In Cyprus, a total number of 599 pupils participated in the survey. The data were collected from four different regions (Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca and Paphos). Due to the small number of pupils in some classes in schools (primary and secondary), it was decided to increase the number of schools from 16 to 21 in order to achieve a greater number of participating pupils. Nine secondary schools and twelve primary schools were randomly selected from the four 4 regions. The sample consisted of 49.1% male and 50.9% female pupils. Most primary school pupils included in the research were 11 years old (76.3%) and, in secondary schools, most pupils (85.2%) were 17 years old.

The ethnic background of the pupils participating in the study was primarily of the Cypriot origin (around three quarters), while the rest were of various other ethnicities, the majority of them being Greek.

### *2.1 Data collection and analysis*

In all countries, the survey was done in the school environment; the questionnaires were handed out inside the chosen classes. As it proved important within the pilot studies, especially in the case of younger schoolchildren, a researcher was always present during the filling out of questionnaires and provided the necessary explanation.

Each partner filled in the data in the previously constructed national sample database, which later formed a common database. However, while developing a strategy for a common treatment of the received data, some issues emerged, as stated below:

- despite a constant emphasis on the importance of ethnicity as the factor of violence, some children still did not distinct between the decisive factors of violence outbursts;
- the problem of substantial missing data emerged especially in the case of rooted questions concerning the circumstances of the observed or experienced violence. The partners agreed upon providing the complete data, including the information on the missing answers;
- more distinction should have been made between the respondents who were not meant to answer particular questions and those who chose not to do so in the case of rooted questions;
- another source of the missing data could also be the absence of specific school spaces. As in some schools there are no, for example, school canteens, playgrounds, etc., the pupils could not provide an accurate answer to the questions (on safety or noticing interethnic violence) regarding those specific locations;

- as the country samples were not representative (they consisted of four regional case studies in each country), they could not be entirely comparable. Therefore, the partners agreed on a country-by-country analysis instead of providing the analyses of the whole sample;
- the data pointed to the important distinction of the occurrence of interethnic violence regarding different gender, age and ethnicity of schoolchildren; therefore, further comparative country analyses were done on that basis. However, the rich database provides many more possibilities for further analyses, e.g. according to parents' education, parents' ethnic background in relation to the pupils ethnic background, etc;
- on several occasions we deal with dominant and other or mixed ethnicity. The term 'dominant' should be taken with reservation, as in some cases the dominant ethnicity does not consist of the predominant ethnic background. Namely, by 'dominant' we aim to encompass the Greek Cypriot, White British, Italian, Slovenian and Austrian in each country;
- finally, the schools were purposefully chosen in multicultural regions and were, therefore, of higher ethnic mixedness and higher interest in the subject of interethnic violence. The selection could have had a reverse effect on the occurrence of interethnic violence or, in other words, presenting a different degree of interethnic violence than one might expect if schools in more ethnically homogeneous environments were included.

### 3 Qualitative research

The essential aim of the qualitative part of the research was to provide an insight into the reasons and causes behind the answers acquired in the quantitative study. The qualitative stage of the research in all participating countries was conducted through **a mixture of individual semi-structured interviews with the experts in the field, school personnel and- focus group interviews with pupils.**

The focus groups with pupils concentrated on the perception of violence, the factors and reasons as well as the pupils' reactions to violent situations. The focus group participants were chosen by school teachers among the pupils who had already participated in the quantitative research. The choice was guided by certain pupils' characteristics, pointed out by the researchers: gender variety, ethnic background diversity and loquacity. All project partners carried out eight focus group discussions with children (four with primary school children and four with secondary school children). The researchers followed a common interview schedule translated into their national languages from English with added nationally specific topics.

Semi-structured interviews with the school personnel – teachers, school counsellors, headmasters – were conducted with the aim to gather an insight into intercultural relations, the context of peer violence from another perspective as well as the coping strategies. Valuable information was also



received through interviews with experts in the field of multiculturalism, who have themselves conducted research on (interethnic) violence in schools or were experts in the field of combating peer-to-peer violence in the school environment. The in-depth interviews covered a range of areas and were structured to enable researchers to get expert knowledge and experience of the key areas of multiculturalism in schools and wider society.

All qualitative study participants were aware of the importance of the topic and were willing to participate; however, in some cases (especially in secondary school focus groups) some additional explanation was necessary. For the children of younger age some warm-up techniques were used within the focus groups to ensure that they would be comfortable to share their experiences.

All interviews were recorded and later transcribed word for word (verbatim), and the significant parts were translated into English. Interview and focus groups transcripts were then coded and analysed in categories that were determined in advance by the research partners and were believed that they would best describe the full range of views and experiences related to the issue of interethnic violence in schools.

## 4 Primary and secondary school samples of the quantitative study

Table 2: Characteristics of the primary school samples per country

	CYPRUS		ENGLAND		ITALY		SLOVENIA		AUSTRIA	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
<b>No. OF SCHOOLS</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>8</b>		<b>8</b>		<b>8</b>		<b>8</b>	
<b>GENDER</b>										
<b>Male</b>	120	49.4	200	47.4	199	55.0	207	53.1	157	44.9
<b>Female</b>	117	48.1	220	52.1	160	44.2	182	46.7	191	54.6
<b>No answer</b>	6	2.5	2	0.5	3	0.8	1	0.3	2	0.6
<b>Total</b>	243	100.0	422	100.0	362	100.0	390	100.0	350	100.0
<b>AGE</b>										
<b>9</b>			40	9.5	5	1.4	5	1.3		
<b>10</b>	18	7.4	282	66.8	280	77.3	301	77.2		
<b>11</b>	183	75.3	90	21.3	62	17.1	76	19.5	189	54.0
<b>12</b>	36	14.8			4	1.1	6	1.5	133	38.0
<b>13</b>	3	1.2			1	.3			24	6.9
<b>14</b>							2	0.5	2	0.6
<b>15</b>									1	0.3
<b>No answer</b>	3	1.2	10	2.4	10	2.8			1	0.3
<b>Total</b>	243	100.0	422	100.0	362	100.0	390	100.0	350	100.0
<b>ETHNICITY</b>										
<b>Dominant</b>	173	71.2	117	27.7	288	79.6	212	54.4	157	44.9
<b>Mixed/other</b>	69	28.4	298	70.6	74	20.4	175	44.9	192	54.9
<b>No answer</b>	1	0.4	7	1.7			3	0.8	1	0.3
<b>Total</b>	243	100.0	422	100.0	362	100.0	390	100.0	350	100.0

**Table 3: Ethnic background of the primary school pupils per country**

CYPRUS		ENGLAND		ITALY		SLOVENIA		AUSTRIA	
Ethnicity/ Nationality	%	Ethnicity/ Nationality	%	Ethnicity/ Nationality	%	Ethnicity/ Nationality	%	Ethnicity/ Nationality	%
Cypriot	71.2	White British	27.7	Italian	79.6	Slovenian	54.4	Austrian	44.9
Georgian	1.6	Irish	0.7	Communitarian	0.8	Croatian	1.3	Albanian	2.9
Greek	12.8	Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.2	Romanian	1.9	Serbian	4.6	Bosniac	9.7
Russian	3.3	Any other white background	6.6	Croatian Serb	2.2	Albanian	0.8	Croatian	3.7
Bulgarian	0.4	Mixed (White/Black Caribbean)	4.0	Albanian	2.5	Macedonian	1.0	Kurdish	0.3
Romanian	1.6	Mixed (White and Black African)	2.4	East-European	2.8	Bosniac	13.3	Romanian	0.3
Iraqi	0.4	White and Asian	2.8	Spanish Latin- American	1.7	Montenegrin	0.8	Serbian	5.7
English	2.1	Any other mixed	3.6	Maghreb Turkish	2.2	Hungarian	1.8	Slovenian	4.9
Syrian	.4	Asian Indian	12.6	African	2.5	Romany	0.8	Turkish	8.9
Moldovan	1.2	Asian Pakistani	14.5	Asian	3.9	Other*	20.0	Other	18.6
Other	4.5	Asian Bangladeshi	2.8			Don't know	0.5	No answer	0.3
No answer	0.4	Asian Chinese	1.2			No answer	0.8	Other* Chechen (2.0) Austrian- German (1.1) Serbian- Bosniac (0.9) Philippine (0.9) Egyptian- Austrian (0.6) Iraqi (0.6) Austrian- Romanian (0.6) Indian (0.6) Macedonian (0.6) Polish (0.6) Vietnamese (0.6)....	
		Any other Asian	5.5			Other*			
		African	4.7			Slovenian- Hungarian (4.4)			
		Caribbean	1.9			Slovenian- Bosniac(3.8)			
		Any other Black	2.1			Slovenian- Croatian (3.3)			
		Arab	2.1			Slovenian- Serbian (1.8)			
		Any other ethnic group	1.2			Slovenian- Italian (0.8)			
		Do not wish to say	1.7			Slovenian- Romanian (0.5)			
		No answer	1.7			Croatian- Serbian (0.5) Croatian- Hungarian(0.5)....			

**Table 4: Characteristics of the secondary school samples per country**

	CYPRUS		ENGLAND		ITALY		SLOVENIA		AUSTRIA	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
<b>No. OF SCHOOLS</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>8</b>		<b>8</b>		<b>9</b>		<b>8</b>	
<b>GENDER</b>										
<b>Male</b>	170	47.8	132	43.0	157	44.6	177	46.9	145	39.7
<b>Female</b>	184	51.7	173	56.4	193	54.8	199	52.8	218	59.7
<b>No answer</b>	2	0.6	2	0.7	2	0.6	1	0.3	2	0.5
<b>Total</b>	356	100.0	307	100.0	352	100.0	377	100.0	365	100.0
<b>AGE</b>										
<b>16</b>	10	2.8	36	11.7			45	11.9	9	2.5
<b>17</b>	299	84.0	176	57.3	155	44.0	262	69.5	177	48.5
<b>18</b>	38	10.7	84	27.4	135	38.4	56	14.9	119	32.6
<b>19</b>	4	1.1	10	3.3	42	11.9	5	1.3	51	14.0
<b>20</b>					15	4.3			6	1.6
<b>21</b>					1	0.3			1	0.3
<b>23</b>					1	0.3				
<b>No answer</b>	5	1.4	1	0.3	3	0.9	9	2.4	2	0.5
<b>Total</b>	356	100.0	307	100.0	352	100.0	377	100.0	365	100.0
<b>ETHNICITY</b>										
<b>Dominant</b>	268	75.3	64	20.8	279	79.3	286	75.9	211	57.8
<b>Mixed/other</b>	86	24.2	242	78.8	73	20.7	85	22.5	154	42.2
<b>No answer</b>	2	0.6	1	0.3			6	1.6		
<b>Total</b>	356	100.0	307	100.0	352	100.0	377	100.0	365	100.0

**Table 5: Ethnic background of the secondary school pupils per country**

CYPRUS		ENGLAND		ITALY		SLOVENIA		AUSTRIA	
Ethnicity/ Nationality	%	Ethnicity/ Nationality	%	Ethnicity/ Nationality	%	Ethnicity/ Nationality	%	Ethnicity/ Nationality	%
Cypriot	75.3	White British	20.8	Italian	79.3	Slovenian	75.9	Austrian	57.8
Georgian	0.3	Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.3	Communitarian	0.3	Croatian	1.9	Albanian	0.8
Greek	16.6	Any other white background	0.7	Romanian	1.7	Serbian	1.6	Bosniac	3.3
Russian	0.8	Mixed (White and Black Caribbean)	1.3	Croatian Serb	3.4	Albanian	0.8	Croatian	5.2
Bulgarian	0.8	Mixed (White and Black African)	1.0	Albanian	4.0	Bosniac	4.0	Kurdish	0.3
Iraqi	0.6	White and Asian	3.9	East-European	2.8	Montenegrin	0.3	Romanian	1.6
English	3.1	Any other mixed	1.6	Spanish Latin-American	0.9	Hungarian	1.3	Serbian	7.7
Other	2.0	Asian Indian	15.3	Maghreb Turkish	1.4	Other*	12.2	Turkish	6.6
No answer	0.6	Asian Pakistani	19.9	African	3.4	Don't know	0.5	Other*	16.7
		Asian Bangladeshi	11.4	Asian	2.8	No answer	1.6	Other* Chinese (1.4) Egyptian (1.1) Polish (1.1) Slovak (1.1) Macedonian (0.8) Austrian-British (0.5) Austrian-German (0.5) Austrian-Italian (0.5) Austrian-Chinese (0.5) Ukrainian (0.5)...	
		Asian Chinese	0.7			Other* Slovenian-Croatian (3.7) Slovenian-Hungarian (2.4) Slovenian-Croatian-Serbian (0.8) Slovenian-Serbian(0.8) Slovenian-Bosnian (0.5) Slovenian-Italian(0.5) Slovenian-Croatian-Italian (0.5) Slovenian-Croatian-Bosnian(0.5)....			
		Any other Asian	5.5						
		African	8.5						
		Caribbean	2.3						
		Any other Black	1.6						
		Arab	2.0						
		Any other ethnic group	1.0						
		Do not wish to say	2.0						
		No answer	0.3						

# GENDER

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University of Vienna, Department of Political Science

Birgit Sauer  
Edma Ajanovic

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## 1 Introduction

This article discusses the different experiences of boys and girls in relation to interethnic violence in the school environment by comparing the results of the quantitative and qualitative research, conducted in Austria, Cyprus, England, Italy and Slovenia during 2011 and 2012. The main result of the comparison is that in most country samples the differences between boys' and girls' experiences are evident – especially when it comes to the nature and forms of (interethnic) violence experienced.

## 2 Methodology and sample

Two different methods were used to collect the data: a quantitative survey and a qualitative study, which comprised focus group discussions with pupils as well as interviews with teachers and experts. Each country selected at least 16 schools for the quantitative study. The aim was to select multicultural schools, attended by pupils of different ethnic backgrounds. Within the quantitative survey, 3,524 students from the age groups 10-12 and 17-18 years old completed the questionnaire. A sample of pupils for the quantitative study was well-balanced in terms of gender and age. In each participating country, the qualitative study was implemented in one of the four regions (four schools – two primary and two secondary schools) where the quantitative study was carried out; it comprised focus group discussion with about 9-16 pupils per school and interviews with two teachers per school. The sample of pupils was fairly well balanced in terms of age and gender. Finally, it is important to note that the results cannot be generalized; however, they represent an insight into the samples from five countries, chosen on the basis of the pupils attending a multicultural school.

## 3 Empirical findings

The following sections discuss the main findings on differences between males and females in samples of the five countries. First, the differences in views and perceptions of boys and girls on multiculturalism and their schools are presented, followed by the discussion of girls' and boys' experiences with (interethnic) violence in their school environment.

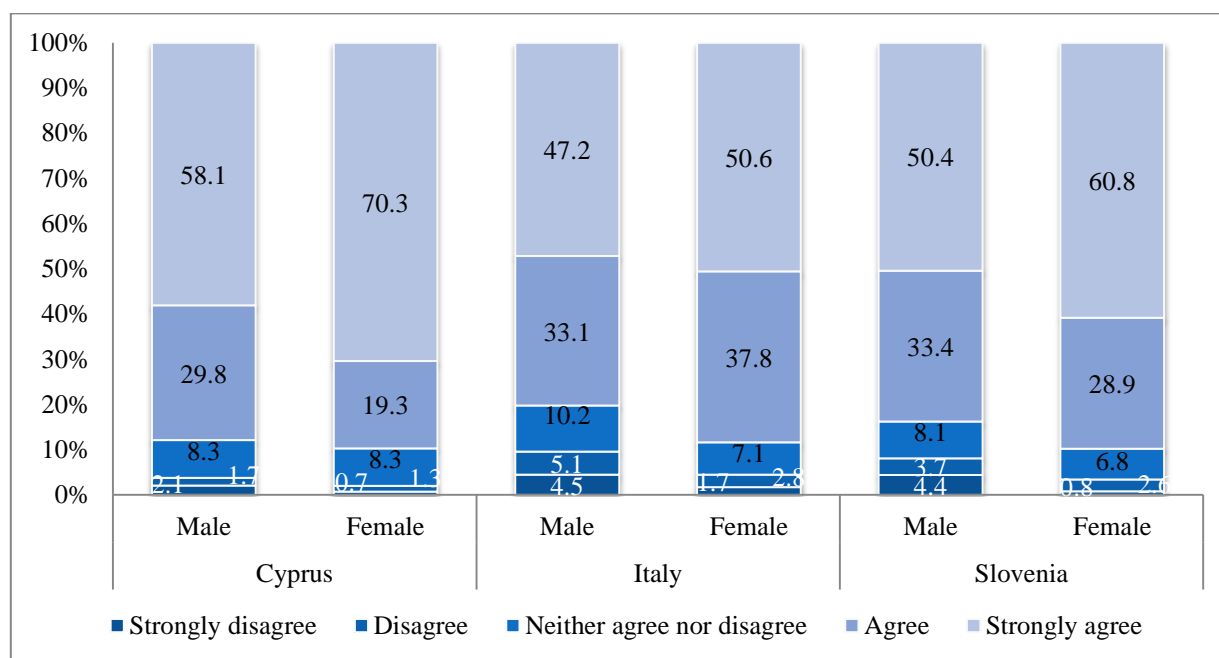
### 3.1 *Differences in views and perceptions*

Within the framework of the quantitative survey, pupils were given different “positive” and “negative” statements (Figure 1) and were asked whether they “strongly agree”, “agree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with the given statements. The following graphs (Figures 1-3) show the results for those country samples where the statements correlate with gender.

**Table 1: Statements on equality and multiculturalism**

Positive statements	Negative statements
All people are equal, regardless the language they speak, their religion or culture.	I think that children that come to my country from other countries should give up their language and culture.
I think that pupils who come to my country from other countries should have the right to follow the customs of their countries.	I think that children that come to my country from other countries should follow German language and Austrian culture.
I like the fact that there are people of different nationalities/ethnic backgrounds in the country where I live.	
I like the fact that there are pupils of other nationalities/ethnic backgrounds in our class/at our school.	
I think that pupils should be allowed to express their religion in school.	

**Figure 1: All people are equal, regardless of the language they speak, their religion or culture**



N=3,483<sup>1</sup>

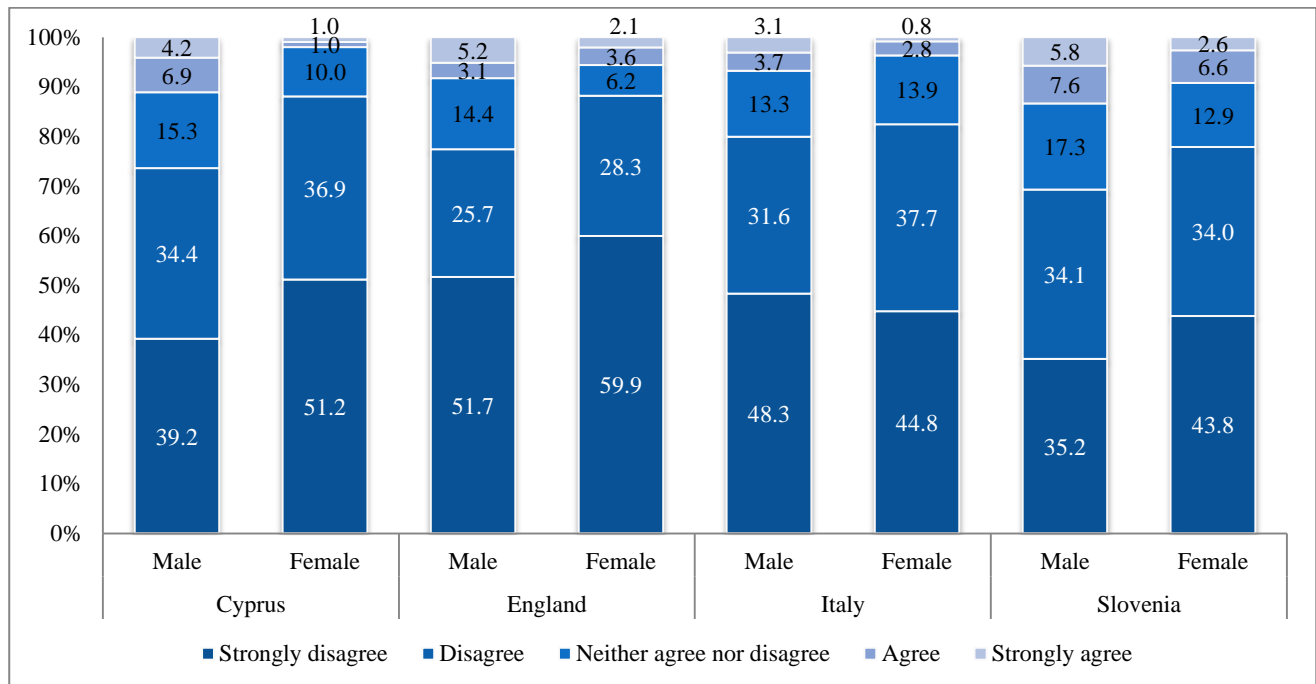
Figure 1 shows that the differences between boys and girls regarding the first statement on the equality of all people are evident especially in Cyprus and Slovenia and to a lower extent in Italy. In all three countries, a higher percentage of girls (strongly) agree with this statement. On the other hand, a higher percentage of boys (4.5%) in Italy strongly disagrees with the statement that all people are equal regardless the language they speak, their religion or culture. Thus, the differences are mainly evident in the answer options “strongly agree”, “agree” and “strongly disagree”. In the Austrian and English samples, gender does not correlate with this statement. The figure also shows that the agreement is generally high in all five countries. About 80% of boys and girls (strongly) agree with this statement in the English and Austrian samples.

<sup>1</sup> The stated number below the figures represent the sample size of all the five countries, whereas the figures only represent the countries in which the correlation proved significant.

The results for the statements “I like the fact that there are people of different ethnic backgrounds in the country where I live” and “I think that pupils who come to my country from other countries should have the right to follow the customs of their countries” do not show any significant differences in the answers of male and female pupils.

The next graph (Figure 2) presents the boys’ and girls’ perceptions in Austrian, Cypriot, English and Slovenian samples, where the correlation between gender and the statement on language and culture is given.

**Figure 2: Children that come to my country from other countries should give up their language and culture**



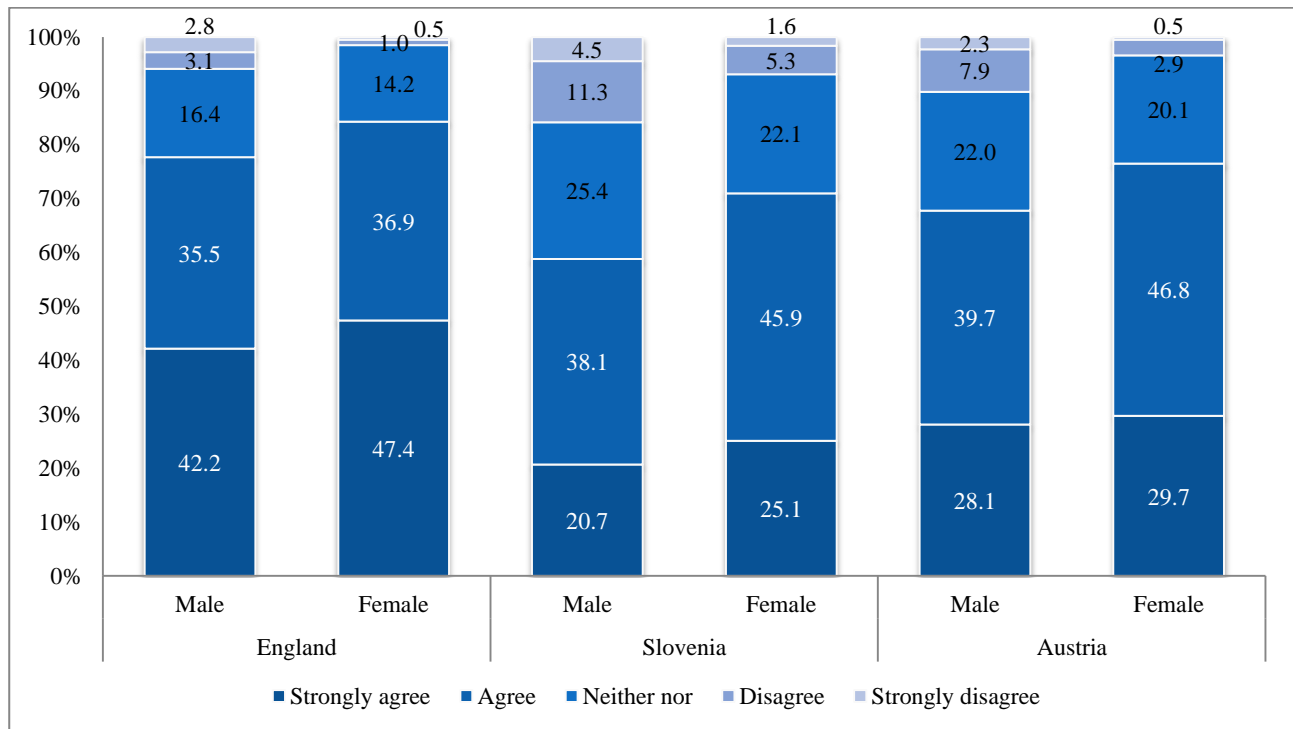
N=3,478

The differences between boys and girls are evident in the answer options “strongly disagree”, “disagree” and “strongly agree”. In the Austrian, Cypriot, English and Slovenian samples, a smaller share of boys than girls distance themselves clearly from the “negative” statement. In all four listed countries, boys more often indicated to strongly agree with it – e.g. 5.8% of boys compared to 2.6% of girls strongly agree in the Slovenian sample. The Italian sample results do not show any differences between boys and girls in this regard.

Furthermore, pupils were asked whether they agree with the statement “I like the fact that there are pupils of other nationalities/ethnic backgrounds in our class/at our school”. The differences between boys and girls are mainly evident in the Austrian, English and Slovenian samples as shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3: I like the fact that there are pupils of other nationalities/ethnic backgrounds in our class/at our school**



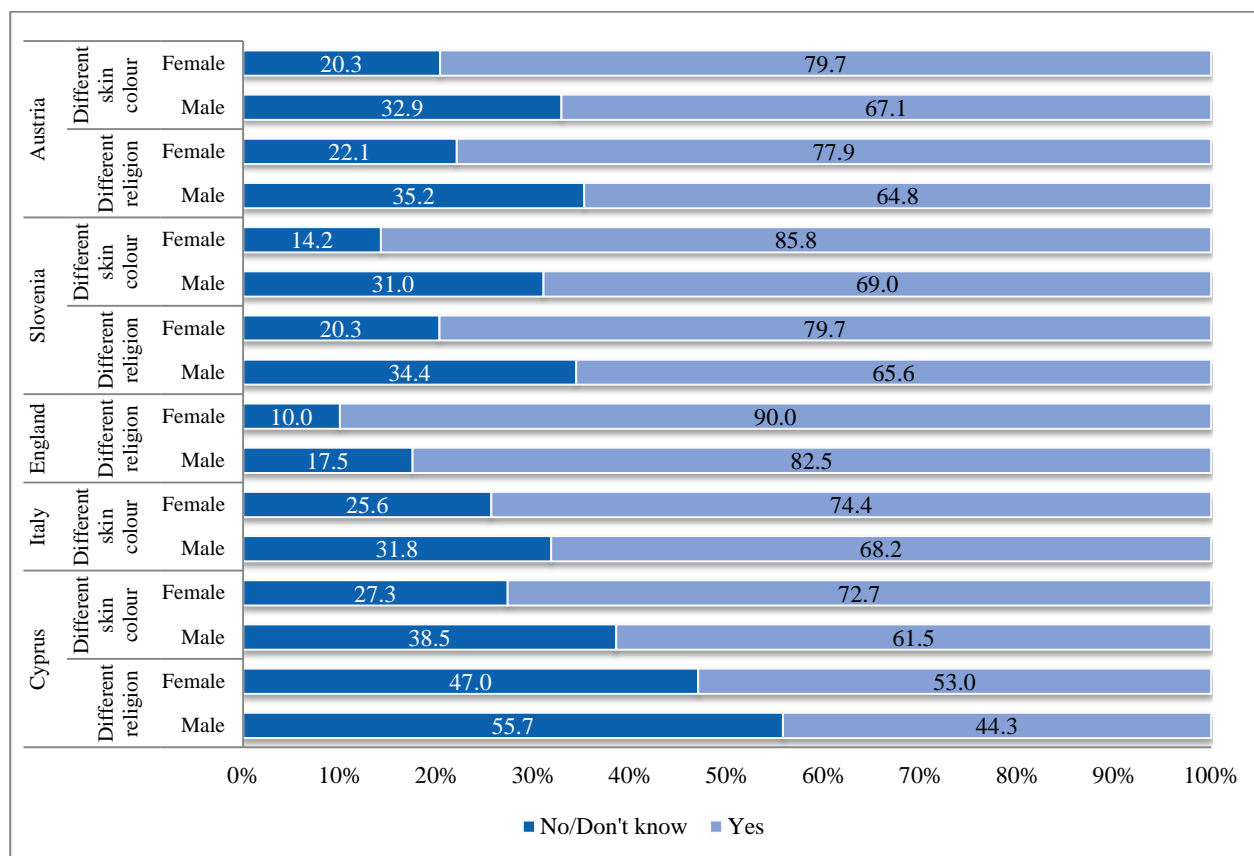
N=3,474

The differences between boys and girls are mainly evident in the Slovenian and Austrian samples, especially when it comes to the answer options “strongly agree” and “agree”. Furthermore, Figure 3 illustrates that the general agreement with this statement is the highest in England, namely about 80%.

In the light of the above presented figures, we can summarize that the pupils’ views on multiculturalism and equality differ along gender lines in a way which is identical for all mentioned countries. Although the average agreement/disagreement is similar between boys and girls, a difference is especially evident in the choice of extreme positions “strongly agree” or “strongly disagree”. Girls more often than boys seem to (strongly) agree with positive statements towards multiculturalism and equality. Boys, on the other hand, more often than girls tend to strongly disagree with the positive statements or (strongly) agree with the negative ones.

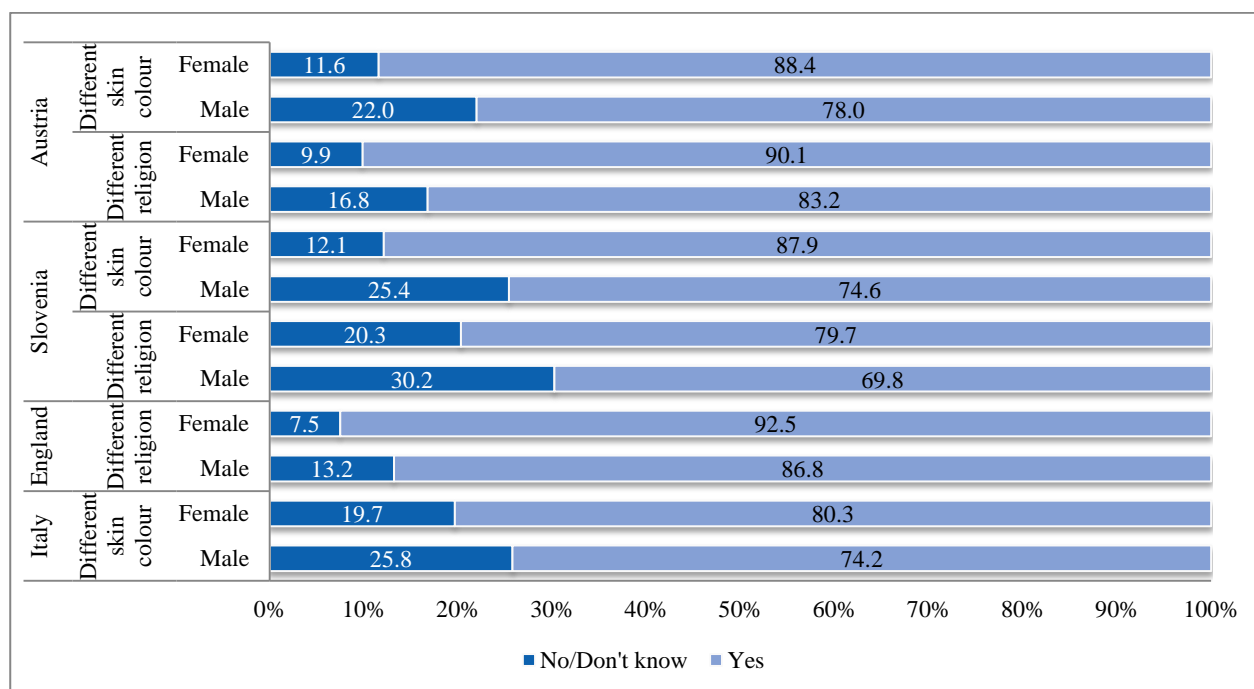
In addition, pupils were asked about their views on multiculturalism at schools on an even more personal/individual level during the quantitative survey and the qualitative focus group discussion. The following figures (4-5) show the results of the quantitative survey and underline the trend that girls seem to be slightly more open-minded in terms of multiculturalism at school and their circle of friends. Figures (4-5) are again presented for the statements which correlate with gender. The results of the focus group discussion are presented after the quantitative survey results.

**Figure 4: I would be happy to sit next to a pupil who has ...**



N=3,453-3,455

**Figure 5: I would be friends with a pupil who has ...**



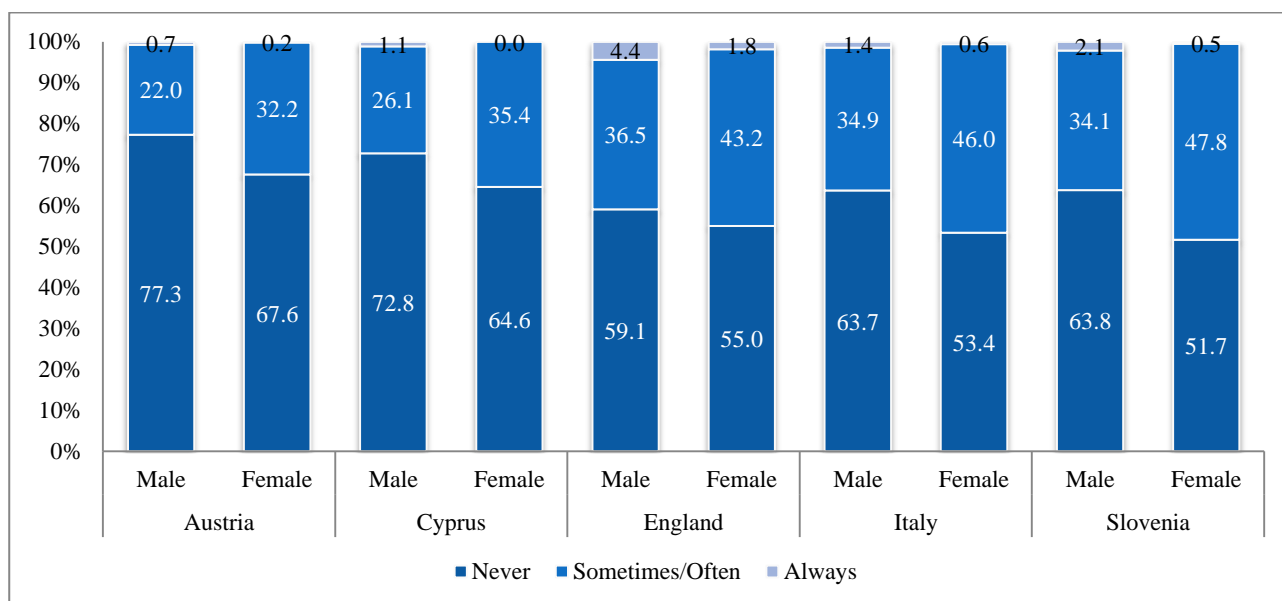
N=3,438-3,443

Figures 4 and 5 present boys' and girls' responses to the question if they would be happy to sit next to/would be friends with a pupil whose religion or skin colour is different from theirs. The differences between boys

and girls are especially evident in the Austrian and Slovenians samples. Girls more often than boys answered “yes” while boys were more often than girls undecided or answered “no”.

Pupils were also asked whether they felt lonely in school in order to get an insight into their social life in school. Although in overall terms, boys and girls indicated not feeling lonely in school, there is a gender pattern in these results for most of the countries.

**Figure 6: Feeling lonely at school**



N=3,453

Male pupils, except for the English sample where there are no differences between boys and girls, more often than girls never feel lonely in school. Girls, on the other hand, indicated more frequently “sometimes/often”. When it comes to the answer “always”, boys again more frequently than girls chose this extreme position in all countries. All in all, the majority of both boys and girls stated to never feel lonely in school, which could be interpreted as an indicator for good social relations in the school environment of the sample.

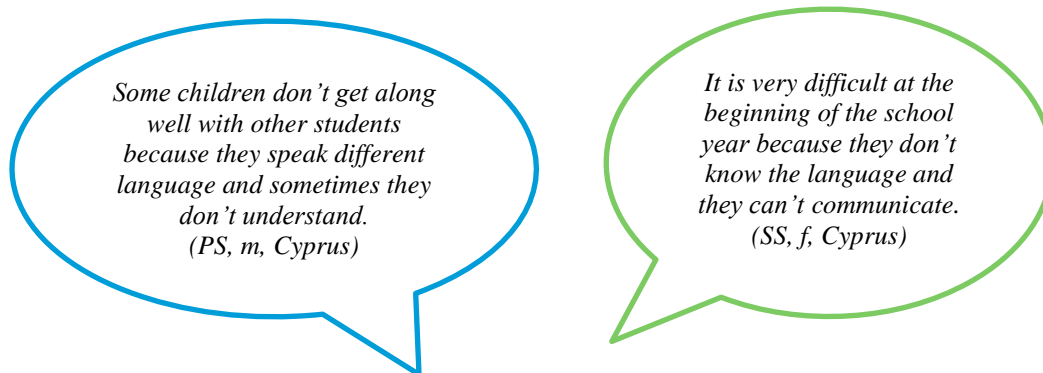
This is also underpinned by the results from the **qualitative study**<sup>2</sup>. During the focus group discussions, both girls and boys in Austria, Cyprus, England and Slovenia stated that they feel well in their schools in terms of multiculturalism and that pupils mix well in the class. Most of them stated that ethnicity is not an issue when it comes to friendship.

*There are many different nationalities in our school but everyone gets along well.  
(SS, f, Austria)*

*I think we do mix well as a college. We, there's like, there is no point where there's, you know, there's just black people for instance, or just Asian people or just white people, we really do mix well. There's a group where there are Asian people, black people, white people, mixed together. Everyone just gets along.  
(SS, pupil, England)*

<sup>2</sup> The legend: PS – Primary school, SS – Secondary school, f – female, m – male

Thus, the differences between boys and girls cannot be identified in this regard. What seems more evident from the focus group discussions is that pupils mainly form groups along gender and not initially along language or ethnicity lines. This was especially evident in the focus group discussion with primary school pupils. In Cyprus, however, language seemed to be of big importance when it comes to friendship and good social relations at school.

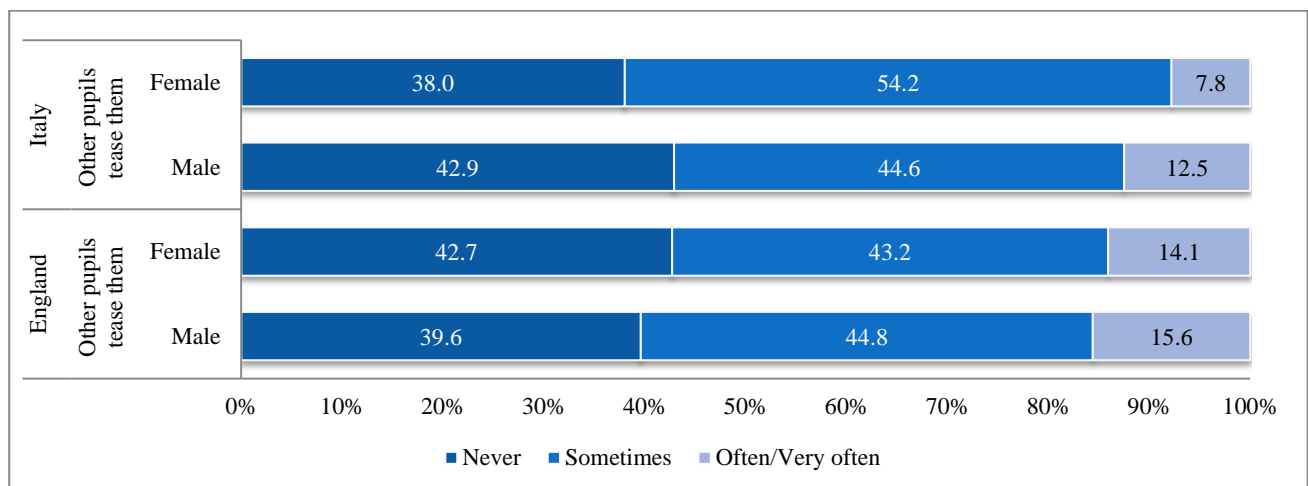


### 3.2 Observation of interethnic violence in the school environment

This section discusses the frequency of observation and witnessing of interethnic violence in the school environment. The following results are again outlined by gender.

Figures 7-9 show the observation differences between boys and girls, which are mainly evident in the results for the English and Italian samples. In the Cypriot, Austrian and Slovenian samples, gender seems to correlate with witnessing of violent situations only for one or two of the listed situations below.

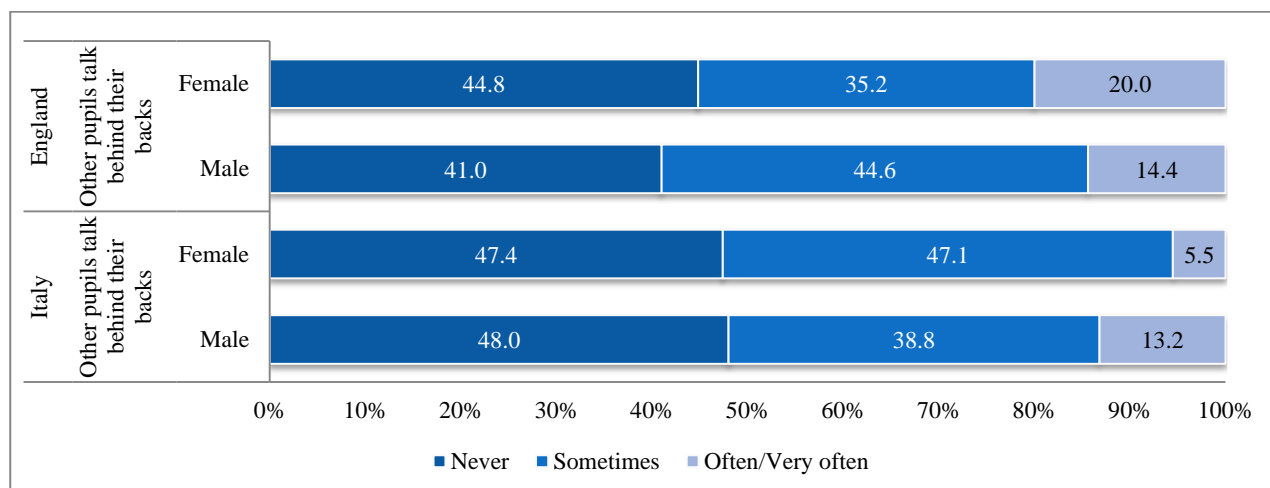
Figure 7: Observation of teasing



N=3,469

While in the Italian sample more girls than boys indicate to observe teasing because of the ethnic background of a child, in the English one it is more boys who indicate to observe it more often. However, in both countries more boys than girls tend to observe teasing often or very often.

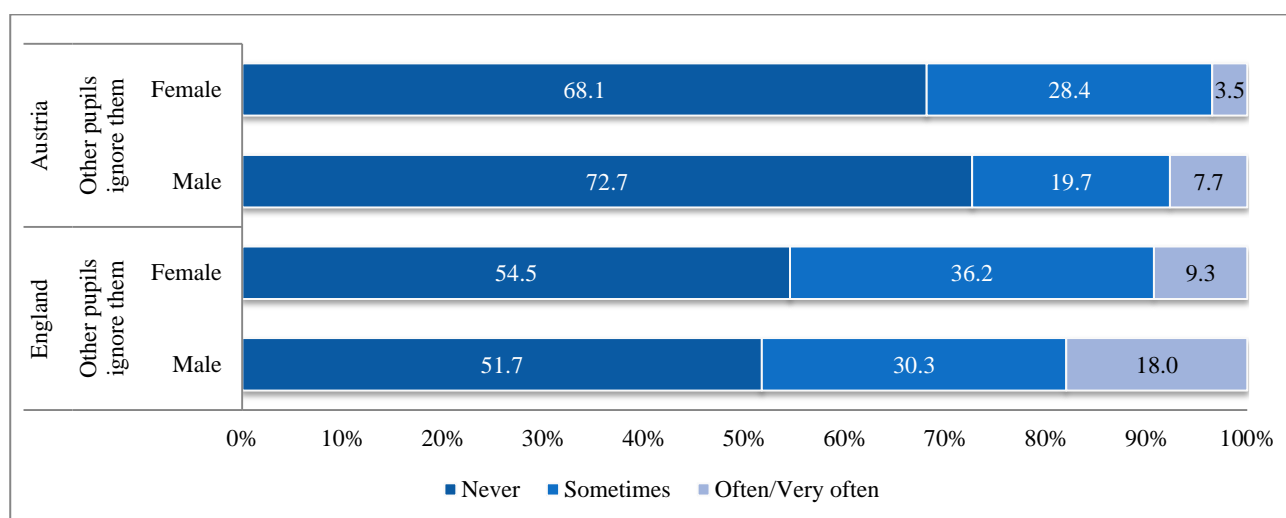
**Figure 8: Observation of talking behind their backs**



N=3,453

When looking at the results for another form of verbal/psychological violence, namely talking behind the backs of students because of their ethnic background, boys and girls again differ in their answer pattern. While in the Italian sample almost the same percentage of boys and girls indicates to never observe such situations, a higher percentage of boys chose the answer “often/very often”. Similar applies to the case in the English sample, although, in general, a higher percentage of girls observed talking behind somebody’s back.

**Figure 9: Observation of ignoring**

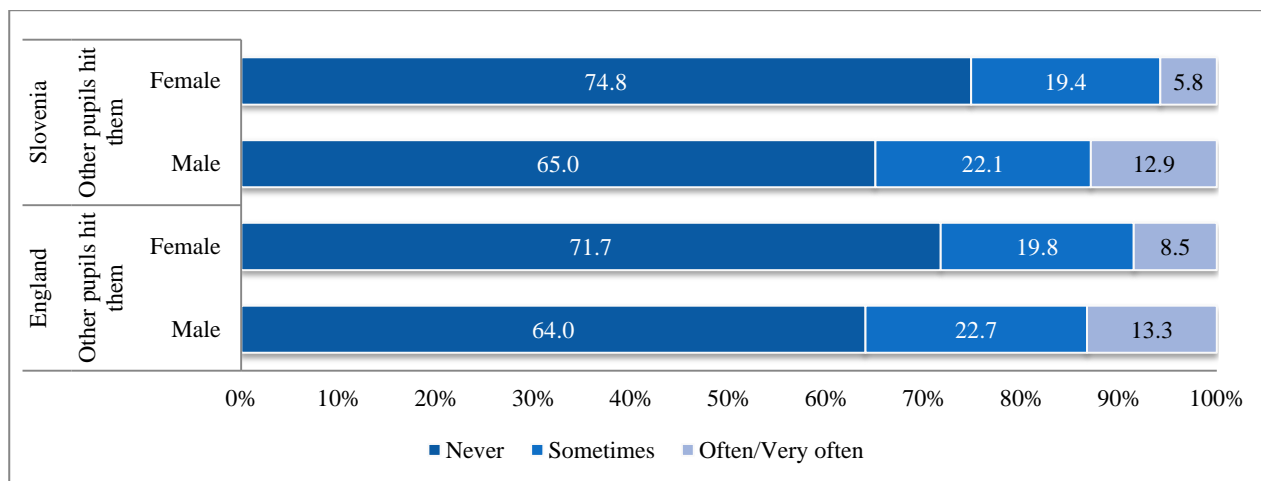


N=3,451

In the Austrian sample, a higher percentage of girls than boys observed how pupils were ignored because of their ethnic background, while for the English sample the opposite is true. In both countries it is again the boys who more frequently chose the answer option “often/very often”. Thus, in the case of talking behind the backs in the Italian, and ignoring in Austrian and English samples, a higher percentage of girls than boys indicate to observe such situations. However, in all cases more boys than girls observe psychological forms of violence “often/very often”.

As regards physical forms of violence, Figures 10-11 show a different situation in terms of the observation in general. A lower percentage of girls than boys indicated to have observed pupils fighting or destroying their things because of the ethnic background “sometimes” or “often/very often”.

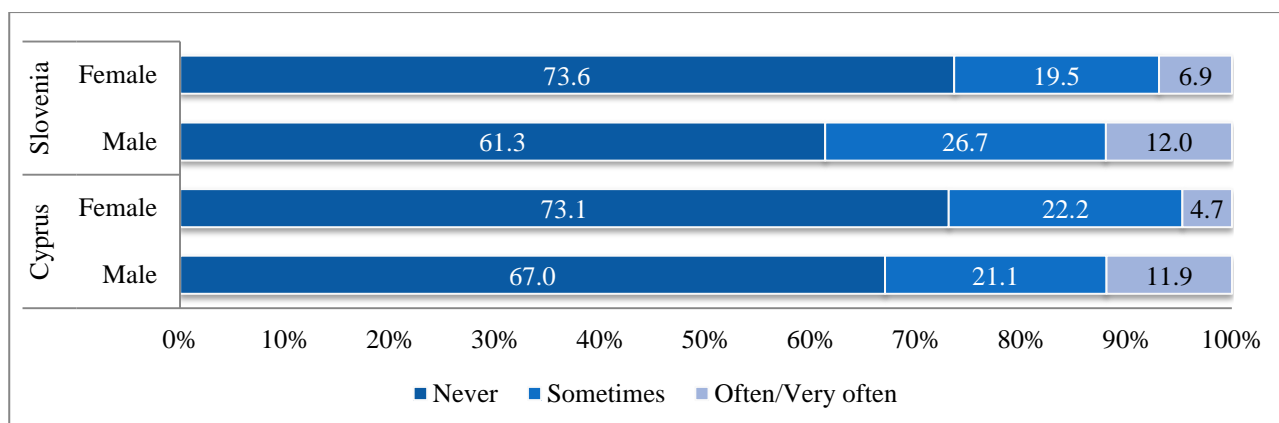
**Figure 10: Observation of physical forms of violence**



N=3,457

A similar percentage of boys (12.9%) in Slovenia compared to 13.3% in England indicated, for instance, to have observed pupils hitting other pupils because of their ethnic background “often/very often”.

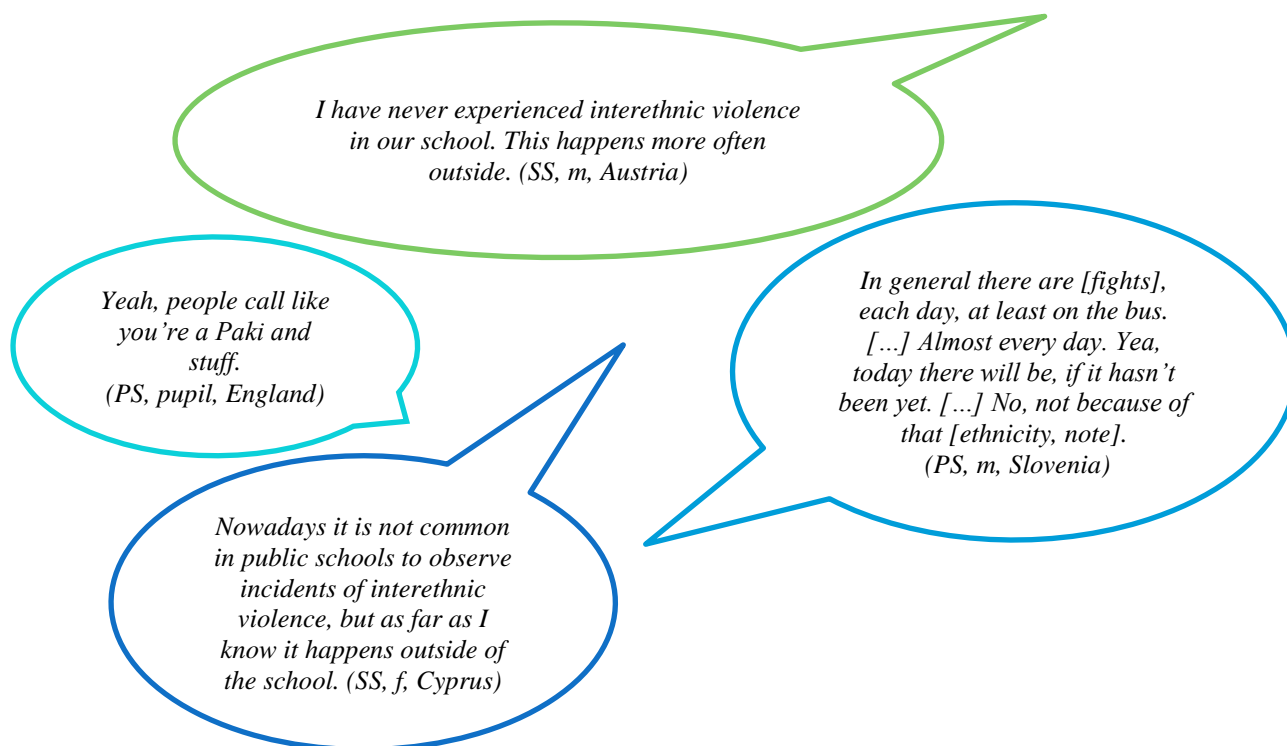
**Figure 11: Observation of hiding or destroying property**



N=3,435

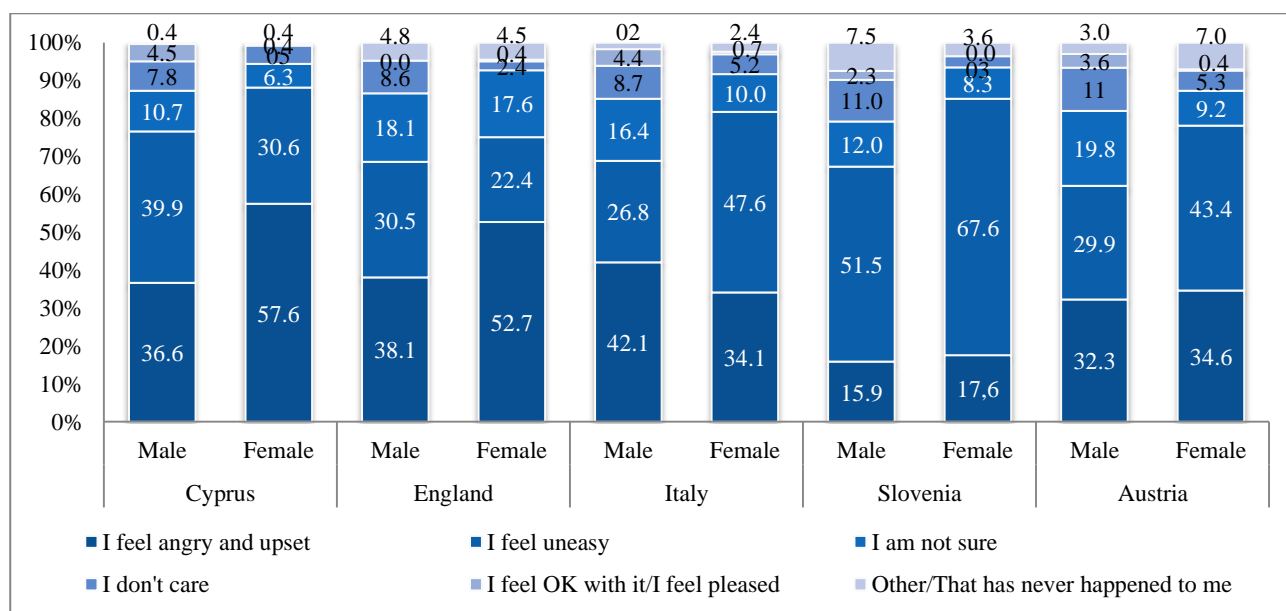
As regards the situation of hiding and destroying the property of other pupils, again a higher percentage of girls never observed it in Slovenia and Cyprus, while boys chose the answer option “often/very often” more frequently than girls.

During the focus group discussions, most pupils – irrespective of gender – said that violence, especially its physical forms, in their school environment is very seldom. Pupils agree that verbal forms of violence, not necessarily related to the ethnicity, nationality or religion of a child, are more frequent than physical forms. Also, pupils in most of the countries stated that they experienced interethnic violence mainly outside the school premises.



The following questions on the feelings and reactions of pupils when they witness violent situations were not answered by all pupils during the quantitative survey. If pupils stated to never have observed any of the above mentioned situations, they were asked not to answer the following questions. The results below are from 71% of the children who responded to have at least sometimes observed one of the above mentioned forms of violence. These sub sample results illustrate differences in reactions of boys and girls when witnessing (interethnic) violence.

**Figure 12: How do you feel when you witness interethnic violence?**

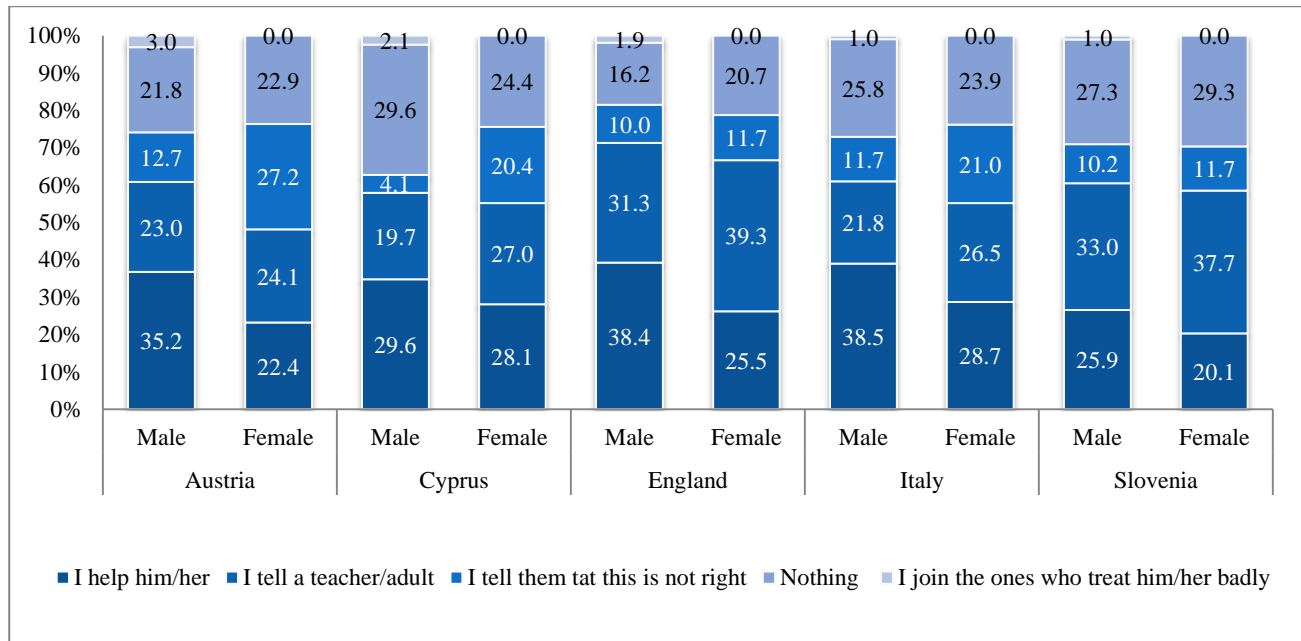


N=2,540

Figure 13 shows that in almost all country samples, except for the Italian one, girls more often than boys indicated to feel angry and upset when they witness interethnic violence. A higher percentage of girls than

boys in the Italian and Austrian samples, on the other side, indicated to feel uneasy in such situations. Between 2% and 5% of boys in Austrian, Cypriot, Italian and Slovenian samples indicated to feel OK or pleased when they witness interethnic violence as compared to no girls.

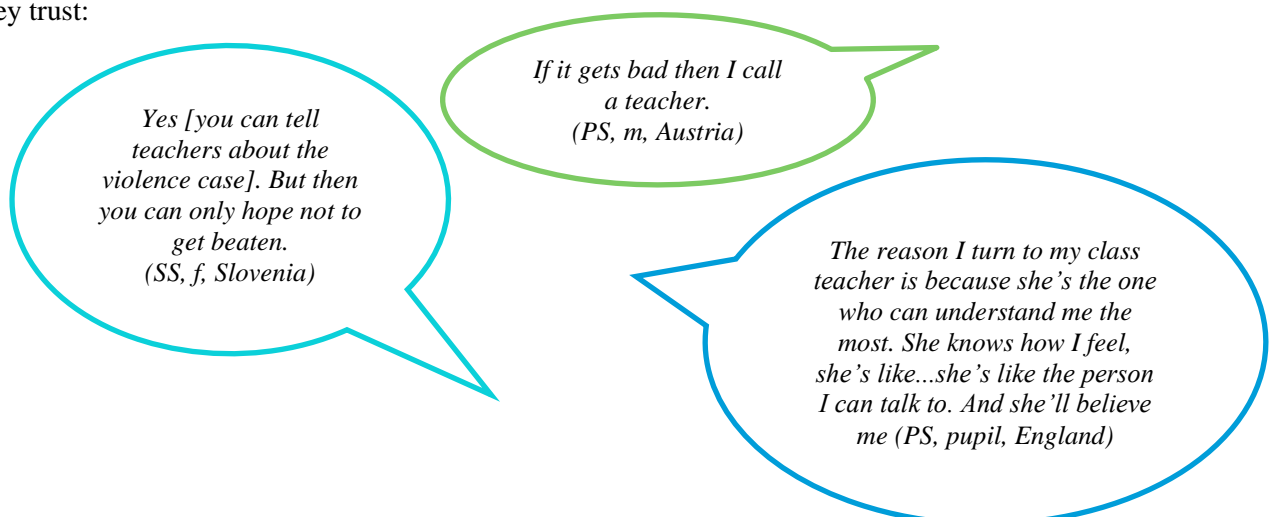
**Figure 13: How do you react when you witness interethnic violence?**



N=2,506

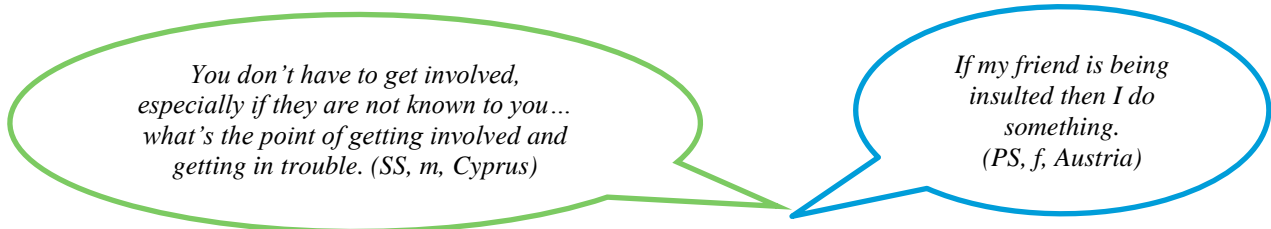
In all five country samples, a bigger share of boys than girls are more eager to help the victim; however, they are also the ones who more often state to join the ones who treat others badly, and they are more often the ones who decide to do nothing, e.g. in the Cypriot, English and Slovenian samples. A bigger share of girls than boys is more eager to tell a teacher or another adult about what is happening.

Focus group discussions showed, however, that pupils, both boys and girls, have restrictions towards talking with teachers about violent situations they have observed. While some would not talk to teachers at all, other pupils stated that they would when something “serious” is happening or that they can talk to a teacher whom they trust:





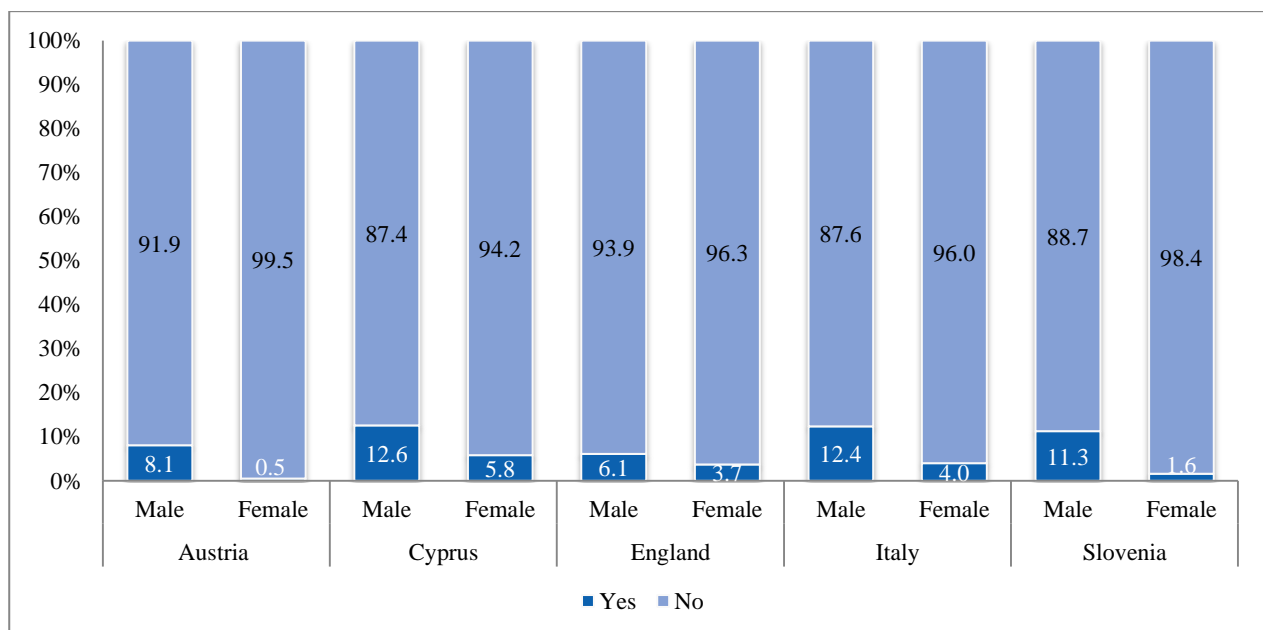
Therefore, the focus group discussions revealed that it is mainly the situation itself which decides how pupils, both boys and girls, react to observed violent situations. For instance, boys and girls in Austria and Cyprus seem to agree that they would only intervene in a violent situation if the pupil concerned is their friend:



### 3.3 Personal experiences of interethnic violence in the school environment

In this section we discuss differences between the boys' and girls' sample in terms of their personal experiences of interethnic violence. As regards our quantitative results, differences are mainly evident in the English, Slovenian and Italian samples. Figure 15 shows the percentages of boys and girls by country who stated to have once treated someone badly because of his/her ethnic background.

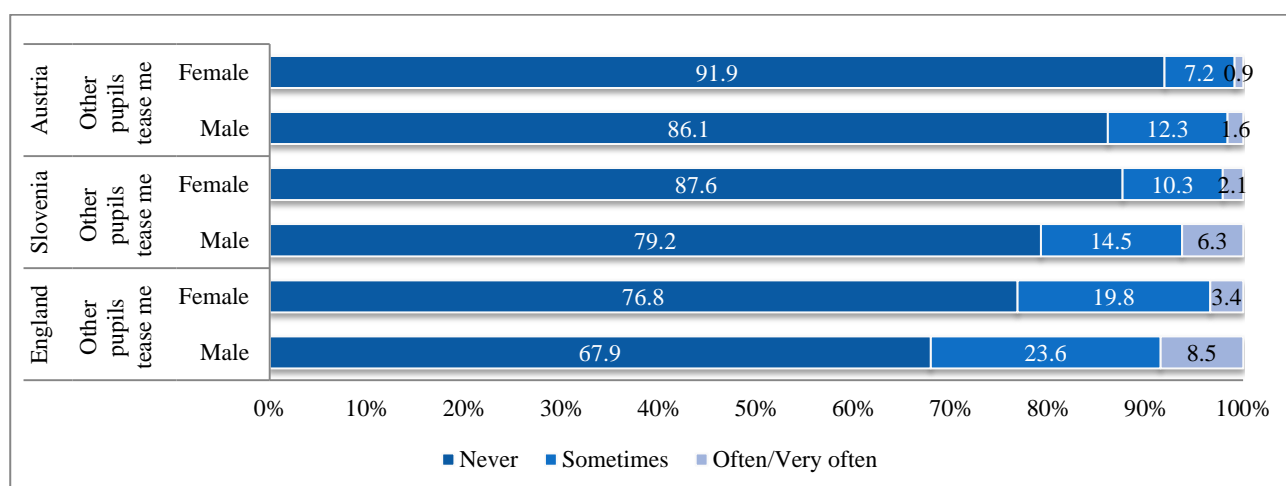
**Figure 14: Have you ever bullied anyone because of his/her ethnic background?**



N=3,410

Figure 14 shows that bullying others because of their ethnic background also correlates with gender. A higher percentage of boys than girls stated that they had bullied someone because of his/her ethnic background in Cyprus, Italy, Slovenia and Austria. The differences are evident especially in Cyprus, Italy and Slovenia where about 12% of boys compared to 5.8% (Cyprus), 4.0% (Italy) and 1.6% (Slovenia) of girls answered “Yes” to the posed question. Similarly, the gender pattern in the results on victims of interethnic violence is especially evident in England, Slovenia, Cyprus and Italy, as presented in Figures 15-17.

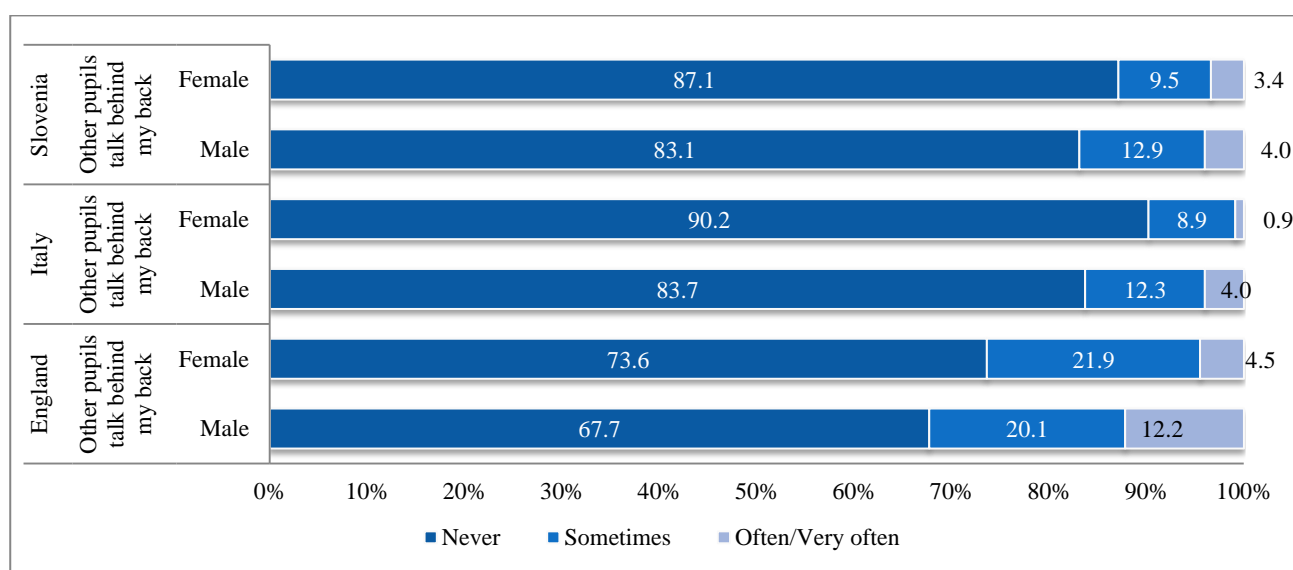
**Figure 15: Other pupils tease me or insult me because of my ethnic background**



N=3,460

In the English, Slovenian and Austrian samples, a bigger share of boys than girls stated that they experience insults and teasing “sometimes” or “often/very often”. The results for “Other pupils talk behind my back because of my ethnic background” (Figure 16) have a similar pattern: a higher percentage of boys than girls stated that it happens to them “sometimes” and “often/very often” in the Slovenian and Italian samples and “often/very often” in the English sample.

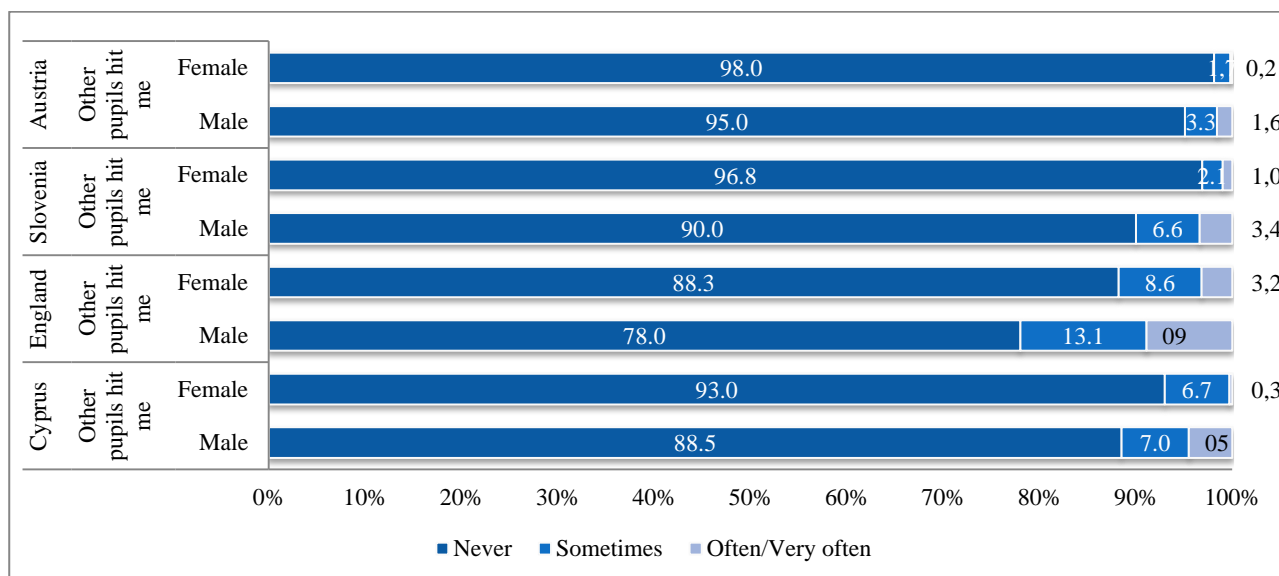
**Figure 16: Other pupils talk behind my back because of my ethnic background**



N=3,439

When comparing the results for forms of physical violence, again a larger share of boys than girls stated to experience it “often/very often” in the school environment, as shown in Figure 17.

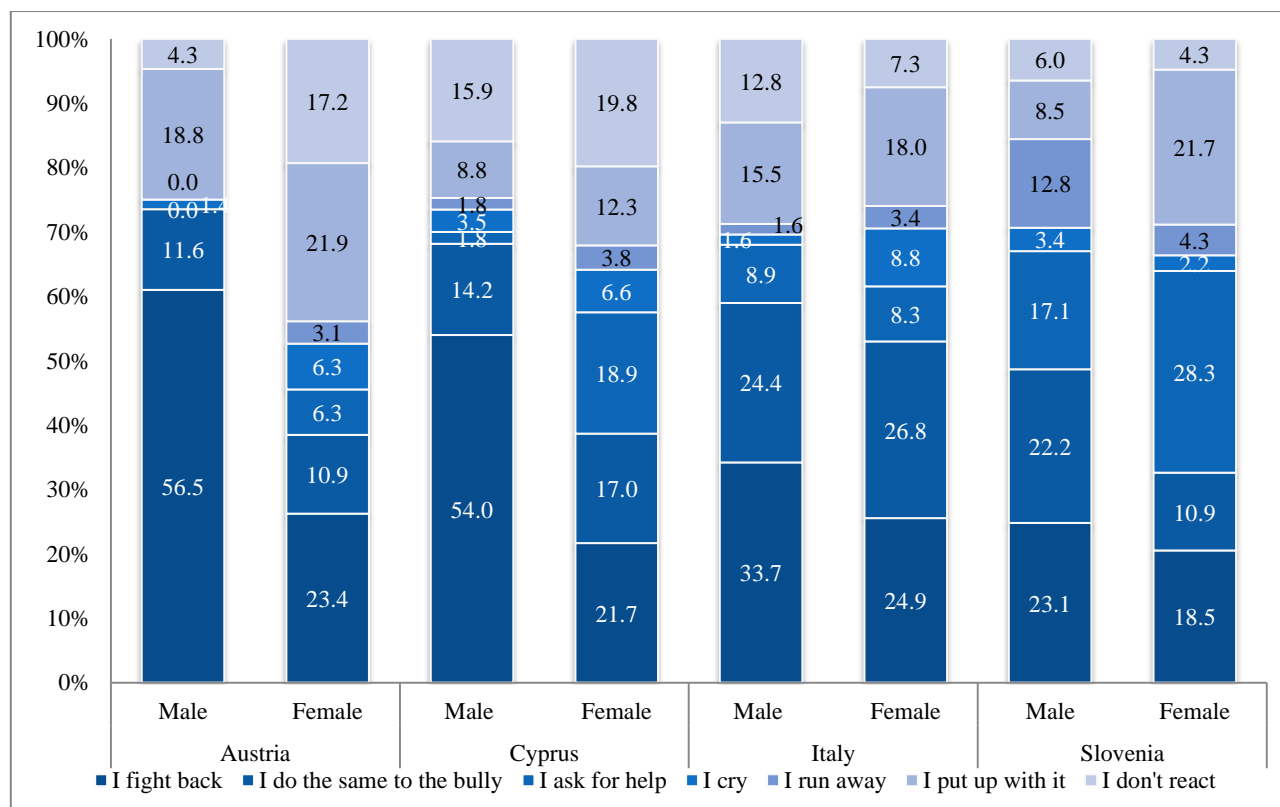
**Figure 17: Other pupils hit me, kick me or spit at me because of my ethnic background**



N=3,453

The Figures 15-17 show that both boys and girls stated to have had experiences in interethnic violence as victims themselves, although a rather small percentage compared to the witnessing results. The figures also show that especially in the samples of England and Slovenia, the correlation between gender and experiencing interethnic violence is evident. Those pupils who have experienced one of the above mentioned situations were asked to share their responses to such experiences. Again, the results for Austrian, Cypriot, Italian and Slovenian samples show a gender pattern, as Figure 18 shows.

**Figure 18: How do you react when treated badly?**



N=1,885

Figure 19 shows a correlation between the reaction to experienced interethnic violence and gender. In all above-listed countries, a significantly higher percentage of boys than girls stated “I fight back” and “I do the same to the bully”. To the answer options, boys responded to a higher percentage “I don’t react” in Italy and Slovenia, while in Austria and Cyprus a higher percentage of girls than boys do not react at all in such situations. The predominant answers of boys in all countries, except in Slovenia, were “I fight back” or “I do the same to the bully”. The girls in the sample responded in a more differentiated way and in most country samples, a high percentage of girls responded “I fight back” (18.5% in Slovenia and 24.9% in Italy) and “I put up with it” (12.3% in Cyprus and 21.9% in Austria). Furthermore, a larger share of girls than boys, except for the Italian pupils, stated “I ask for help” in such situations.

The results from the focus group discussions underpin the above illustrated gender differences in pupils’ experiences of interethnic violence in the school environment. In all countries both boys and girls stated to have experienced (interethnic) violence; however, the forms of violence they engage in often differ. Our analysis showed that gender often intersects with other factors such as age, ethnicity/religion or socio-economic factors, which together shape the different experiences of girls and boys. Furthermore, the experiences of boys and girls differ sometimes from country to country, depending on the images and stereotypes which prevail in the respective society.

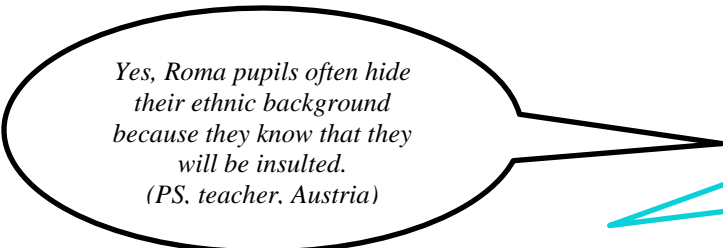
- In the focus group discussions and interviews, boys of the younger age group more often reported about experiences of physical forms of violence than girls of the same age or older boys.
- In Austria and England, experiencing violence because of one’s religion is often connected to the issue of wearing a hijab. In Austria, most girls who mentioned to have experienced interethnic violence stated that it always was in reference with the hijab they wear.
- In Slovenia, there is another gender specific form of interethnic violence. Especially boys from the southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia are avoided by Slovenian pupils and exposed to gendered stereotypisation.

*Typical appearance of ‘čefur’ [Southerner, pej.] is supposed to be a track suit [...] And sunglasses, and this shining hairstyle, and a necklace, a metal jewellery chain. (SS, f, Slovenia)*

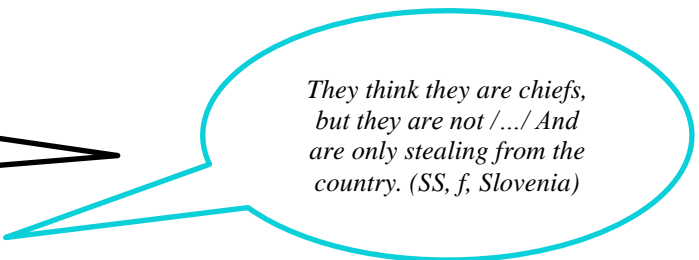
On the other hand, children of the Roma and Sinti ethnic background seem to be exposed to interethnic stereotypisation and violence regardless of their gender especially in Italy, Slovenia and to a certain extent in Austria. The following statements illustrate the prevailing observations in these countries.

*...And there is waste around their cottages. (SS, f, Slovenia)*

*And they do not feel like working. (SS, m, Slovenia)*

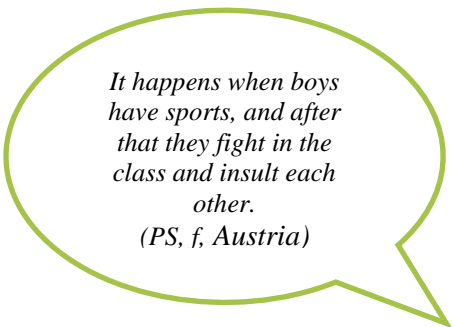


*Yes, Roma pupils often hide their ethnic background because they know that they will be insulted.  
(PS, teacher, Austria)*

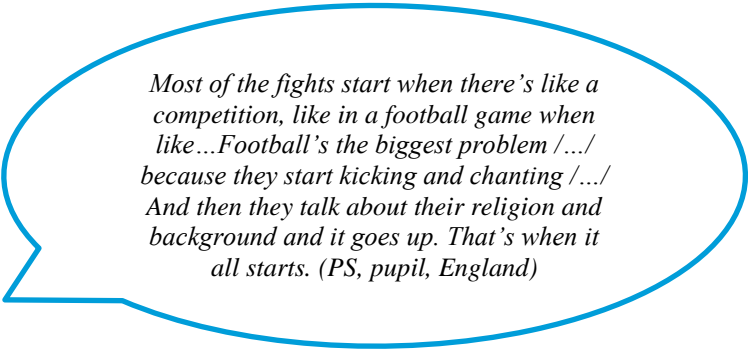


*They think they are chiefs, but they are not /.../ And are only stealing from the country. (SS, f, Slovenia)*

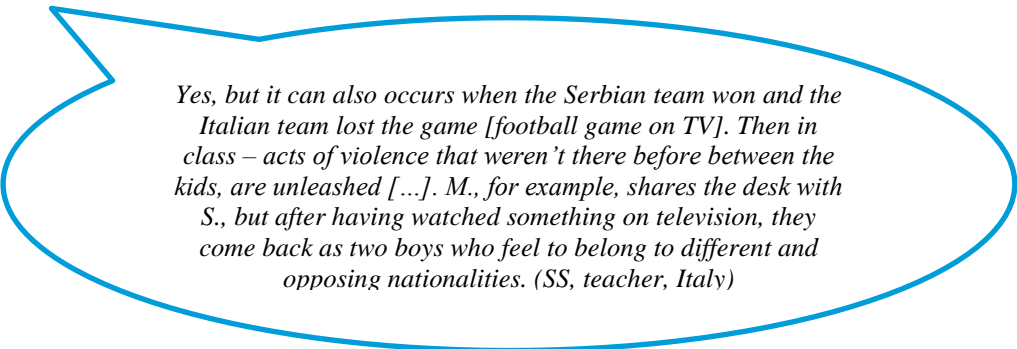
Although boys and girls mentioned to have experienced or observed violence because of the ethnicity or nationality of a pupil, the majority still agrees that ethnicity, nationality or religion is in most cases not the reason for the outburst of a violent situation. In most violent situations they experienced, ethnicity develops as an identification characteristic and is used to insult someone in the dynamics of violence, as the examples from England, Austria and Italy show.



*It happens when boys have sports, and after that they fight in the class and insult each other.  
(PS, f, Austria)*

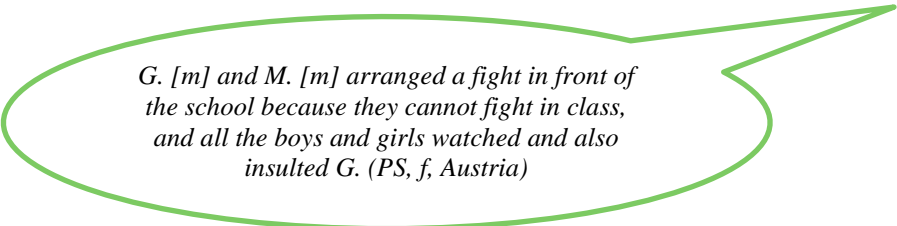


*Most of the fights start when there's like a competition, like in a football game when like...Football's the biggest problem /.../ because they start kicking and chanting /.../ And then they talk about their religion and background and it goes up. That's when it all starts. (PS, pupil, England)*



*Yes, but it can also occurs when the Serbian team won and the Italian team lost the game [football game on TV]. Then in class – acts of violence that weren't there before between the kids, are unleashed [...]. M., for example, shares the desk with S., but after having watched something on television, they come back as two boys who feel to belong to different and opposing nationalities. (SS, teacher, Italy)*

Interethnic violence is thus often provoked by emotional situations, e.g. when pupils play football and start to fight or argue because of the result. In these situations they often use ethnic categories to insult each other. Although it seems that such “situations” are mainly games understood as “male games”, one cannot say they concern only boys. As the statements presented illustrate, the conflicts emerged in the football field are “transported” into the classroom where the conflict goes on and often expands. This means that also other pupils, boys and girls, get involved by witnessing such situations or by supporting the parties verbally, as the statement below describes.



*G. [m] and M. [m] arranged a fight in front of the school because they cannot fight in class, and all the boys and girls watched and also insulted G. (PS, f, Austria)*

## 4 Conclusion

The analysis of the five samples from Austria, Cyprus, England, Italy and Slovenia show that the experiences with interethnic violence of boys and girls differ. Boys and girls both witness and experience interethnic violence in the school environment. The quantitative analyses show only slight differences in the overall frequency of observation and experience. However, it also shows the nature and forms of interethnic violence pupils experience differ along gender lines. In all country samples and regarding almost all above listed forms of violence, boys more often than girls indicated to have “often/very often” experienced/observed verbal/psychological and physical violent situations.

Different factors, namely in addition to gender, such as age and ethnicity/religion of a child seem to determine interethnic violence. These factors intersect with each other; the results, therefore, show that boys of the younger age group (10-12 years old) more often than girls or older boys (17-18 years old) engage in physical forms of violence. The country by country comparison also shows that pupils often experience gender specific interethnic violence related to different stereotypes, for instance, for Muslim girls in Austria and England or for boys from southern republics of ex-Yugoslavia in Slovenia.

# AGE

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European University Cyprus  
University of Primorska, Science and Research Centre

Marios Vryionides  
Martina Rameša

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## 1 Age structure of country samples

The aim of the project was to capture the “voices” about interethnic violence of 10-11 years old primary school pupils and 16-17 years old secondary school students. The desired samples were achieved in England, Italy and Slovenia, where the largest share of survey participants were 10 and 17 years old and other age groups were represented in distinctly lower numbers (especially 9-, 12- and 14-year-olds, and 20-, 21- and 23-year-olds). Due to the specific national context, the sample was slightly older in Cyprus and Austria, which in general included children from 11 years on.

**Table 1: Respondents’ age**

AGE		CYPRUS	ENGLAND	ITALY	SLOVENIA	AUSTRIA
9	f		40	5	5	
	%		5.6	0.7	0.7	
10	f	18	282	280	301	
	%	3.0	39.3	39.9	39.7	
11	f	183	90	62	76	189
	%	31.0	12.5	8.8	10.0	26.5
12	f	36		4	6	133
	%	6.1		0.6	0.8	18.7
13	f	3		1		24
	%	0.5		0.1		3.4
14	f				2	2
	%				0.3	0.3
15	f					1
	%					0.1
16	f	10	36		45	9
	%	1.7	5.0		5.9	1.3
17	f	299	176	155	262	177
	%	50.6	24.5	22.1	34.6	24.9
18	f	38	84	135	56	119
	%	6.4	11.7	19.3	7.4	16.7
19	f	4	10	42	5	51
	%	0.7	1.4	6.0	0.7	7.2
20	f			15		6
	%			2.1		0.8
21	f			1		1
	%			0.1		0.1
23	f			1		
	%			0.1		
Total	f	591	718	701	758	712
	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0



## 2 Age as a factor of interethnic violence

For the analysis, the pupils included in the survey were divided into two groups: the younger – primary school pupils and the older – secondary school students. This chapter tries to investigate differences in the way primary and secondary school pupils responded to the various issues under investigation in this project.

The findings of the survey were analysed through statistical tests in order to reveal differences between the way the two age groups had responded in the various parts of the questionnaire. Detailed data on how the responses vary among countries are also presented in charts. As shown in Table 2, both age groups in general expressed agreement with the statements that all people are equal regardless of the language they speak, their religion or culture. For statements 2, 3 and 5 (see Table 2), the primary school children generally adopted a more positive attitude than the secondary school children whereas in statement 6, the trend was reversed. In the focus groups with children, pupils of both age groups reported more or less similar views on the issues relating to equality almost in all five countries.

STATEMENTS ON MULTICULTURALITY	
1.	All people are equal, regardless of the language that they speak, their religion or culture.
2.	People who come to (country) from other countries should have the right to follow the customs of their countries.
3.	I like the fact that there are people of different ethnic backgrounds in the country where I live.
4.	Children that come to (country) from other countries should give up their language and culture.
5.	I like the fact that there are pupils of other nationalities/ethnic backgrounds in our class/at our school.
6.	I think that children that come to (country) from other countries should follow (country) language and (country) culture.

**Table 6: Average value of agreement with the statements per country**

Statement	Kind of school	Cyprus	England	Italy	Slovenia	Austria
1.	Primary	4.41	4.27	4.46	4.29	4.12
	Secondary	4.53	4.70	3.99	4.38	4.12
2.	Primary	3.86	4.19	4.15	4.23	4.29
	Secondary	3.81	4.18	3.01	3.52	3.61
3.	Primary	3.73	4.16	4.11	4.16	4.06
	Secondary	3.37	4.40	3.36	3.52	3.85
4.	Primary	1.77	1.71	1.54	1.85	1.99
	Secondary	1.87	1.70	2.07	2.20	1.90
5.	Primary	3.80	4.14	4.21	3.94	4.12
	Secondary	3.54	4.31	3.45	3.53	3.78
6.	Primary	2.85	2.39	2.59	2.86	3.23
	Secondary	2.93	2.84	3.48	3.59	3.96

Furthermore, additional analysis was made by determining the measures of association using the Cramer coefficient. In the subsequent text, a range of countries is presented in which the association between the age groups and the dependent variable proved significant.

In England, a larger share of the older pupils strongly agreed with the statement *All people are equal, regardless of the language that they speak their religion or culture*, while in Italy and Slovenia, more younger pupils said that they strongly agree with the statement. In England and Slovenia, a larger share of the younger pupils said that they strongly disagree, while a higher percentage of older pupils strongly disagreed with the statement in Italy.

In England, Italy, Slovenia and Austria, a larger share of the younger rather than the older pupils strongly agreed with the statement *People who come to (country) from other countries should have the right to follow the customs of their countries* and a smaller share of the younger than the older pupils (except in England) strongly disagreed with it.

In Cyprus, England, Italy, Slovenia and Austria, a larger share of the younger than the older pupils agreed with the statement *I like the fact that there are people of different ethnic backgrounds in the country where I live*. A larger percentage of the younger than the older pupils strongly disagreed with the statement in Cyprus, Italy and Slovenia, while in Italy, a larger share of the younger pupils also strongly disagreed with it and the shares of both were about the same in Austria.

In England, Slovenia and Austria, a significantly larger share of the younger than the older pupils said that they strongly agreed with the statement *Children that come to (country) from other countries should give up their language and culture*, while in England, Slovenia and Austria, they said that they strongly disagree with it and a slightly bigger share of the older pupils strongly disagreed in Italy.

In Cyprus, Italy, Slovenia and Austria, the younger pupils were more inclined to strongly agree with the statement *I like the fact that there are pupils of other nationalities/ethnic backgrounds in our class/at our school* than the older pupils did. The opposite applies in England where a larger share of the older pupils strongly agreed with the statement. The younger pupils were less likely to strongly disagree in Cyprus, Italy and Austria.

In England, Italy, Slovenia and Austria, a larger share of the older than of the younger pupils tended to strongly agree with the statement *I think that children that come to (country) from other countries should follow (country) language and (country) culture* and they were significantly less inclined to strongly disagree with it in England, Italy, Slovenia and Austria.

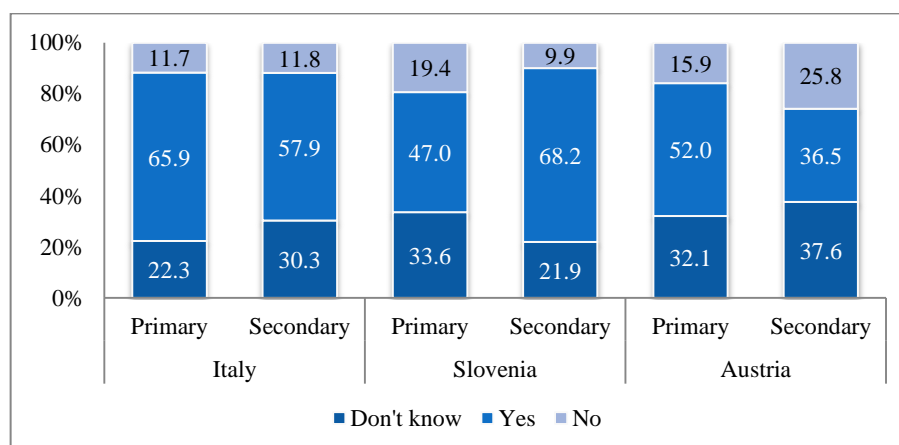
## WILLINGNESS TO SIT NEXT TO OR TO BE FRIENDS WITH

1. Sit next to a pupil who does not speak my language (well)
2. Sit next to a pupil whose religion is different from mine
3. Sit next to a pupil whose skin colour is different from mine
4. Be friends with a pupil who does not speak my language (well)
5. Be friends with pupil whose religion is different from mine
6. Be friends with a pupil whose skin colour is different from mine

The students participating in the survey were asked to indicate whether they would be happy to sit in class next to students with various kinds of differences and then to respond to the question whether they would be friends with such students.

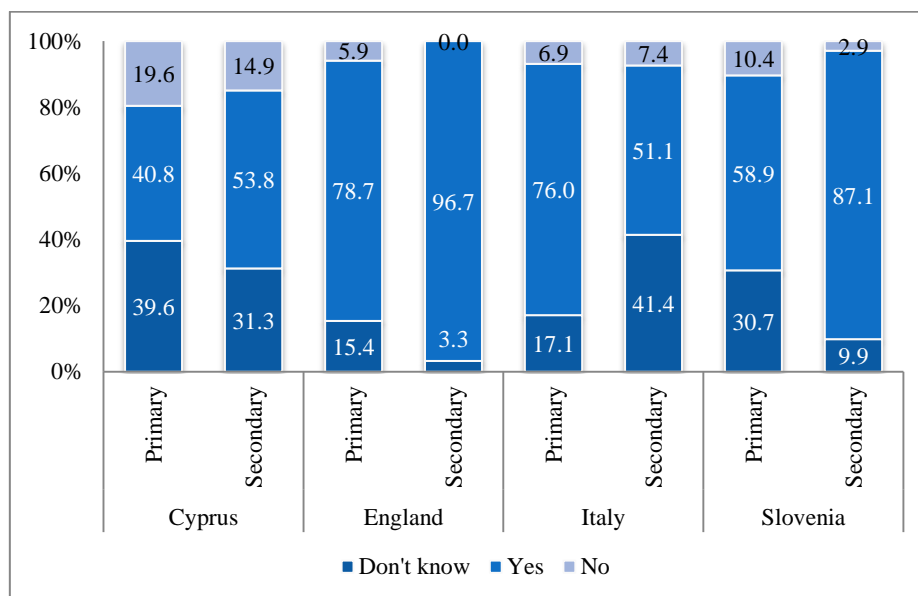
In Slovenia, a larger share of the older pupils responded positively and significantly more younger than older pupils would not be happy to sit with a pupil who does not speak their language (well). The opposite holds true for Austria and Italy where a larger share of the younger than the older pupils would be happy to sit with a pupil who is unable to speak their language, and a larger share of the older pupils responded negatively.

**Figure 1: Would you be willing to sit next to a pupil who does not speak your language well**



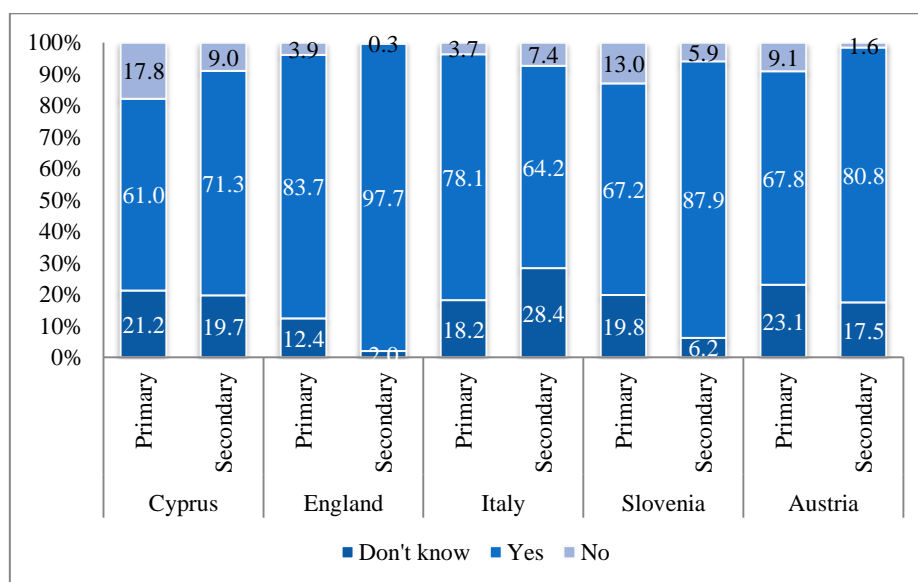
In Cyprus, England and Slovenia, a larger share of the older pupils responded positively and more younger than older pupils would not be happy to sit with a pupil who has a different religion from them. The opposite applies in Italy where a larger share of the younger than the older pupils would be willing to sit with classmates of different religion.

**Figure 2: Would you be willing to sit next to a pupil whose religion is different from mine**



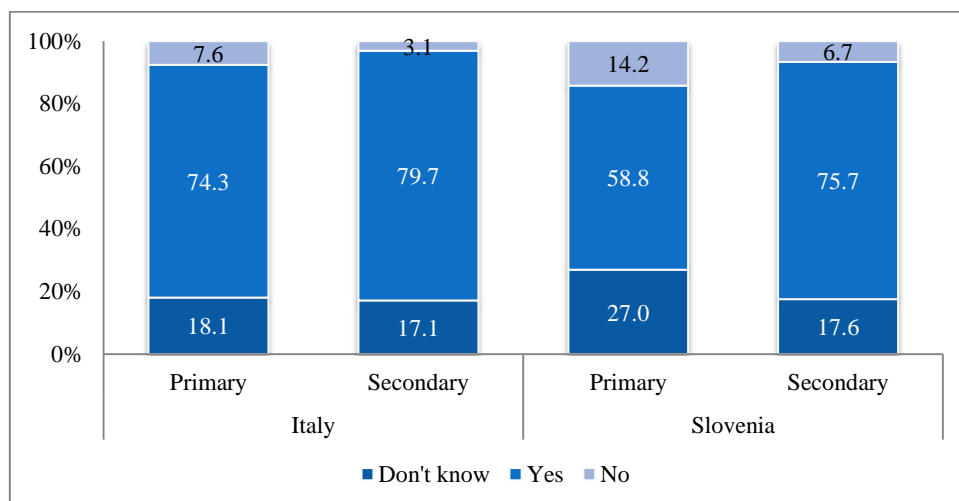
In Cyprus, England, Slovenia and Austria, a larger share of the older than the younger pupils responded positively and a larger share of the younger than the older pupils would not be happy to sit with a pupil whose skin colour is different from theirs. In Italy, a larger share of the younger than the older pupils would be willing to sit with a classmate whose skin colour is different from theirs.

**Figure 3: Would you be willing to sit next to a pupil whose skin colour is different from mine**



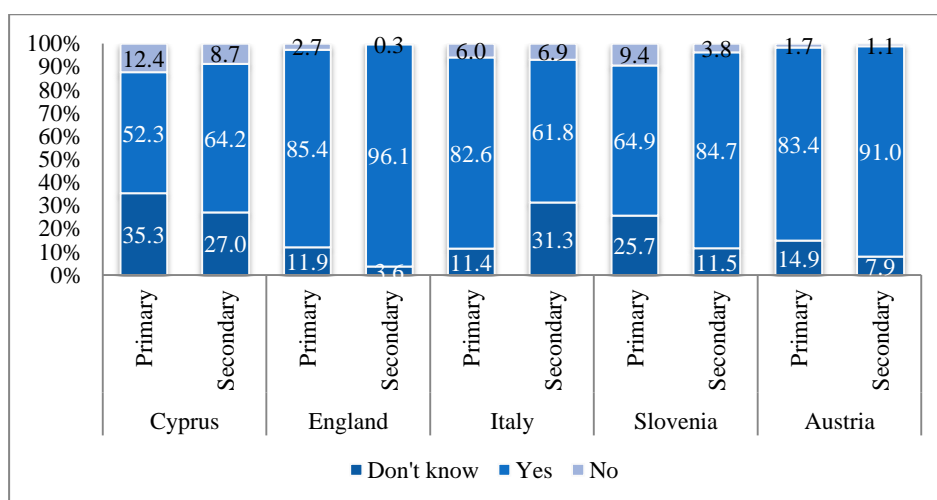
In Italy and Slovenia, a larger share of the older pupils responded positively and more younger than older pupils would not be friends with a pupil who does not speak their language.

**Figure 4: Would you be friends with a pupil who does not speak your language well**



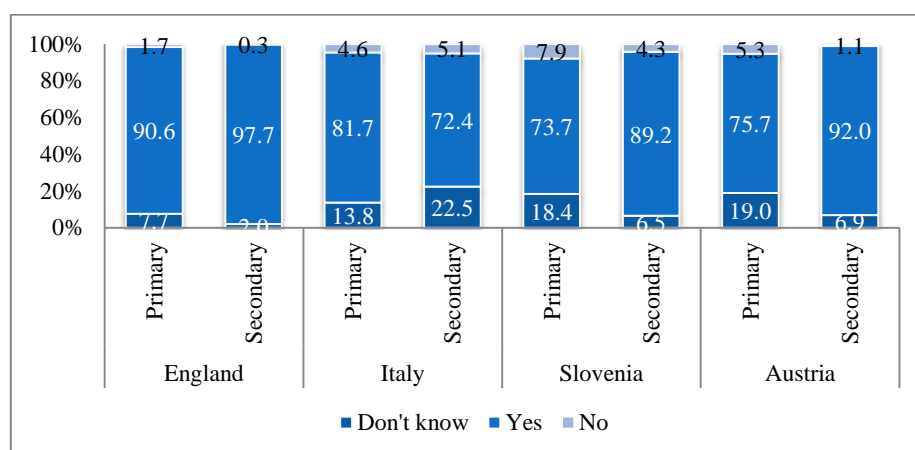
In Cyprus, England, Slovenia and Austria, a larger share of the older pupils responded positively and a slightly larger share of the younger than the older pupils would not be friends with a pupil of a different religion. In Italy, on the other hand, a larger share of the younger pupils would be friends with someone who has a different religion.

**Figure 5: Would you be friends with a pupil whose religion is different from mine**



In England, Slovenia and Austria, a larger share of the older pupils responded positively and a larger share of the younger ones would not be friends with a pupil whose skin colour is different. In Italy, a larger share of the younger than the older pupils would be friends with a student of different skin colour.

**Figure 6: Would you be friends with a pupil whose skin colour is different from mine**



## FEELING OF LONELINESS

### 1. Feeling lonely in schools

The data show that a larger share of the older pupils never feels lonely at school in Cyprus, England, Italy, Slovenia and Austria. Correspondingly, except in Slovenia, in all other countries, a slightly larger share of the younger than the older pupils said that they always feel lonely in school.

## NOTICING INTERETHNIC VIOLENCE

1. Other pupils tease them, call them names, or insult them because of their ethnic background
2. Other pupils talk or say untruthful things behind their backs because of their ethnic background
3. Other pupils send insulting SMS or e-mails, post insulting comments on Facebook, Twitter because of their ethnic background
4. Other pupils ignore them, avoid contacts with them because of their ethnic background
5. Other pupils hit them, spit at them or express other forms of rude physical behaviour because of their ethnic background
6. Other pupils hide, destroy their things, property because of their ethnic background

In Slovenia, a larger share of the older pupils said that teasing and name-calling because of the pupils' ethnic background never happened, while the opposite holds true for Austria. In both countries, a larger share of the younger than the older pupils said that it happened very often.

In Cyprus, England and Slovenia, a larger share of the older than the younger pupils said that they had never noticed other pupils talk behind others' backs because of their ethnic background, while in Italy, a larger share of the younger pupils stated the same. In Cyprus, England, Italy and Slovenia, a larger share of the younger than the older pupils said that it had happened very often.

In England and Austria, a larger share of the older than the younger pupils said that they had never noticed cyberbullying or sending insulting SMSs due to different ethnic background, while a larger share of the younger pupils in Italy and Slovenia said the same. In England, Italy and Austria, a larger share of the

younger than the older pupils said that it had happened very often, while in Slovenia the shares were about the same.

In Cyprus and Italy, a larger share of the younger than the older pupils said that ignoring or avoiding contact due to different ethnic background had never happened, while the opposite holds true for England and Slovenia. In Cyprus and Italy, a larger share of the older pupils said that it had happened often or very often, again, the opposite holds true in England and Slovenia.

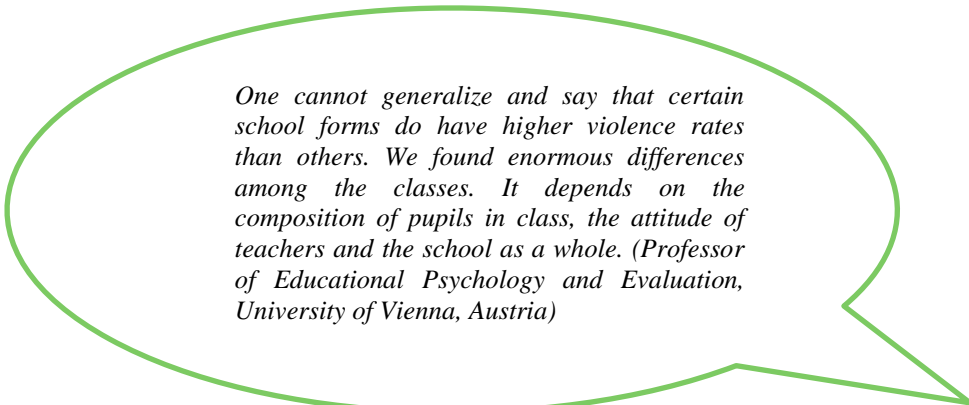
In Cyprus, England, Slovenia and Austria, a larger share of the younger than the older pupils said that physical violence on the basis of different ethnic background had happened often or very often and a significantly larger share of the older pupils said that it had never happened.

In England, Slovenia and Austria, a higher percentage of the older pupils said that hiding or destroying one's property because of his/her different ethnic background had never happened and a larger share of the younger than the older pupils said that it had happened either often or very often.

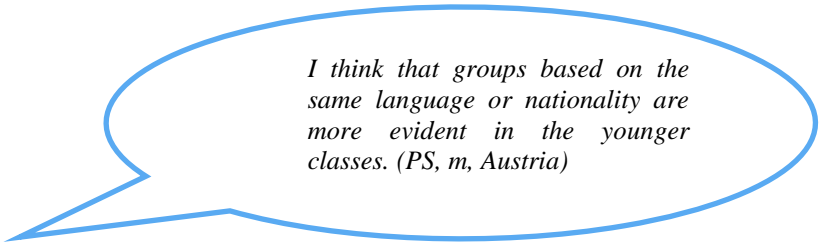
In the Slovenian quantitative and qualitative studies, the children's responses confirmed that (interethnic) violence is more present within the younger age group in primary schools. Few secondary school students wrote in the questionnaires: "I used to do that, now I don't anymore".

However, it should also be noted that among the younger pupils, the categories such as nationality or religion are not always intelligible or recognised. As the school counsellor at the Tone Čufar Primary School pointed out, the migrants at Jesenice endeavour to assimilate to the local environment and, consequently, the children sometimes do not know their culture, the culture of the country where their parents came from, and they are "as being rooted out".

The Austrian research also confirmed the apparent differences in presence of (interethnic) violence among the younger and the older school children; however, it was emphasized that differences can hardly be generalized, and as a more important factor the class climate was proposed:

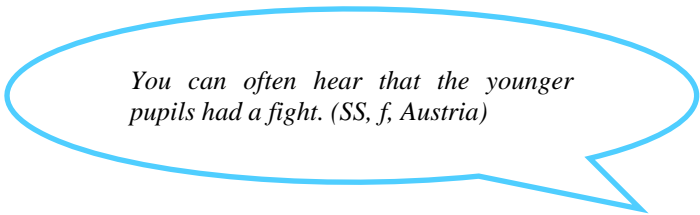


*One cannot generalize and say that certain school forms do have higher violence rates than others. We found enormous differences among the classes. It depends on the composition of pupils in class, the attitude of teachers and the school as a whole. (Professor of Educational Psychology and Evaluation, University of Vienna, Austria)*



*I think that groups based on the same language or nationality are more evident in the younger classes. (PS, m, Austria)*

As previously mentioned, physical violence in the school environment happens rather seldom, especially among the group of secondary school pupils.



*You can often hear that the younger pupils had a fight. (SS, f, Austria)*

The qualitative research in Austria determined that violence is in general more often an issue among the younger pupils and, in particular, physical violence is more often an issue among younger boys. However, psychological and verbal forms of violence are also present among the older age group.

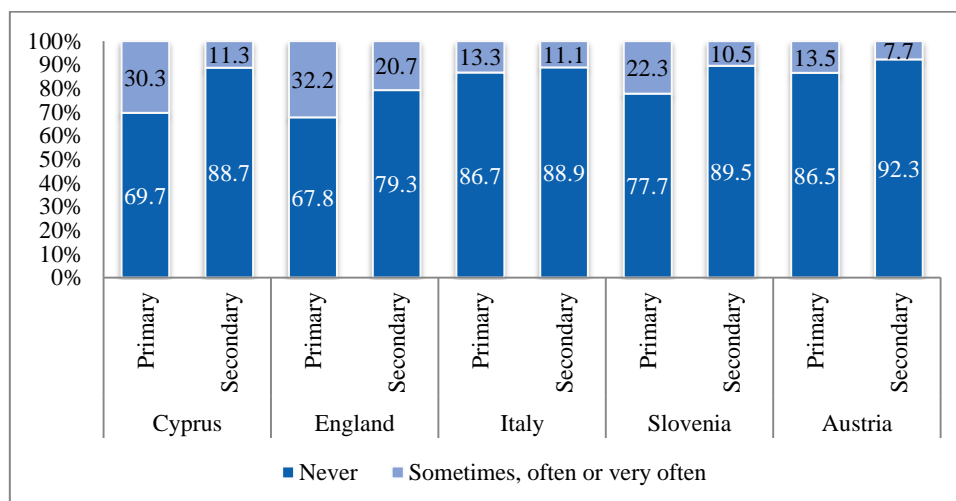
A short description of the differences in experiencing the interethnic violence among the younger and the older pupils is given below. To provide a clearer picture, the following graphic illustrations show the sum of violence experienced sometimes, often or very often.

EXPERIENCING INTERETHNIC VIOLENCE	
1.	Other pupils tease me, call me names or insult me because of my ethnic background
2.	Other pupils talk or say untruthful things behind my back because of my ethnic background
3.	Other pupils send insulting SMS or e-mails, post insulting comments on Facebook, Twitter because of my ethnic background
4.	Other pupils ignore me, avoid contacts with me because of my ethnic background
5.	Other pupils hit me, spit at me or express other forms of rude physical behaviour because of my ethnic background
6.	Other pupils hide, destroy my things, property because of my ethnic background

In Cyprus, England, Italy, Slovenia and Austria, a larger share of the older pupils said that teasing or name-calling had never happened to them and a larger share of the younger pupils claimed that it had happened to them very often.

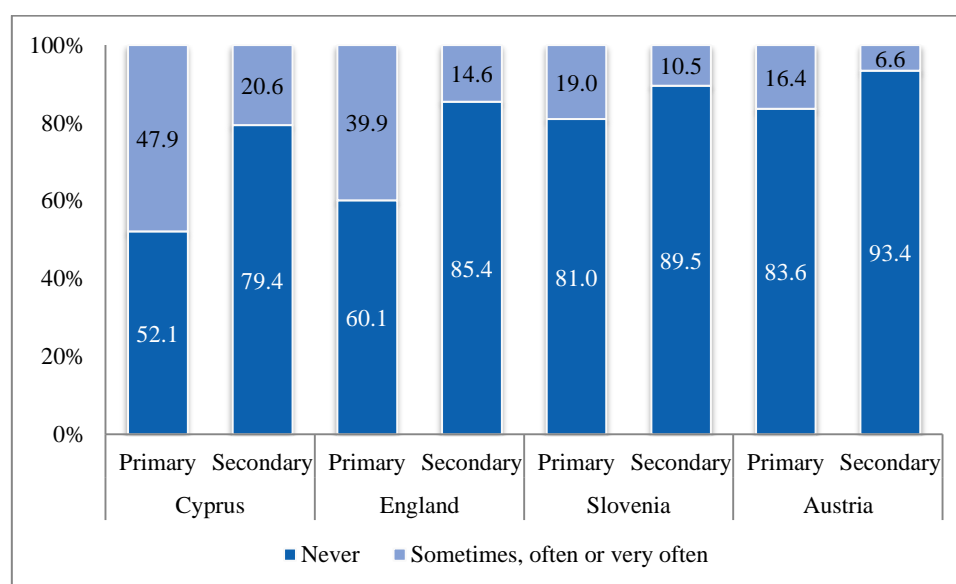


**Figure 7: Teasing or name-calling**



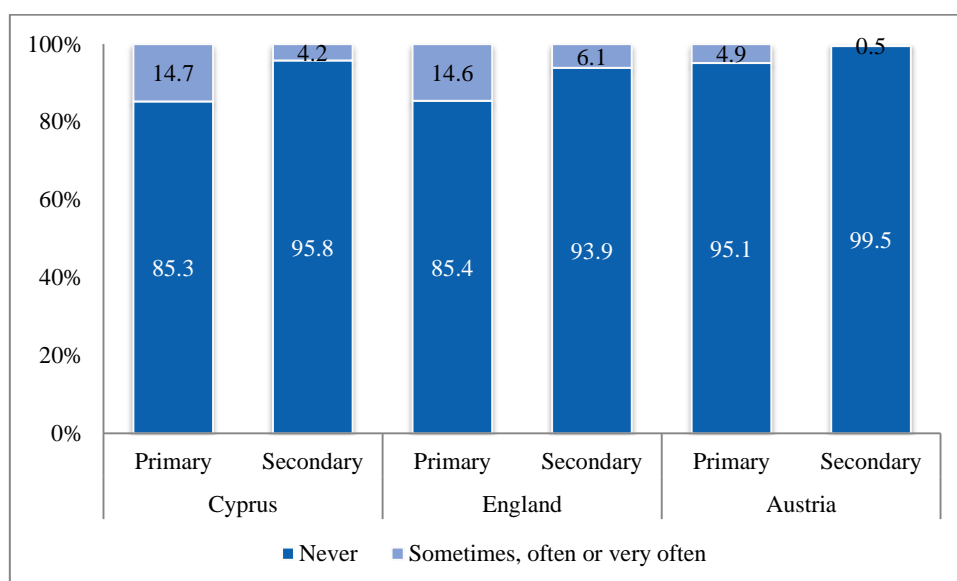
In Cyprus, England, Slovenia and Austria, a higher percentage of the older than the younger pupils said that talking behind or spreading rumours had never happened to them and a larger share of the younger pupils in Cyprus, England and Austria said that it had happened to them very often.

**Figure 8: Talking behind back**



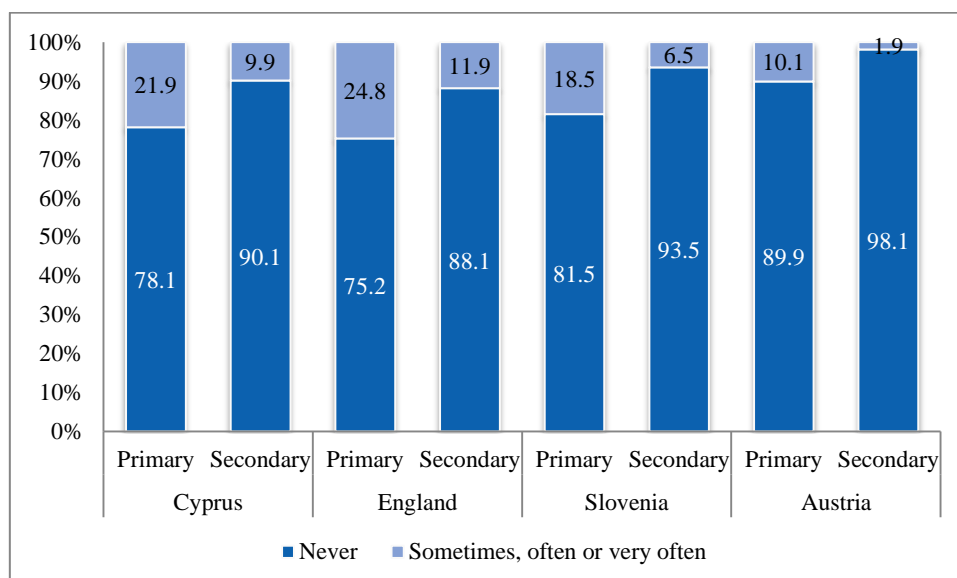
In Cyprus, England and Austria, a larger share of the older pupils said that cyberbullying or receiving insulting SMS had never happened to them and, in Cyprus and England, a larger share of the younger than the older pupils said that it had happened to them very often.

**Figure 9: Sending insulting messages (internet, SMS)**



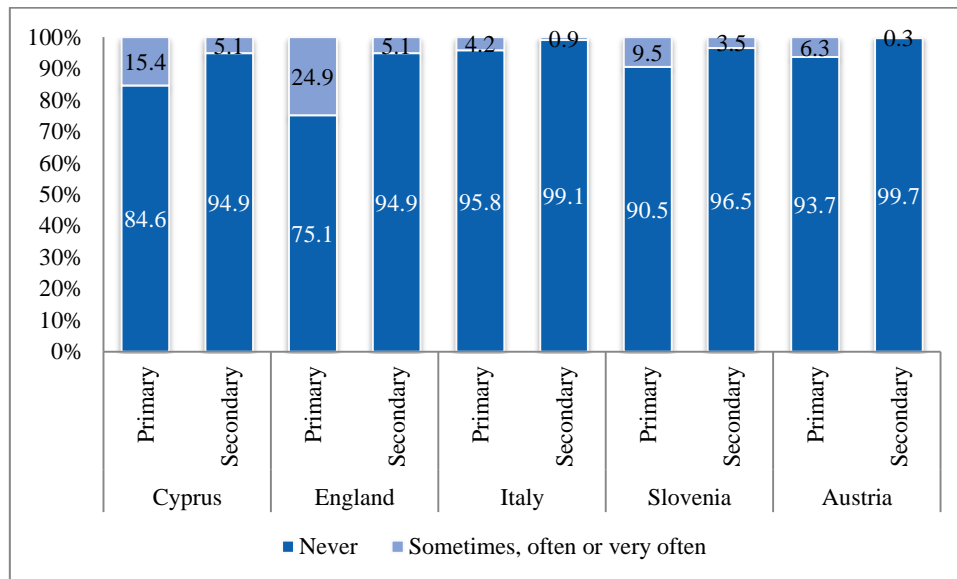
In Cyprus, England, Slovenia and Austria, a larger share of the older pupils said that being ignored or left out had never happened to them and a larger share of the younger than the older pupils said that it had happened to them very often.

**Figure 10: Ignoring or avoiding contact**



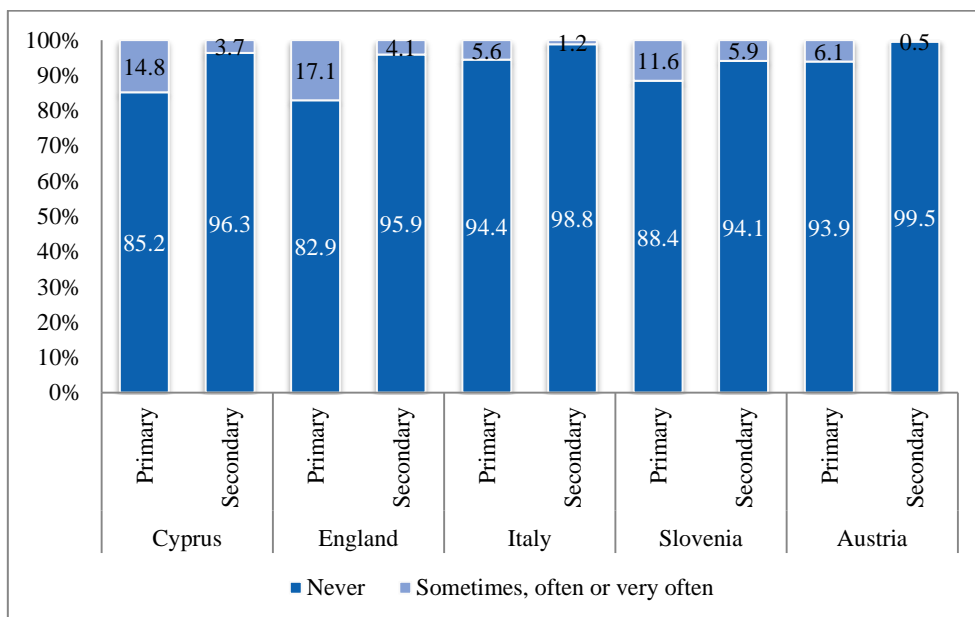
In Cyprus, England, Italy, Slovenia and Austria, a larger share of the older pupils said that rude physical behaviour due to their ethnicity had never happened to them and a larger share of the younger than the older pupils in England, Italy and Austria said that it had happened to them very often.

**Figure 11: Rude physical behaviour**



In all five countries, a larger share of the older pupils said that having their property hidden or destroyed had never happened to them and a larger share of the younger than the older pupils in Cyprus and Italy said that it had happened to them very often.

**Figure 12: Hiding or destroying property**



There were also noticeable differences between primary and secondary school students on how they responded to normative statements about how their school deals with interethnic violence. The Slovenian qualitative study, for example, showed that the younger students believed that their teachers treated them equally, regardless their ethnicity, while the older student observed cases of discriminative grading.

Also, it appears that secondary schools deal with this issue in a much more organized manner than primary schools. This was confirmed during the qualitative phase (focus group) of the project where secondary

school children made references to a number of school strategies involving, for example, organizing discussions on multiculturalism and co-existence in class and helping students to integrate in the school environment. The way secondary school students articulated such issues during the interviews in fact revealed a picture of them being more conscious about ethnicity issues compared with the younger children whose responses revealed more “innocent” approaches to the issues of ethnic differences.

To sum up, we could contend that the survey findings relating to the observed differences in the way the two age groups responded were in most cases confirmed by the interview data. This served as an excellent way of data triangulation and significantly increased the validity of the findings. There were cases of clear and distinctive differences in the way primary and secondary school pupils responded in the survey and during the focus groups in all the participating countries and this could be the product of cognitive and personality development. Specifically, one might argue that the developmental stage of teenagers relating to their ethnic identity formation allows certain ambivalences and uncertainties to be resolved and thus are more conscientious about their observations and experiences compared with younger children.

In the end, in England, differences were observed also in the proposed solutions to the problem of peer-to-peer violence:

- primary school pupils cited the circle time as an effective way of dealing/ preventing interethnic violence as well as the rights-based initiatives, such as the UNICEF’s Rights Respecting Schools Award. Experts also shared this view;
- sixth formers cited the overall school ethos and implementation of a code of conduct as an effective mechanism for dealing with interethnic or other peer violence. School staff and experts also shared this view.

There were also noticeable differences between primary and secondary school students on how they responded to normative statements about how their school deals with interethnic violence. It appears that secondary schools deal with this issue in a more organized way than primary schools.

# ETHNICITY

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University of Primorska, Science and Research Centre

Ana Kralj  
Tjaša Žakelj

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# 1 Ethnicity, interethnic relations and interethnic violence

Ethnic diversity was the most important criteria for the selection of areas and schools where qualitative and quantitative researches were to be conducted. Therefore, the ethnic structure of sample respondents represents an above-average ethnic diversity.

**Table 1: Percentage of pupils of dominant ethnicity<sup>3</sup> included in the sample (primary school respondents)**

CYPRUS (243 pupils)		ENGLAND (422 pupils )		ITALY (362 pupils)		SLOVENIA (390 pupils)		AUSTRIA (350 pupils)	
Ethnicity %									
Cypriot	71.2	White British	27.7	Italian	79.6	Slovenian	54.4	Austrian	44.9

In primary school samples of England and Austria, less than half of the sample consisted of dominant ethnic group pupils. The ethnic structure of sample population was less heterogeneous in Italy, Cyprus and Slovenia.

**Table 2: Percentage of pupils of dominant ethnicity<sup>4</sup> included in the sample (secondary school respondents)**

CYPRUS (356 pupils)		ENGLAND (307 pupils)		ITALY (352 pupils)		SLOVENIA (377 pupils)		AUSTRIA (365 pupils)	
Ethnicity %									
Cypriot	75.3	White British	20.8	Italian	79.3	Slovenian	75.9	Austrian	57.8

In comparison to the primary school sample, the secondary school sample of England reflects a higher ethnic diversity. In Slovenia, Austria and Cyprus, the percentage of dominant ethnic group students was higher in the secondary school sample than in the primary school one and, in England, the percentage of White British students was even lower.

## 1.1 Perceptions of ethnic diversity

The experience of being of other or mixed ethnic background rather than of dominant ethnicity stimulates the sensibility to recognise the ethnic diversity of school or class structure.

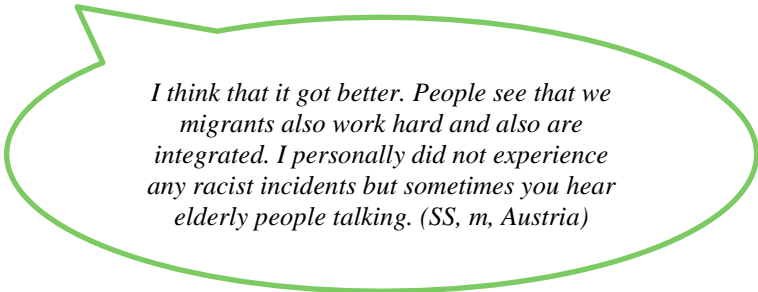
Statistical analysis shows a correlation between the ethnicity and pupils' observation of the number of pupils of different ethnic backgrounds in their school in Cyprus, Slovenia and Austria. Generally, in all participating countries (Cyprus, England, Italy, Slovenia and Austria), pupils of different ethnic background are much more aware of the ethnic diversity of their schools than the pupils of dominant ethnicity.

<sup>3</sup> In England, where ethnic diversity is the highest among all participant countries, White British pupils represent the minority in the sample. In the report, however, the term "dominant ethnic groups" is used for all countries not only to emphasise the prevalent ethnicities of the English, Austrians, Cypriots, Italians and Slovenians, but also to highlight the difference in social position of ethnic groups. Dominant ethnic groups are perceived as those not having foreign origin.

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 2.

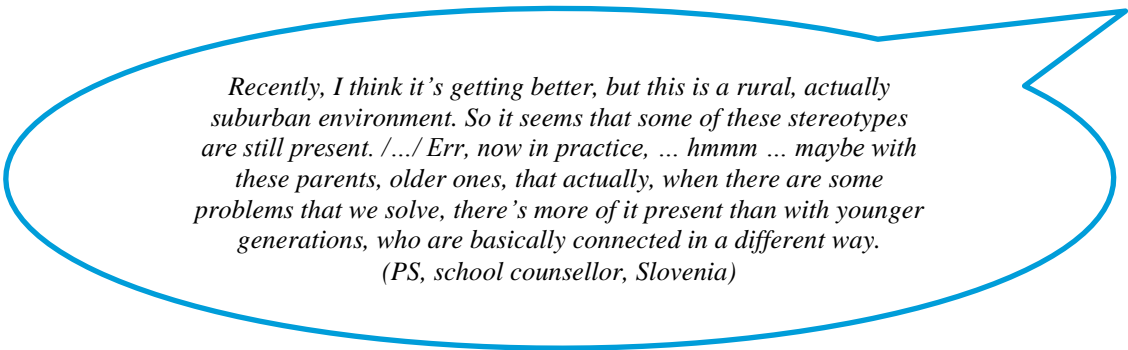
## 1.2 General about interethnic relations

According to the assessment in the Austrian and Slovenian project partners' reports, the interethnic relations have improved. However, in both countries, the elder generations were recognised as less tolerant.



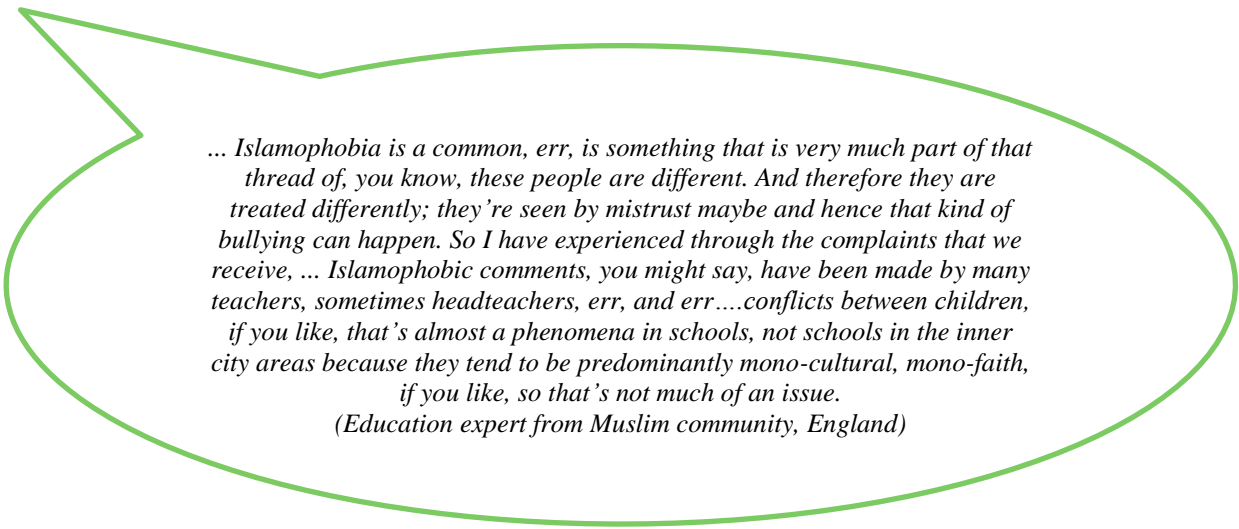
*I think that it got better. People see that we migrants also work hard and also are integrated. I personally did not experience any racist incidents but sometimes you hear elderly people talking. (SS, m, Austria)*

In the Slovenian and English reports, distinctions between urban and rural areas were pointed out.



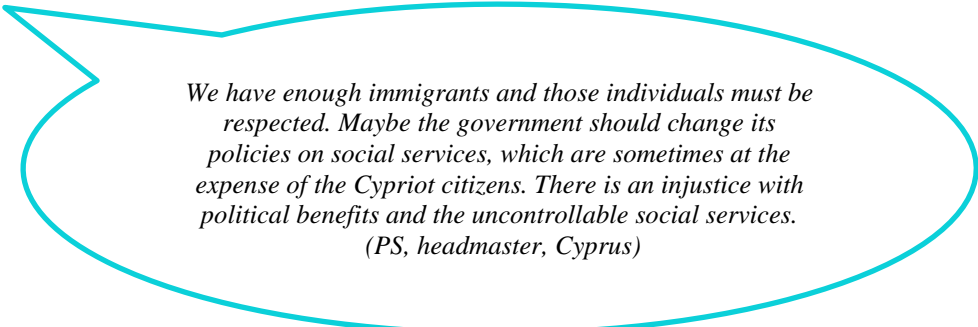
*Recently, I think it's getting better, but this is a rural, actually suburban environment. So it seems that some of these stereotypes are still present. /.../ Err, now in practice, ... hmmm ... maybe with these parents, older ones, that actually, when there are some problems that we solve, there's more of it present than with younger generations, who are basically connected in a different way. (PS, school counsellor, Slovenia)*

**In England**, the sixth form students raised concerns about being judged on the colour of their skin. Their perception was that outside London the situation is different, less multicultural, and therefore the potential of interethnic tensions may be higher. Racism has in general decreased in terms of overt violence. Islamophobia is common and increasing; however, it is now occurring in more subtle, less overt forms such as structural violence in the form of educational and occupational discrimination and negative stereotyping.



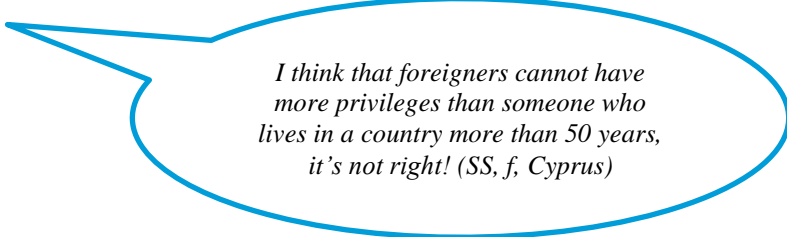
*... Islamophobia is a common, err, is something that is very much part of that thread of, you know, these people are different. And therefore they are treated differently; they're seen by mistrust maybe and hence that kind of bullying can happen. So I have experienced through the complaints that we receive, ... Islamophobic comments, you might say, have been made by many teachers, sometimes headteachers, err, and err....conflicts between children, if you like, that's almost a phenomena in schools, not schools in the inner city areas because they tend to be predominantly mono-cultural, mono-faith, if you like, so that's not much of an issue. (Education expert from Muslim community, England)*

**In Cyprus**, the respondents stated a growing concern about the presence of migrant groups in the country.



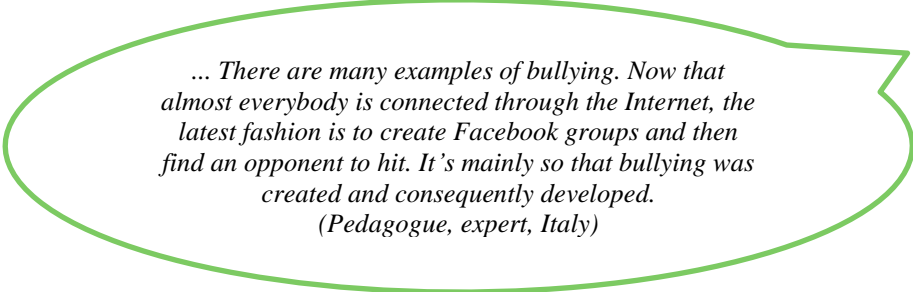
*We have enough immigrants and those individuals must be respected. Maybe the government should change its policies on social services, which are sometimes at the expense of the Cypriot citizens. There is an injustice with political benefits and the uncontrollable social services.*  
(PS, headmaster, Cyprus)

Students believe that politicians and society in general provide more benefits to immigrants than to native Cypriots.



*I think that foreigners cannot have more privileges than someone who lives in a country more than 50 years, it's not right!* (SS, f, Cyprus)

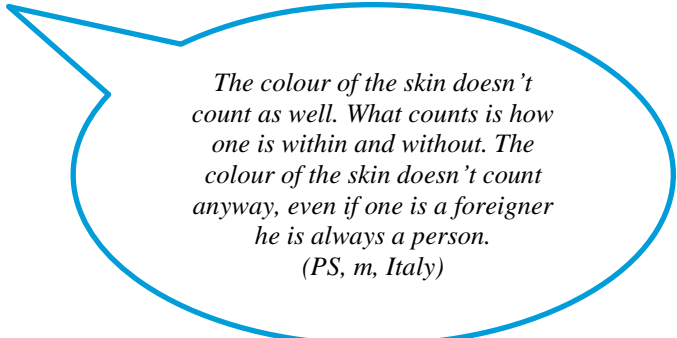
**In Italy**, the problems of racism and bullying were recognised as widespread between young people. Interethnic bullying often starts on the web first and finally moves to the places where young people meet face to face.



*... There are many examples of bullying. Now that almost everybody is connected through the Internet, the latest fashion is to create Facebook groups and then find an opponent to hit. It's mainly so that bullying was created and consequently developed.*  
(Pedagogue, expert, Italy)

### 1.3 Who are the “others”?

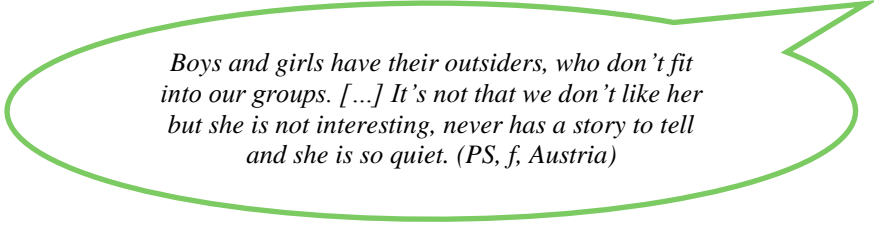
When talking with pupils in Austria and Italy, individualised attitude towards others was stressed by them. What matters is the personality of an individual, not his/her race, ethnicity, religion, etc.



*The colour of the skin doesn't count as well. What counts is how one is within and without. The colour of the skin doesn't count anyway, even if one is a foreigner he is always a person.*  
(PS, m, Italy)

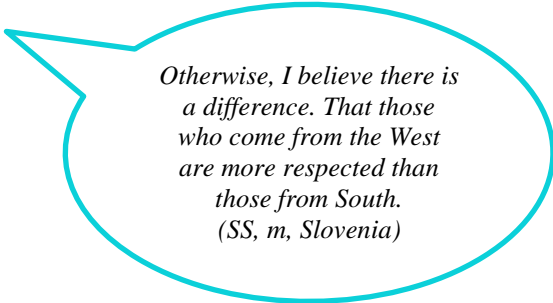


Similarly, in Austria, younger pupils perceive “others” as being different from the mainstream in class, mainly in terms of personality and behaviour but not in terms of their origin/nationality/ethnicity.



*Boys and girls have their outsiders, who don't fit into our groups. [...] It's not that we don't like her but she is not interesting, never has a story to tell and she is so quiet. (PS, f, Austria)*

In Slovenia, in the perception of “others” there is an evident differentiation between the nationalities from South-Eastern parts of Europe (like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, etc.) and Western or Northern parts of Europe. While tolerance is higher in case of western nationalities, the Balkan nations are less accepted among Slovenians.

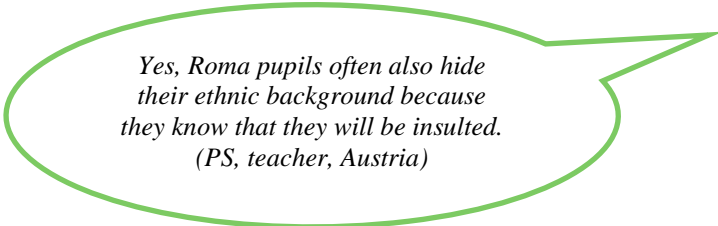


*Otherwise, I believe there is a difference. That those who come from the West are more respected than those from South. (SS, m, Slovenia)*

In Cyprus, some specific ethnic groups that were identified by the interviewees as targets of prejudices and discrimination were of Asian background, such as Filipinos, Sri Lankan and Pakistanis and of Eastern European background, mostly Romanians and Bulgarians. Religious background also appeared to play a distinctive role in discriminating against specific groups in Cyprus. It seems that groups associated with Islam are treated with more scepticism compared to other religious groups.

No particular ethnic groups were singled out in England; violence, when it occurs, happens across ethnicities and it varies.

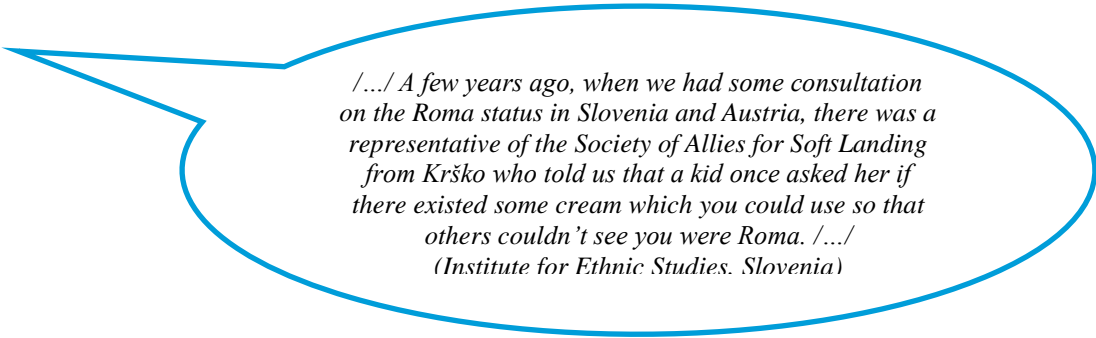
In terms of ethnicity, “others” are often defined through the lens of hierarchic position. When evaluating the attitudes of the majority population towards different ethnic groups in Austria, Slovenia and Italy, the Roma people (as also the Sinti and Kurds in Austria) were identified as the most exposed to intolerance, stereotyping and discrimination.



*Yes, Roma pupils often also hide their ethnic background because they know that they will be insulted. (PS, teacher, Austria)*

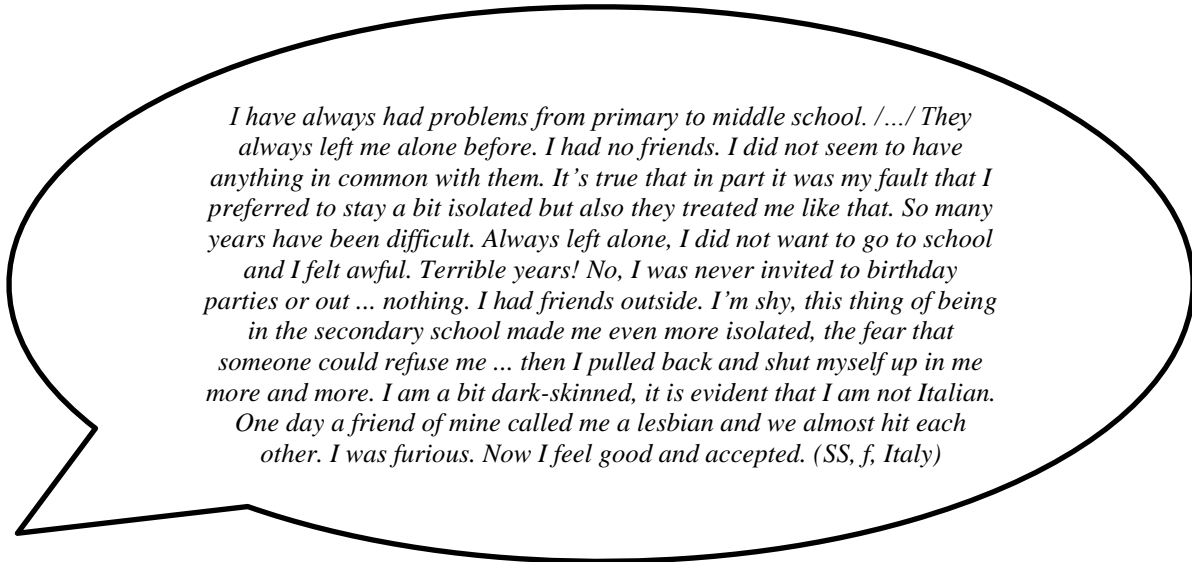
A similar situation was observed in Slovenia. An 11 years old girl of the Roma ethnic background declared herself as a Croat, but later in the focus group discussion about prejudices she explained that others think

they (the Roma) “smell and should go to school for students with special needs”. Hiding the Roma ethnic background could be understood as a reasonable consequence of multiple prejudices related to the Roma.



*.../ A few years ago, when we had some consultation on the Roma status in Slovenia and Austria, there was a representative of the Society of Allies for Soft Landing from Krško who told us that a kid once asked her if there existed some cream which you could use so that others couldn't see you were Roma. .../ (Institute for Ethnic Studies. Slovenia)*

Regarding the position of Roma, the Italian researchers stressed the **attitudes towards foreign adopted children**, having formal rights as other Italians but in peer groups and in wider society they are often treated as “foreigners”. An adopted girl, coming from India, explained.



*I have always had problems from primary to middle school. .../ They always left me alone before. I had no friends. I did not seem to have anything in common with them. It's true that in part it was my fault that I preferred to stay a bit isolated but also they treated me like that. So many years have been difficult. Always left alone, I did not want to go to school and I felt awful. Terrible years! No, I was never invited to birthday parties or out ... nothing. I had friends outside. I'm shy, this thing of being in the secondary school made me even more isolated, the fear that someone could refuse me ... then I pulled back and shut myself up in me more and more. I am a bit dark-skinned, it is evident that I am not Italian. One day a friend of mine called me a lesbian and we almost hit each other. I was furious. Now I feel good and accepted. (SS, f, Italy)*

#### 1.4 *Interethnic relations in schools*

Pupils included in the research in Austria, England, Italy and Slovenia estimate interethnic relations in school as largely positive. Interculturality itself does not represent a problem and is well accepted. However,

- in England, children in primary school do report some incidences of racism and religious discrimination among children. Elder students noticed segregation or social grouping on the basis of ethnicity, while younger student mentioned that they do socialize with their friends of other ethnicities;
- teachers in Austria stressed socially embedded concepts, such as “foreigners” or “the Austrians” are present in pupils' minds;

- experts and school staff in Slovenia stress that interethnic tolerance depends on general socio-economic situation in the country. Economic crisis can influence interethnic relations and deepen intolerance and discriminative behaviour towards ethnic minorities and migrant populations.

In Cyprus, mixed perceptions about interethnic tolerance in schools were identified, ranging from negative to (politically correct) positive.

Treatment of pupils in schools is not based on their ethnicity. Researchers from Austria, England, Italy and Slovenia emphasised that pupils mainly estimate the school environment as positive and inclusive. In general, the ethnicity of pupils does not influence the attitude of teachers towards them. Especially younger pupils believe that teachers treat them equally.

*I don't think anyone is valued above another...I think a lot of our teachers are from ethnic backgrounds as well, that helps as well.*  
(SS, pupil, England)

*It's not possible to treat everyone the same. But if teachers don't treat us the same then it's not because of our nationality.* (SS, f, Austria)

Individual cases of discriminative grading, unequal treatment or racist comments were mentioned in Austria, England and Slovenia.

*Because I wear a head scarf in year five one of the teachers they said to me: 'Oh you have to take it off or you're not doing PE', but I won't take it off so I ended up sitting out'.*  
(PS, f, England)

*I have experienced it personally: a teacher gave me a D and an Austrian student got a C although we had the same number of points in the test.* (SS, f, Austria)

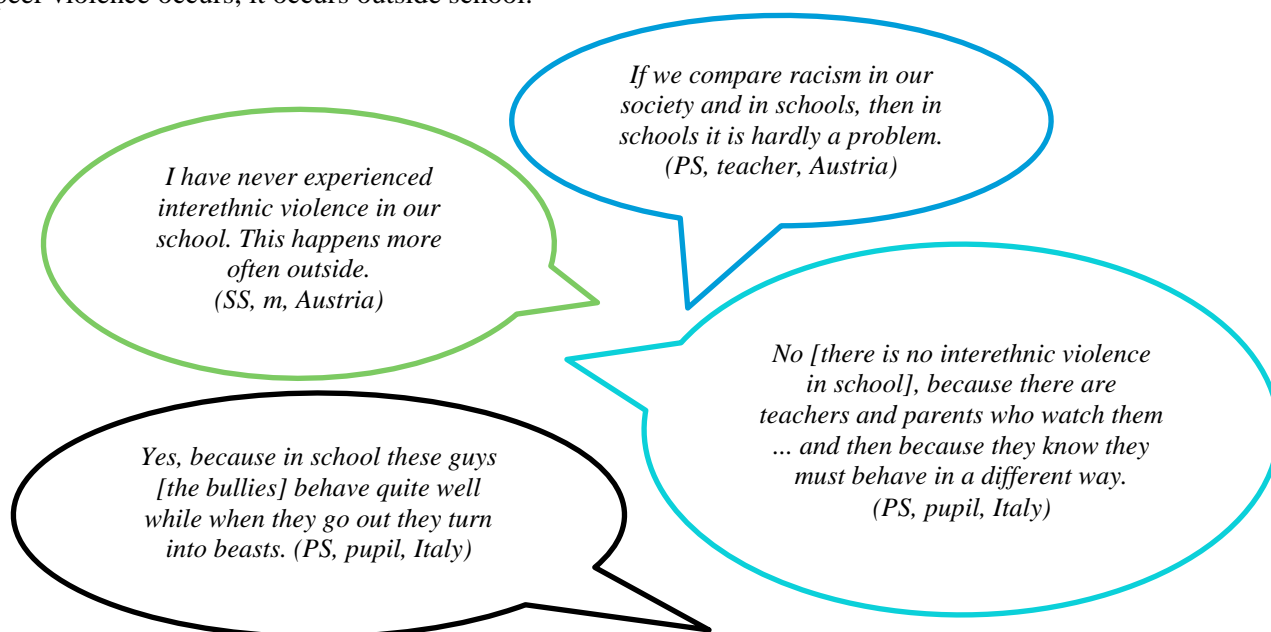
In Cyprus, the children appear to have a mixed perception of how the teachers treat students of different ethnic background:

*There are some teachers who really try to treat students equally.*  
(SS, f, Cyprus)

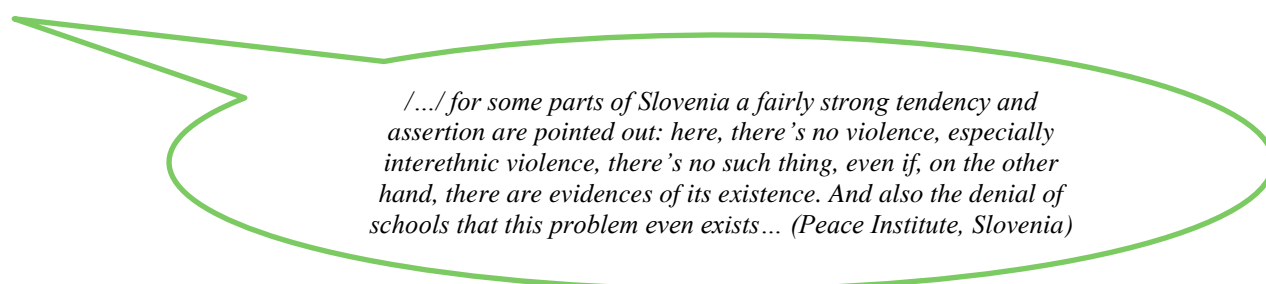
*There are a lot of teachers who don't treat equally all students. For example, they don't know how to pronounce some students' names and they create nicknames for those students. They don't respect them.*  
(SS, f, Cyprus)

## 1.5 *Is interethnic violence an important school issue?*

Research participants from Austria, Italy, Slovenia and England pointed out that **interethnic violence is not an important issue in schools**. In Austria and Italy, school is perceived as a safe environment where interethnic violence generally does not occur. **School functions as a “protected space”** and if interethnic peer violence occurs, it occurs outside school.



In Slovenia, the pupils included in the research mainly believe that ethnicity does not play a role in peer relations. They do not recognise ethnic affiliation as the reason for violent acts among peers. **Interethnic violence is not an issue in school also because of the denial of the heterogeneity of the population:**



The interviews with pupils and staff in primary schools and sixth form centres in England suggest that if ethnic violence were to occur in these institutions, it would be recognised and dealt with through well established procedures, but that generally it was not a feature in their lives within the school/sixth form environment. The schools are required to report any incidents of interethnic or other form of violence to the local authority. However, interviews with experts in the field provide a different and more varied picture with some experts raising issues around the extent to which schools routinely recognise the issues of interethnic violence.

Contrary to the findings in other four countries, **interethnic peer violence is an important issue in Cypriot schools**. Participants in the research noticed a growing concern about the presence of migrants at the national

level. Interviewees referred to subtle discriminatory practices by Cypriot youngsters towards peers from other ethnic groups.

*I observed psychological violence against these groups of students and I believe it is a very important issue. (PS, teacher, Cyprus)*

*Yes, it is a very important issue. (School counsellor, Cyprus)*

All project partners conclude that ethnicity is not a major factor influencing the peer violence. Instead, violent behaviour with a hint of interethnic dimension is a consequence of **a combination of many factors and causes**. Among important factors there are socio-economic position, political context, family background, physical appearance, personality traits, gender, peer group status (role of the “outsider”), recent events, etc.

*It's hard to say that there's more of such violence than among children in general. If a comparison be made, it'd be hard to say that children from ethnic minorities are more often victims of violence – we didn't find that, violence occurs in many different dimensions. Ethnicity isn't the only one, it isn't crucial ... /.../ Yeah, it's about the circumstances, the combination of factors ... (Peace Institute, Slovenia)*

*My perception, when I work with the teenagers, is that interculturality is not the main issue in conflicts. More often classic topics in this age prevail, like gender-issues, group membership, and stronger/weaker groups. [...] I think that they can deal well with these intercultural issues but of course sometimes it can be a reason for a conflict. (ZARA, expert, Austria)*

*They also messed with me sometimes, but they don't anymore. Cuz Im Austrian, and a bit more chubby, and stuff. (PS, m, Slovenia)*

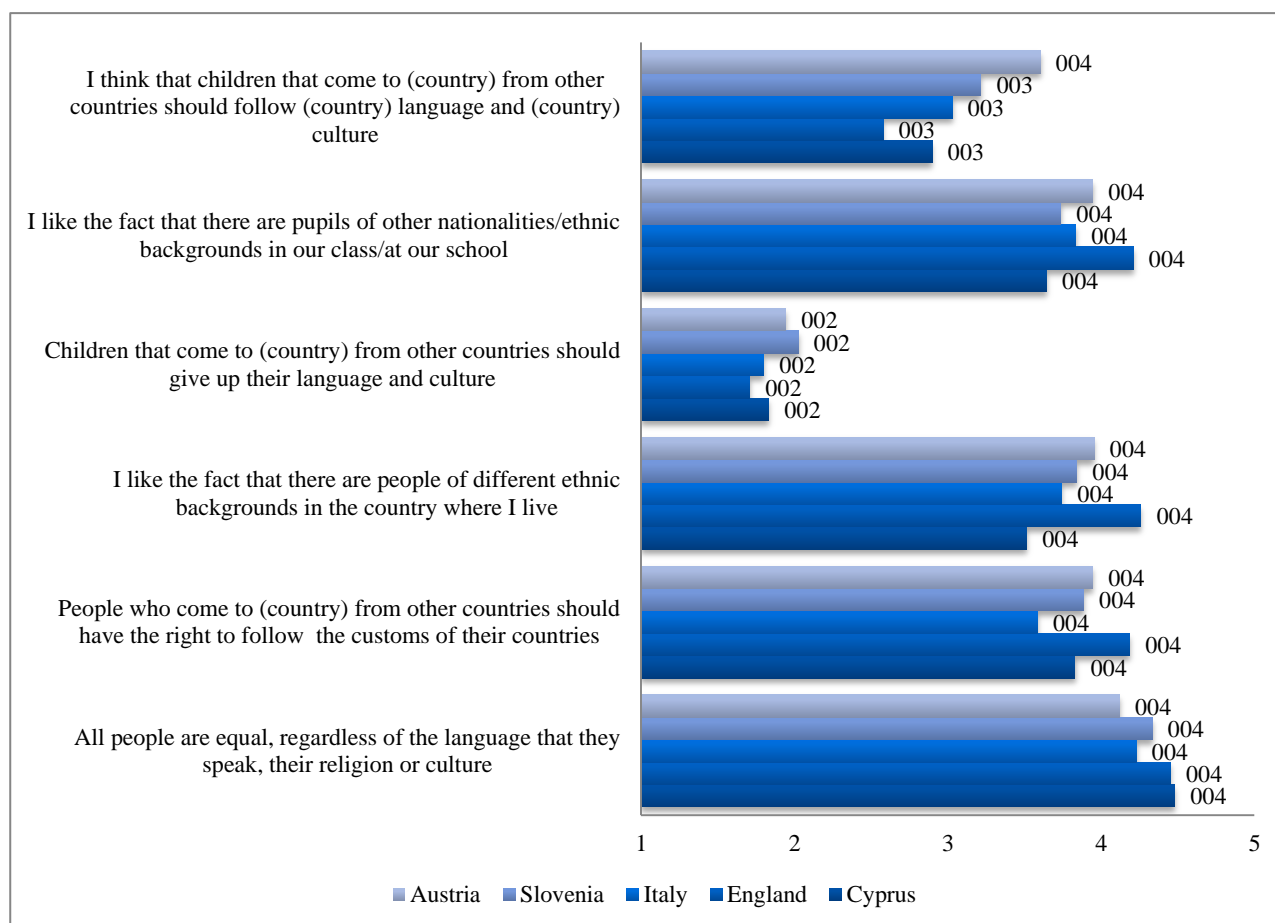
*/.../ if the community, and even the school but mainly the community gives the language and the political context, the students will pick that up and therefore, and then you do end up having an issue between Sikh and Afghan boys and then it is a racial confrontation. But it's not rooted in those two groups of 14 year old boys not liking each other because of their religion. It's rooted because they're boys and they've not received guidance from home. (Educational professional, England)*

*...If, for example, someone [who is Turkish Cypriot] killed a Greek Cypriot and there are Turkish Cypriots students in the school, I'm sure it would cause a violent situation against those children and especially if there are students who have a violent tendency, a fanaticism. (SS, teacher, Cyprus)*

*...he could be Cypriot but yet varies in appearance...again we will have a problem. (PS, teacher, Cyprus)*

## 1.6 Ethnicity and normative statements

Figure 1: Average values of agreement



**Pupils express positive views on the equality of all people in the five countries.** Pupils in the Cyprus sample strongly agree that all people are equal (average value 4.48); however, they tend to agree to the lowest extent with the statement that “I like the fact that there are people of different ethnic backgrounds in the country where I live” (3.51, compared to England’s highest value of 4.26).

Pupils from all countries expressed a general disagreement with the statement *Children that come to my country from other countries should give up their language and culture*, with values ranging from 1.71 (England) to 2.02 (Slovenia).

Slovenian students however expressed a lesser degree of tolerance in one focus group.

*But this is weird, isn't it? Because when we go to their country, women have to clothe and wear headscarves; here they can just walk around in headscarves, can't they?"*  
(SS, m, Slovenia)

On average, the pupils from England declared that they highly agree with the statement that they like the fact there are pupils from other nationalities at their school or in their class (4.21). These values are slightly lower in other countries, the lowest in Cyprus (3.64). Bigger differences arise when comparing the agreement with the statement *Children that come to country from other countries should follow language and culture that they currently live in*. Pupils involved in the research in England mostly disagreed with it (2.58), while the Austrian pupils declared a relatively high level of agreement (3.6).

In Cyprus, England, Italy, Slovenia and Austria a higher percentage of pupils of other ethnic background than dominant or mixed ethnic background strongly agreed with the statements:

- “I like the fact that there are people of different ethnic backgrounds in the country where I live”. Respectively, in all countries, less pupils of different ethnic background strongly disagreed with the statement; and
- “I like the fact that there are pupils of other nationalities/ethnic backgrounds in our class/at our school” - in all countries, a smaller share of pupils of different ethnic background strongly disagreed with the statement.

In Italy, Slovenia and Austria a significantly larger share of pupils of non-dominant or mixed ethnic background strongly agreed with the statement “People who come to (country) from other countries should have the right to follow the customs of their countries”. Respectively, in all countries, relatively less pupils of different ethnic background strongly disagreed with the statement.

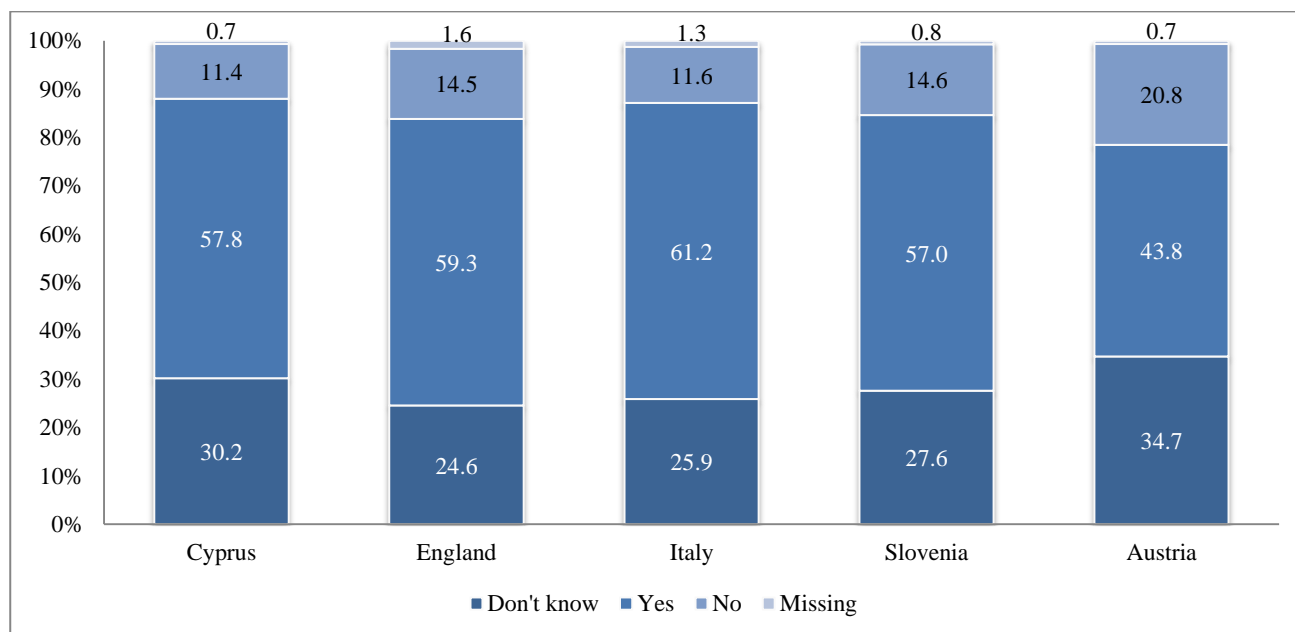
### **1.7 Willingness to sit with a pupil not speaking (well) their language/pupil of different skin colour/pupil of other religion**

In general, the majority of pupils in the samples of all five countries would be happy to sit next to a pupil who is unable to speak (well) their language.

In Cyprus, England, Italy and Austria, a higher percentage of pupils of different ethnic background would be happy to sit with pupils who are unable to speak the respondents’ language. In England, the larger share of those who would be willing to sit with classmates who do not speak (well) the same language can be found among pupils of other ethnic groups, Asian and other white ethnic background.

Every fifth pupil included in the survey from Austria and every seventh pupil from Slovenia and England would not be happy to sit with a pupil who is unable to speak well their mother tongue.

**Figure 2: I would be happy to sit next to a pupil who does not speak my language (well)**

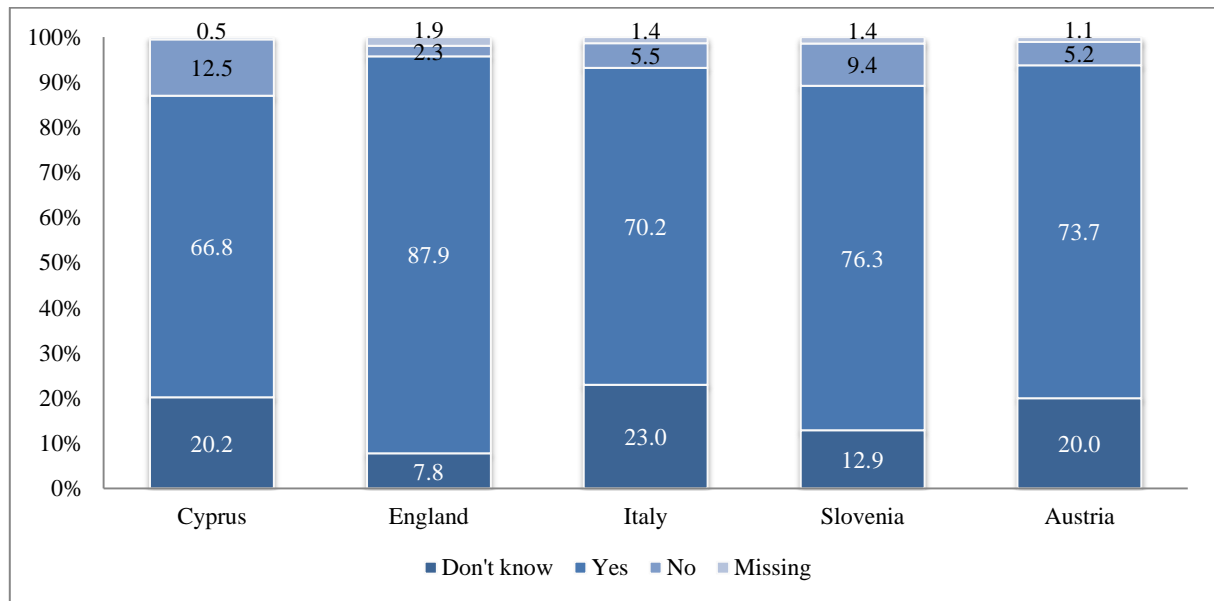


The vast majority of pupils in all five countries would be happy to sit next to a pupil whose skin colour is different from theirs. Among the countries, Italy has the highest percentage of those who answered “I don’t know” (23%) while Cyprus has the highest percentage of pupils who would not be happy to sit next to a person whose skin colour is different from theirs (12.5%):

*Our teachers teach us that we should choose friends based on character not colour ... it doesn't mean that if somebody is black you cannot be friend with. (PS, f, Cyprus)*



**Figure 3: I would be happy to sit next to a pupil whose skin colour is different from mine**



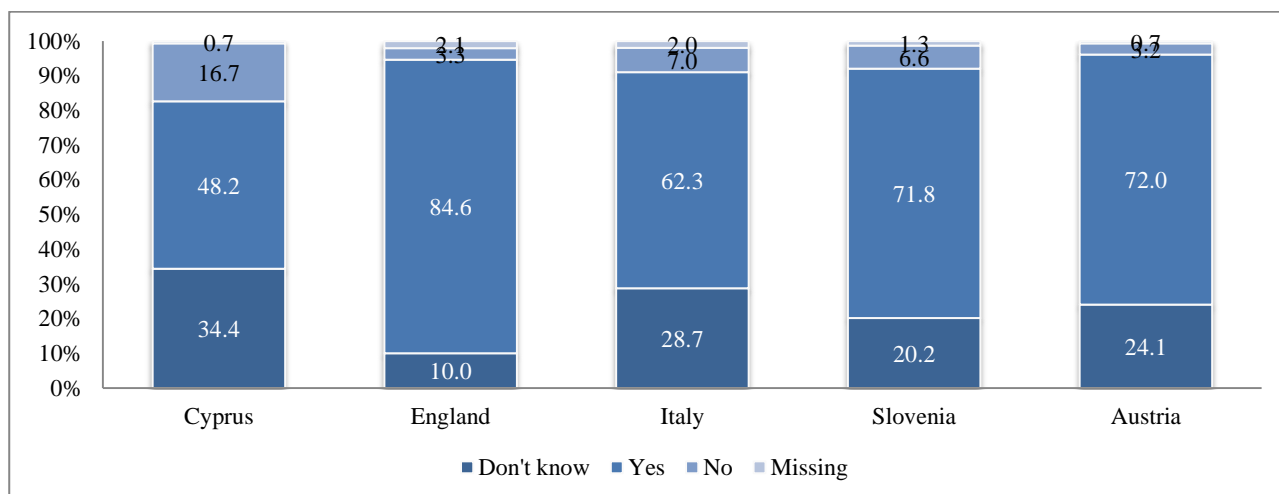
The vast majority of pupils in England, Austria and Slovenia would be happy to sit next to a pupil who has a different religion. The highest percentage of pupils who would be willing to sit next to a pupil of a different religion was found in England (84.6%).

*Everyone mixes well because I don't think anyone in this college is racist. I don't think you know, everybody mixes well because our school promotes multicultural ethnicities to work together, to strive together, to play together.*  
(SS, pupil, England)

Cyprus, on the other hand, has the highest percentage of those who answered “I don’t know” (34.4%) and the highest percentage of those who answered they wouldn’t be willing to sit next to a pupil of a different religion (almost 17%).

In Cyprus, religious background also appeared to play a distinctive role in the attitudes towards specific groups. It appears that the groups associated with Islam are perceived with more scepticism compared to other religious groups.

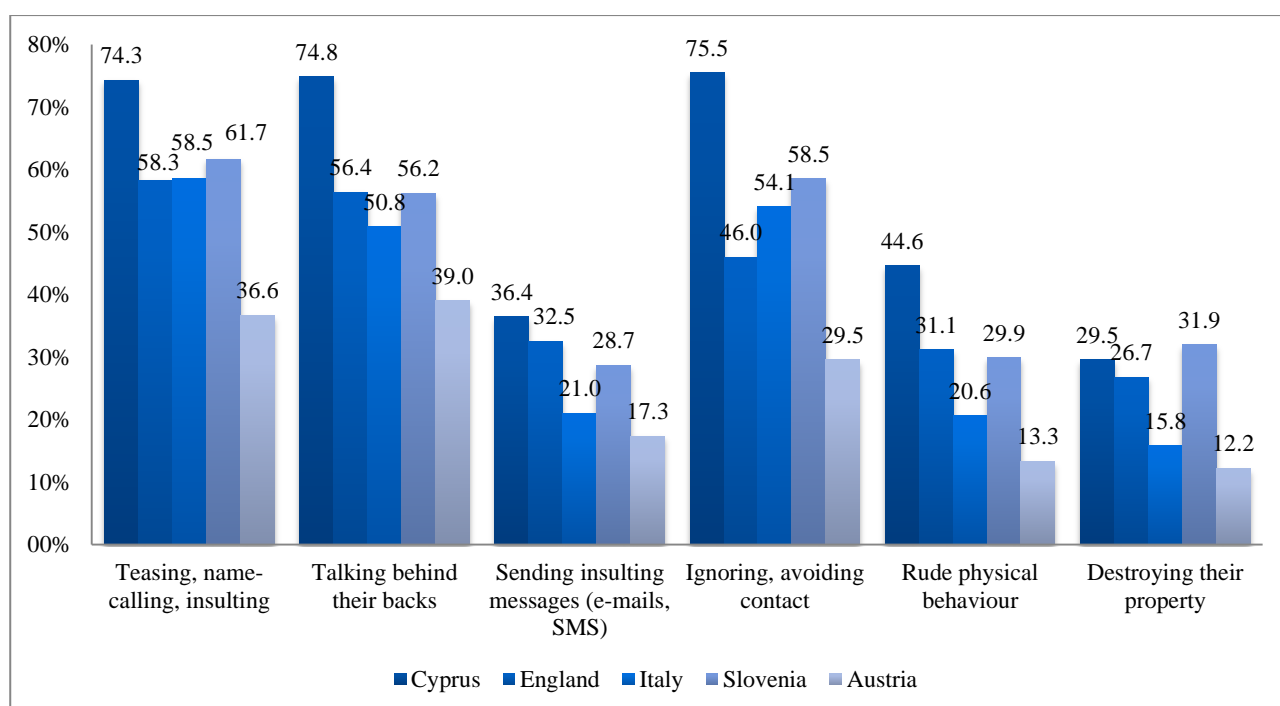
**Figure 4: I would be happy to sit next to a pupil who has a different religion from me**



## 1.8 Noticing interethnic violence

**Cypriot sample has the highest percentage of pupils who witnessed various forms of interethnic violence** (three-quarters of pupils witnessed ignoring, talking behind backs and teasing). Pupils in Slovenia and England also witnessed various forms of interethnic violence more often than their Italian and Austrian counterparts. Sending insulting SMSs or e-mails and insulting comments over the Internet seems to be the least widespread form of interethnic violence in all countries, except in Austria and Italy where the least widespread forms of violence turned out to be rude physical behaviour towards other pupils and hiding and destroying their property.

**Figure 5: Noticed interethnic violence (% of sometimes, often or very often)**



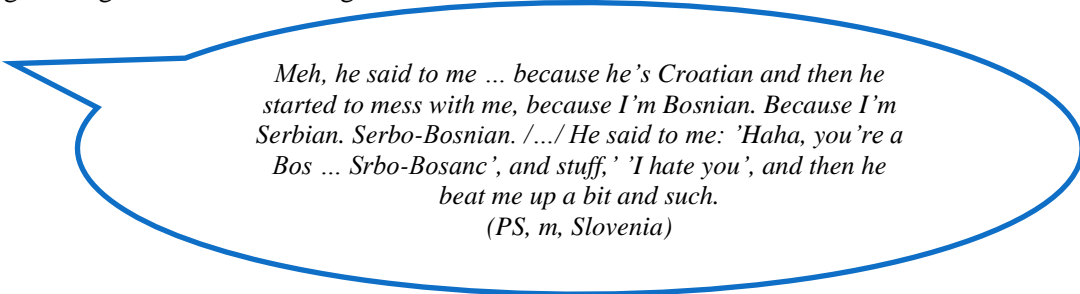
Pupils of non-dominant ethnicities (and those of mixed ethnic background) included in the survey were more aware about interethnic violence happening to their schoolmates:

- in Italy, England, Slovenia and Austria, a significantly larger share of pupils of other or mixed ethnic background noticed cases of teasing of others due to their poor knowledge of the national language;
- in England, Italy and Austria, relatively more pupils of other ethnic background tend to notice habitual teasing, calling names or insulting others because of their ethnic background. In England, noticing such things is present to a larger extent among the pupils of other white, black and mixed ethnic background;
- In Italy, England and Austria, somewhat more pupils of other ethnic background tend to notice rumour spreading more often than pupils of dominant ethnicity. In England, noticing such things is present to a larger extent among pupils of mixed ethnic background and those who do not wish to state their ethnicity;
- Austrian and English pupils of non-dominant or mixed ethnicity noticed cyber bullying, ignoring and avoiding a, physical violence and hiding or destroying property happening to others due to their ethnic background more often than pupils of the dominant ethnic background.

Austrian sample has the highest percentage (53.4%) of pupils who have never noticed others being teased because of their inadequate knowledge of the German language. Cyprus, however, has the highest percentage of pupils who have often witnessed teasing on the basis of inadequate knowledge of the Greek language (14.4%).

## 1.9 *Experiences of interethnic violence*

Rumour spreading and saying untruthful things behind someone's back is the most frequent form of interethnic violence in all countries except in the Slovenian sample, where the most prevalent form of violence is teasing, calling names and insulting:



*Meh, he said to me ... because he's Croatian and then he started to mess with me, because I'm Bosnian. Because I'm Serbian. Serbo-Bosnian. /.../ He said to me: 'Haha, you're a Bos ... Srbo-Bosanc', and stuff,' 'I hate you', and then he beat me up a bit and such.  
(PS, m, Slovenia)*

Students from England most frequently personally experienced five out of six forms of interethnic violence:

- teasing, insulting and name calling;
- sending insulting SMSs or e-mails and insulting comments over the Internet;
- rude physical behaviour;
- ignoring and avoiding;
- hiding or destroying things.

Responses of the survey participants in Cyprus are similar to those of the pupils from England, but their experience of talking behind and saying untruthful things behind their backs is the highest of all participants.

Pupils from Austria and Italy, included in the survey, experienced all forms of interethnic violence least frequently.

**Figure 6: Experienced interethnic violence (% of sometimes, often or very often)**

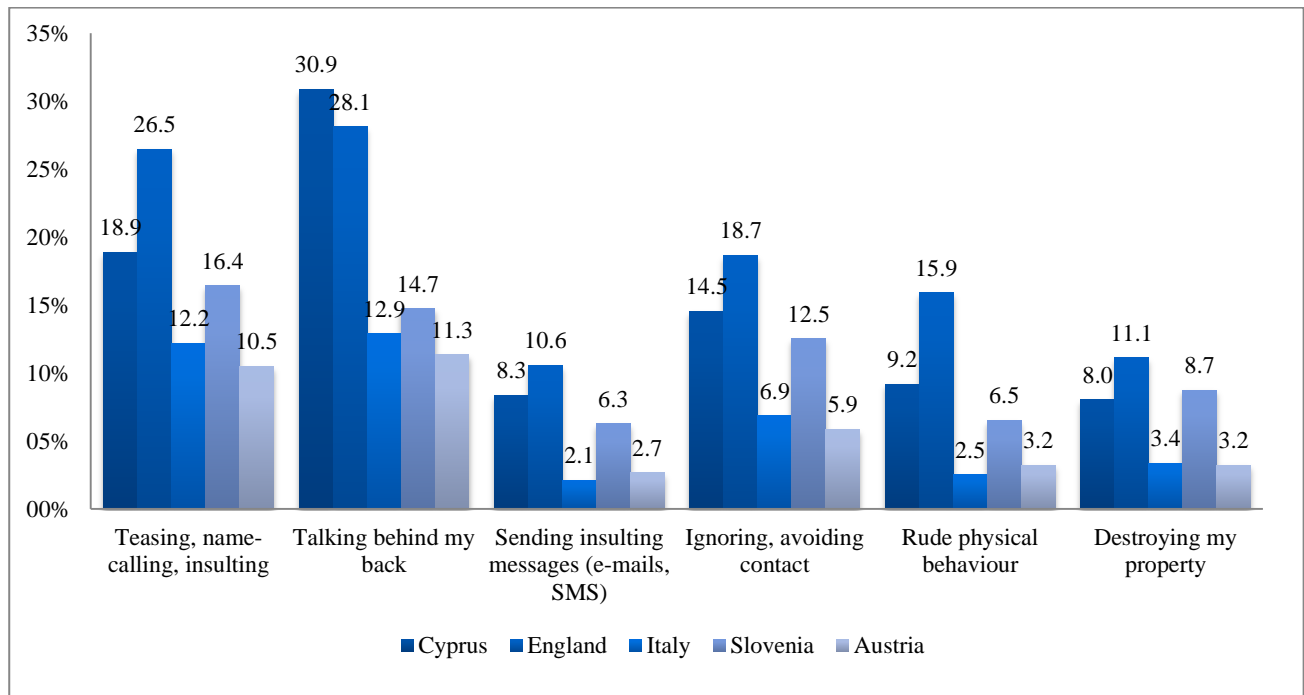
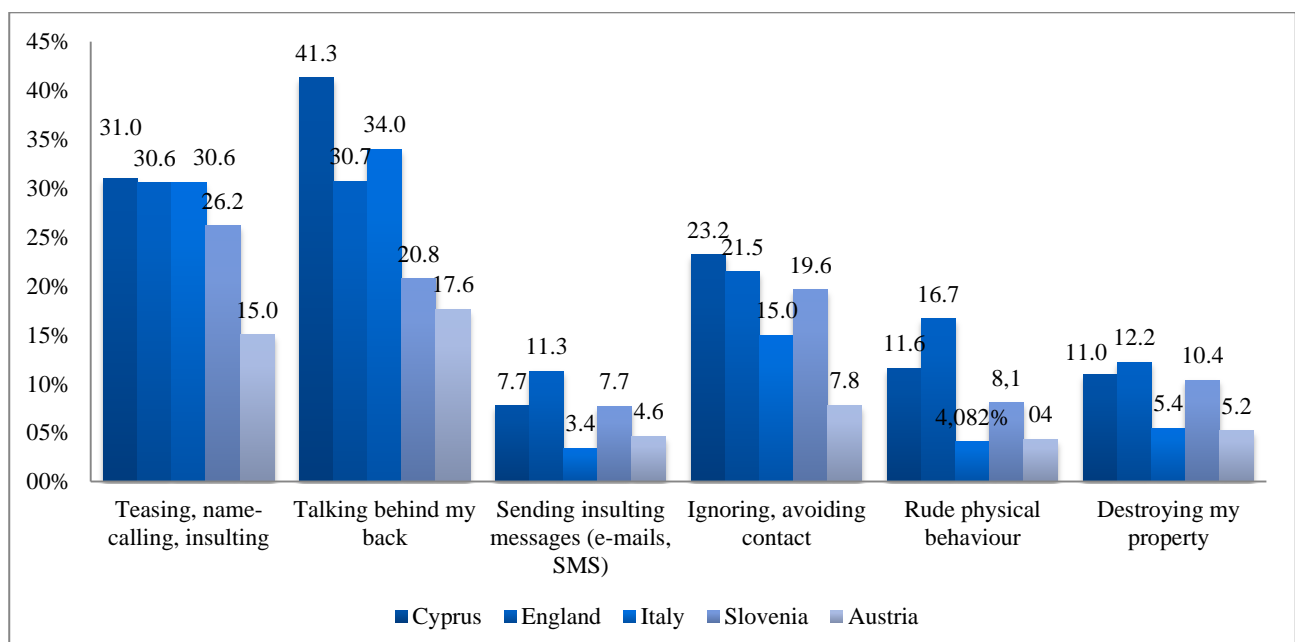
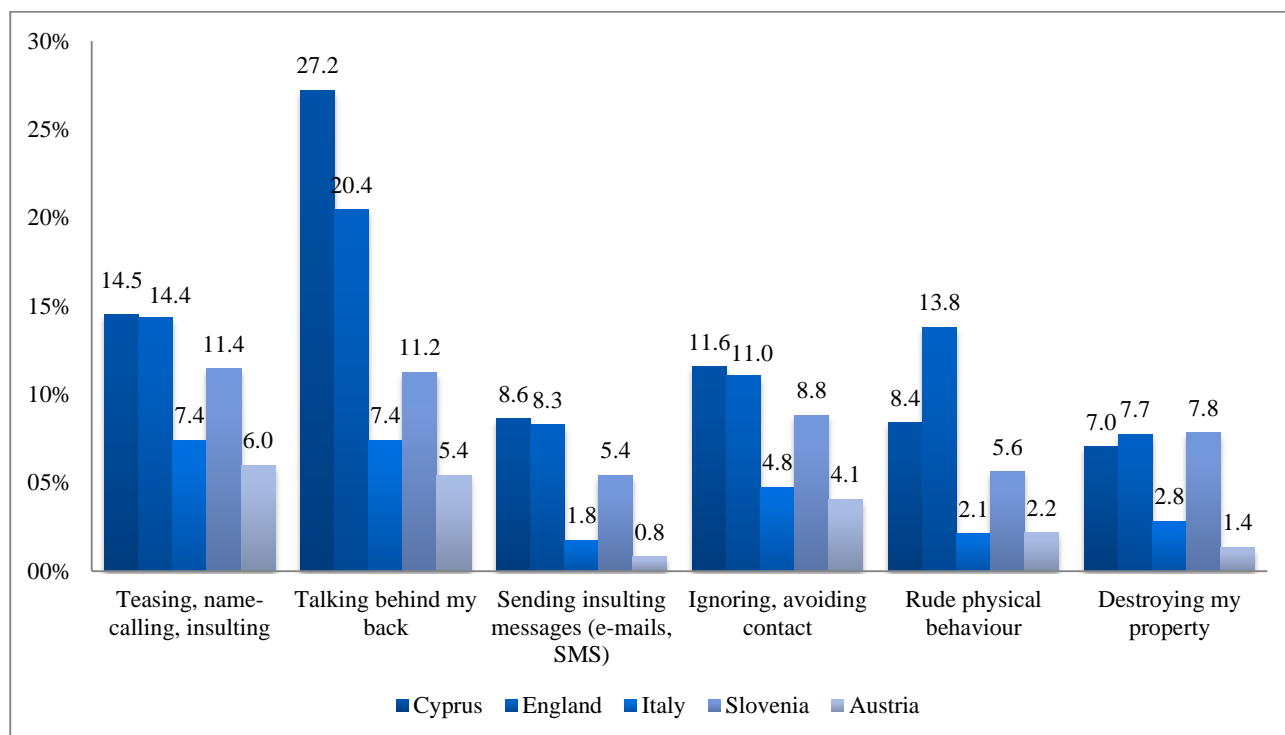


Figure 7 and 8 show that pupils of non-dominant or mixed ethnic background experience interethnic violence more often than pupils of dominant ethnicity.

**Figure 7: Experience of interethnic violence among pupils of non-dominant or mixed ethnic background**



**Figure 8: Experience of interethnic violence among pupils of dominant ethnic background**



In Cyprus, England, Italy, Slovenia and Austria, significantly more pupils of non-dominant ethnic background experienced:

1. Teasing, name-calling or insulting

*They insult each other as they did with D. – they sang “kill the Serb”.  
(PS, m, Austria)*

2. Talking behind their back due to their ethnic background

3. Being shunned by their classmates of dominant ethnicity

*So, those who are foreigners, they, so to say, avoid you. They are more lonely.  
(PS, m, Slovenia)*

Moreover, in Austria, a slightly bigger share of pupils of different ethnic background experienced their property being destroyed due to their ethnic background and in England, a bigger share of non-dominant ethnic background experienced physical interethnic violence.

Namely, in England:

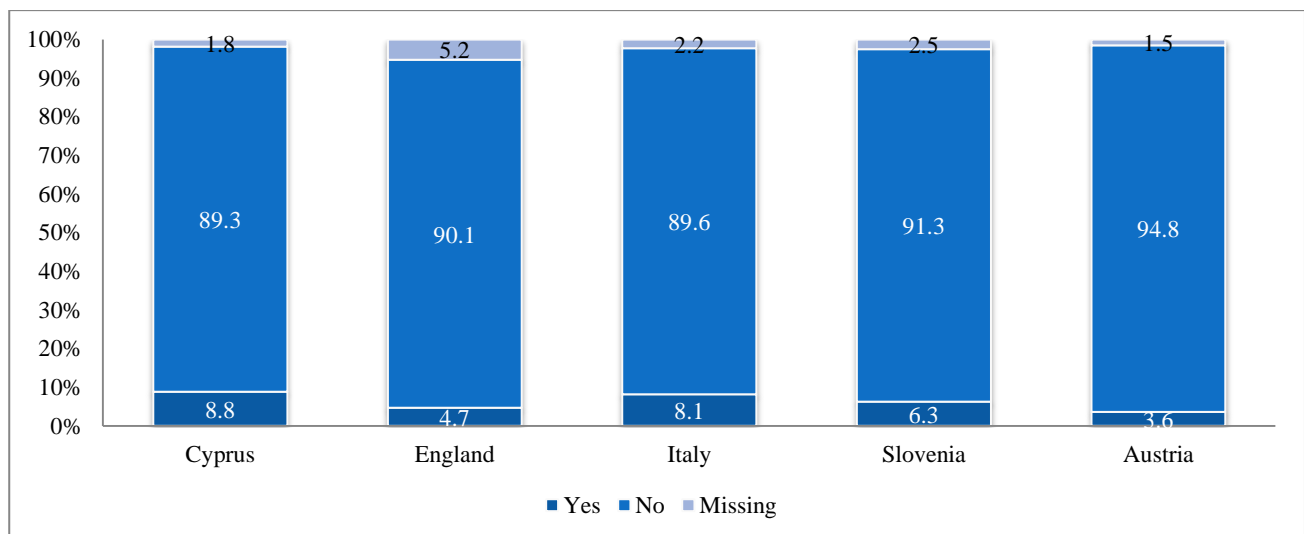
- the highest share of interethnic violence in terms of talking behind their backs can be observed among the pupils who do not wish to state their ethnicity, are of other white, Asian or mixed ethnic background;
- the highest share of interethnic violence in terms of ignoring or avoiding is evident among pupils who do not wish to state their ethnicity, those who are of other white, Asian or mixed ethnic background.
- physical interethnic violence is present to the largest extent among pupils of mixed and other white ethnic background;
- hiding or destroying things happens to the largest extent to pupils who do not wish to state their ethnicity and pupils belonging to other white group of ethnic background.

*People make fun out of our religion and saying stuff about turban and saying different, unkind things about my beliefs and my religions. (PS, m, England)*

### 1.10 Bullying because of his/her ethnic background

A vast majority of the pupils included in the research in all five countries answered that they have never bullied anyone due to his/her ethnic background. Out of all the countries, Cyprus has the highest percentage of those who answered “Yes” (8.8%) and Austria the lowest (3.6%).

**Figure 9: Have you ever bullied anyone because of his/her different ethnic background?**



In everyday life, interethnic violence is encouraged by events that raise the issues of ethnic identity (sports events, media reports and experiences of national conflicts or war).

*Yes, but it can also occur when the Serbian team won and the Italian team lost the game. Then in class acts of violence, that weren't there before between the kids, are unleashed.*  
(SS, professor, Italy)

*I have recently had a case where a Kosovo Albanian girl and a Serbian girl had a problem and they have already had this conflict in their last school. But here the parents were responsible for the conflict – the parents even fought in school once. Here our influence comes to an end and only a social worker can help and go to the families.*  
(PS, teacher, Austria)

*It's very negative, most of the time news reports bad things, that have happened and then everyone assumes 'well, okay that race is always doing bad things. Well we're going to be scared of that race.'* (SS, pupil, England)

*I remember when they reported the news of that Romanian who had killed a man piercing him in the eye with the tip of an umbrella in Rome, a hell of a conflict raged. The kids at school were all against the Romanian kids and I still remember the aggression, remember my Romanian friend. She was on the bus with her baby in her arms, the phone rang and she started the conversation in her language. At that point all people on the bus attacked her with insults and pulled her off the bus. (Testimony of Sant' Egidio's Community, Italy)*

## 2 Conclusion

To sum up the most important findings:

- Interethnic peer violence in the school environment does not seem to be a major issue of concern in the samples of all participant countries, with the exception of Cyprus, where both pupils and school staff recognize a growing problem of xenophobia and discriminative treatment of migrant minorities in broader society as well as in the school environment. Nevertheless, even though ethnicity is not regarded as a significant factor influencing peer violence, it would be misguided to assume that the phenomenon does not exist at schools of all countries, included in the research.
- In these times of socio-economic crisis, growing unemployment, lack of economic and social reforms and the absence of equal opportunities, we may expect a growth of inter-ethnic, inter-religious and overall intolerance in the EU countries. The potential role of the socio-economic crisis as an igniter of xenophobia, intolerance and traditionalistic and nationalistic orientations has been recognized by many scholars.
- In Austria, Italy and Slovenia the members of the Roma and Sinti people still represent the most marginalised, socially vulnerable ethnic group that is habitually a target of discrimination, prejudice and stereotypisation, which also transcends from the everyday life into the sphere of the school environment.
- In all participant countries, pupils highly agree with normative statements on equality of all people, generally positively value the multicultural environment in their countries as well as in their schools and mostly support the idea that immigrants should have the right to follow their own traditions, customs and religion. Moreover, they highly disagree with the statement that immigrants should abandon their own language, culture and religion and fully assimilate in the new society.
- Pupils of non-dominant ethnicities tend to positively assess multicultural environment in a higher degree than their schoolmates of dominant ethnicity. Furthermore, pupils of non-dominant ethnicities tend to support the statement on immigrant's right to preserve their own language, culture and religion in a higher degree than other pupils. Having a personal migrant/minority experience seems to influence a general positive attitude towards multi/interculturalism, the respect of diversity and awareness of minority rights.
- Pupils of non-dominant ethnicities are more willing to sit next to a classmate who is unable to speak their mother tongue. Since cases of teasing pupils who have insufficient knowledge of the official language of the country are quite widespread, we might assume that immigrant/minority pupils relate more easily with their classmates with whom they might share a similar experience of being "different" from the majority in the class.



- Pupils of non-dominant ethnicities are more aware of interethnic violence and ethnic discrimination happening to their schoolmates. The results of the research study show that they perceive various forms of discriminative treatment and bullying more often than the classmates of dominant ethnicity.
- Ethnicity/nationality per se is only rarely a factor that causes peer violence; on the other hand, referring to the respective ethnicity/nationality usually happens when the existing conflict among pupils escalates.
- Pupils of non-dominant ethnicities are victims of interethnic violence more often than pupils of dominant ethnicity.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA

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London South Bank University

Sally Inman  
Pip McCormack  
Sarah Walker

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# 1 Introduction

In researching interethnic violence<sup>5</sup> and children's rights in the school environment in England, there is a vast tapestry of interethnic relations available for analysis. However, in light of world and home events over the past two decades, in particular the terrorist attacks on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 and the London bombings in July 2005, and the resulting counter-terrorism strategies that disproportionately affect Muslims, there is discernible evidence of increased hostility and prejudice towards Muslims in England and, indeed, Europe more generally (CBMI, 2004; Poynting and Mason, 2007; Crozier and Davies, 2008; Suleiman, 2009; Lambert and Githens-Mazar, 2010; Allen, 2010).

Thus, we opted to analyse interethnic violence in the school environment in England through the lens of Islamophobia<sup>6</sup>, in relation to both children's own experiences as well as attitudes towards Muslims. When referring to Muslims, it is important to note that we do not assume Muslims to have an essentialist homogenised identity but, rather, acknowledge the multifaceted and dynamic nature of identity and understand Muslims as those who choose to identify as such. Indeed, Muslims in the UK are a very ethnically and theologically diverse group (Suleiman, 2009; Beckford et al., 2006).

## Demographic context

The most recent census in England and Wales was conducted in March 2011<sup>7</sup>, and results reveal that most residents of England and Wales belonged to the White ethnic group (86 per cent, 48.2 million) in 2011, and the majority of these belonged to the White British group (80 per cent of the total population, 45.1 million). However, in London in 2011, just 45 per cent (3.7 million) out of 8.2 million usual residents were White British (Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2011).

In relation to religion, Christianity remains the largest religion in England and Wales in 2011 despite falling numbers. Muslims are the next biggest religious group and have grown in the last decade from 3% in 2001 to 5%; up from 1.55 million to 2.7 million (ONS, 2011). Great ethnic and theological diversity can be found in British Muslim communities, a fact often overlooked in the literature, which has a tendency to homogenise and essentialise what it means to be Muslim (Suleiman, 2009; Change Institute, 2009).

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<sup>5</sup> We use this term to refer to violence experienced or perceived to occur on the basis of linguistic, religious, cultural and/or racial affiliation. The concept of violence is understood in the broadest possible sense as encompassing all forms of behaviour that in a variety of ways hurt the individual.

<sup>6</sup> Islamophobia itself is a contested term because it is often imprecisely applied to very diverse phenomena, ranging from xenophobia to anti-terrorism and some have questioned how it differs from other terms such as racism, anti-Islamism, and anti-Muslimness (see for example, Cesari, 2006; Richardson 2009). However, the term is used with increasing frequency in the media and political arenas, and sometimes in academic circles and is of widespread use in the UK. Thus whilst acknowledging the limitations of the term, we have adopted the definition used by the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR): *the fear, hatred or hostility directed towards Islam and Muslims. ... Islamophobia affects all aspects of Muslim life and can be expressed in several ways including: attacks, abuse and violence against Muslims; attacks on mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim cemeteries; discrimination in education, employment, housing, and delivery of goods and services; and the lack of provisions and respect for Muslims in public institutions* (cited in Allen, 2010 p.5).

<sup>7</sup> The census in England and Wales was run by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Simultaneous, yet separate, censuses took place in Scotland and Northern Ireland. All three censuses took place on 27 March 2011. 94% of the population in England and Wales completed the census (ONS, 2012).

## 2 Islamophobia and interethnic violence in schools

In the UK, large scale surveys on bullying in general reveal that about half of primary pupils and a quarter of secondary pupils say they have been bullied at school (Hayden 2009; Brown and Winterton, 2010). However, the concept of bullying itself is still a somewhat contested issue<sup>8</sup> and, owing to differences in methodology and terminology, it is difficult to find comparative data (Oliver and Candappa, 2003; Wolke et al., 2001). Researchers utilise different concepts of bullying, although most draw heavily on the work of Olweus (e.g. 1997). Whilst there is little literature available on interethnic violence in schools in England (Monks et al., 2008), several questionnaire studies have focused explicitly on the degree and frequency of peer victimization and bullying among ethnic minority children, and the field reveals differing findings.

Some studies find that children from ethnic minorities were more likely to experience racist name-calling and social exclusion compared to children from a majority ethnic group (Boulton, 1995; Verkuyten and Thijs, 2002; Monks et al., 2008; British Council, 2008; DfES, 2006; Anderson et al., 2008). Whereas others (for example, Sweeting and West, 2001; Smith and Shu, 2000; Green et al., 2010), found low levels of racial bullying, although the majority of respondents in these studies were “white”.<sup>9</sup> There is also evidence that pupils do not report racist abuse when asked about bullying in general, which Siann et al. (cited in Monks et al., 2008, p.510) suggest points to an underestimation of levels of racial victimization experienced by pupils in schools. Clearly, racist bullying is a complex phenomenon across and between ethnicities and may vary between schools depending on the proportion of ethnic minority pupils (Green et al., 2010) and the overall school ethos. Further, much of the research on racism in schools points to the fact that teachers often deny or are oblivious to the existence of racism in their school (Hill et al., 2007; Crozier and Davies, 2008; Gillborn and Rollock, 2010). Such findings are symptomatic of the often widely held view that racism is obvious, in the form of violent attacks, rather than reflecting the reality that many forms of racism can be much more subtle and even unintended (Gillborn and Rollock, 2010, p. 157).

Whilst there is very limited literature available on instances of Islamophobia in English schools (Shaik, 2006), some research does emphasise that institutional racism towards Muslims within the educational sector both in relation to teachers’ assumptions and prejudices towards Muslim students is a problem (Weller et al., 2001; Archer, 2003; Shah, 2006; Hill et al., 2007; Crozier and Davies, 2008; Meer, 2009; OSI, 2010; Shain, 2011). Shain (2011) and Crozier and Davies (2008) found racism to be a central feature of the Muslim pupils in their studies’ experiences of school, from both overt, low level name-calling to more covert institutional racism. In line with other studies, they also found teachers often denied this experience. Further, unfortunately, as Islamophobia is not always recognised as racism and is often not referred to in guidance/policy documents by local authorities, Islamophobia in schools can sometimes go unaddressed (CMBI, 2004).

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<sup>8</sup> For further discussion of the definition of bullying see Monks and Smith (2006).

<sup>9</sup> The report used data from the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE), which encompasses a number of limitations (see for example Gillborn, 2010).

### 3 Method

The research adopted a mixed approach using both a quantitative survey and qualitative fieldwork. The quantitative study utilized a questionnaire and the second stage a qualitative study employing individual semi-structured interviews with experts, teachers and other educational professionals and focus group interviews with pupils.

#### **Quantitative research**

The data collection for the quantitative survey took place between November and December 2011 in five different regions of England: London, the South East, West and East Midlands and Yorkshire and Humber. However, for the purpose of the research, we treated the East and West Midlands as one region<sup>10</sup>. With Islamophobia as the principal research focus, all the schools selected needed to be in areas with a high Muslim population. This decision limited the choice of regions in which to select the sample. Purposive sampling was used in that the regions and the schools were selected according specific criteria in the project description:

The survey will be conducted in four ethnically mixed regions in each country. In accordance with the literature, the following criteria will be used for identifying these areas:

- closeness of the border (border region),
- the urbanity of the area (highly urban areas), and
- the “attractiveness” of the region for migrants (region with high level of migration – economic migrants)

#### **Participants**

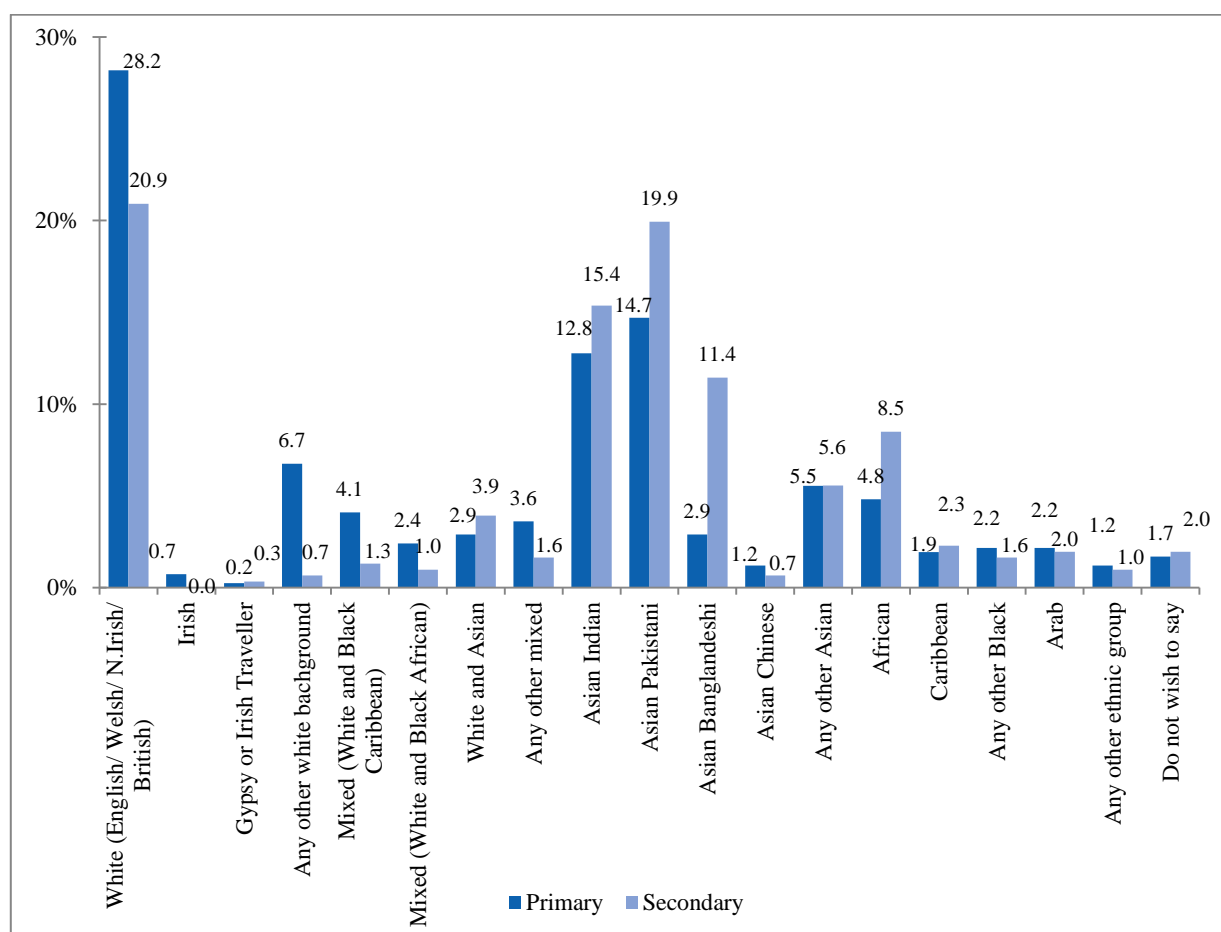
A total of 729 children and young people completed questionnaires. Fifty-seven per cent (422) of respondents were in primary school in Year 6, with two classes of Year 5 children. Forty-three per cent (307) were in secondary school in Year 13, with two classes in Year 12. The gender breakdown in the sample overall was 54% female and 46% male.

The ethnic composition of the sample is broken down in Figure 1. Overall, the largest ethnic group of the sample was White British (25%) followed by Pakistani (17%), and then Indian (14%).

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<sup>10</sup> Due to difficulty in obtaining schools in the Midlands regions we had to use schools across both West and East Midlands.

**Figure 1: Ethnic background of respondents**

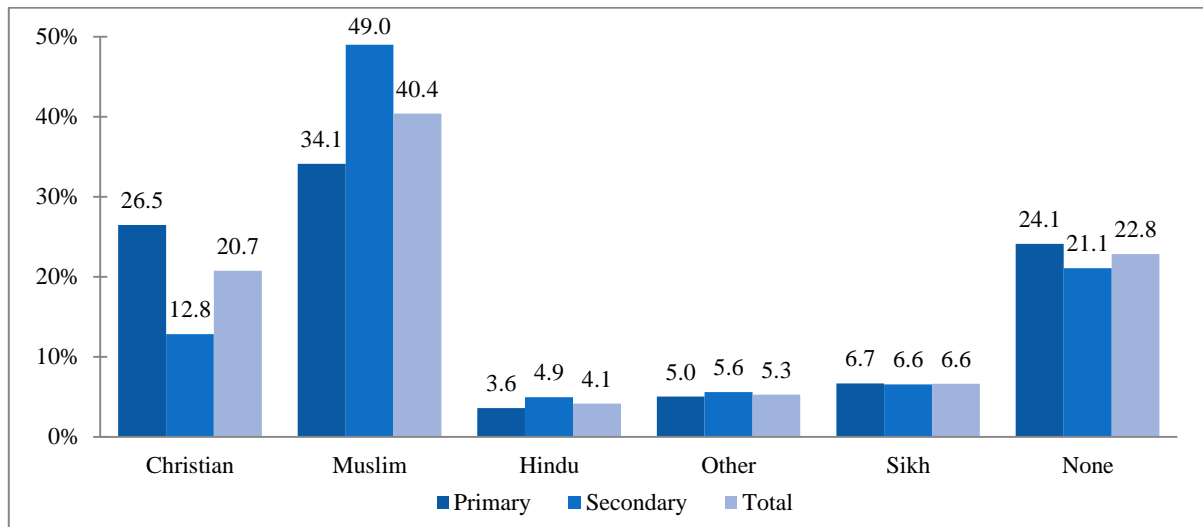


## Religions

Overall, over 40% of the respondents were Muslim, reflecting our choice of schools in areas with high Muslim populations. In order to remain in line with project requirements, we chose schools in urban areas with highly mixed populations and as we wanted to capture Muslim students' experiences, a large number of pupils came from a Muslim background. Other religions were represented as follows: Christian (21%), Sikh (6%), Hindu (4%), Other (1% — including Jehovah's Witness, Taoist, Zoroastrian), Buddhist (0.7%) and Jewish (0.3%). Twenty-three per cent of respondents stated that they were not religious and 3 per cent chose not to declare their religion.

As numbers of respondents from a Jewish or Buddhist background were so low (2 and 5 respectively), the decision was made to amalgamate these groups together with "Other". Those who chose not to declare their religion were also grouped into "Other" to create a larger group for the purposes of analysis. Figure 2 shows the resulting percentages.

**Figure 2: Religious background of sample regrouped**



## Measures and procedures

The questionnaire was developed with all partners across the five countries, with additional questions added by each partner for their particular focus. The questionnaire explored children's attitudes to their peers with regard to ethnic background and religion, the nature of interethnic violence in school as well as pupil and institutional responses in school, locally and on a national level. Ethnic classifications were taken from the 2011 UK census.

The schools and sixth forms chosen for the study were all non-selective, mixed gender, state schools with a higher than average ethnic mix. No faith schools were included in the sample<sup>11</sup>. Schools were also asked to provide contextual data on their ethnic composition and anti-bullying policies. All the researchers were White British. The aim was to have a minimum of 40 pupils completing the questionnaire in each school; however, in three secondary school/sixth form centres, figures were slightly lower.

## Qualitative research

The qualitative part of the research was undertaken between December 2011 and April 2012. The interview schedules were agreed across the five European partners but with additional questions for England as we were focussing particularly on Islamophobia within the overall context of interethnic conflict in schools. We undertook the research in London, one of the four regions used for the quantitative research. London was chosen because it meets the criteria set out in the original proposal in that it is an urban and very ethnically diverse region with a high proportion of people from minority ethnic groups. Schools in London reflect this ethnic diversity and, in particular, have significant numbers of Muslim pupils.

<sup>11</sup> Faith schools are schools with a religious character (all school stages); they are responsible for setting their own admissions policies and teach religious education according to their religious precepts. Faith schools admit pupils on religious affiliation but many admit those who are not of the school's faith (DCSF, 2008).

## **Measures and procedures**

A mixture of one to one semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews with pupils were conducted. Semi-structured one to one interviews were held with seven experts in the field of race equality. The interviewees included representatives from Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), researchers, government agencies, schools and community organisations. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Focus groups were conducted in four schools in London – two primary schools and two sixth form centres catering for post-16 students. We conducted two one-hour focus group interviews with five-six pupils in each of the schools and centres. Primary school pupils were year 6 (10-11 year olds) and secondary school pupils were year 13 (17-18 year olds). Pupils were chosen by the teachers, but we requested that the groups comprised a mix of gender and ethnicity roughly in proportion to the pupil population. We also undertook 45-60 minute individual semi-structured interviews with a senior manager and a teacher in all four schools/centres. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed and then coded using NVivo software.

## **Difficulties encountered**

As is often the case in researching with schools (see Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000), we encountered a number of difficulties with data collection: participation in the project was voluntary and finding schools that would agree to take part and that had an appropriate pupil cohort was difficult. This was partly due to the selection criteria (which restricted the choice of schools); the sensitive nature of the project, which meant that only schools who felt confident with the way they managed interethnic violence were prepared to be involved; and the nature of schools themselves. School staff are often very busy and research is not a priority for them. Thus, the schools had voluntarily agreed to take part in the research, were located in diverse ethnic areas and had a strong Muslim presence and as such may be more likely committed to race equality and more confident in their policies and practices than other schools.

In many primary schools the completion of the questionnaire involved considerable discussion and explanation, and classroom assistants and teachers were used to read and sometimes scribe for pupils who had greater difficulties comprehending, which inevitably could have influenced the answers. As other research, such as that of Hurry, has shown, variation in reading abilities and comprehension of read information varies largely in English primary schools (cited in Wolke et al., 2001, p. 3) and thus may be a source of error. Indeed, many of the questions involved the term “ethnic” or “ethnicity” and the idea of ethnicity proved a difficult concept for some of the younger pupils in primary schools to grasp (Cohen et al., 2007). In the sixth forms, where a looser structure exists with regard to attendance, it was sometimes difficult to find enough pupils to complete the questionnaire.

In relation to the qualitative part of the research, the focus group interviews in the qualitative fieldwork were chosen by teachers and whilst the ethnic makeup of the focus groups was what we had requested, it may be that those pupils chosen were possibly those that were positive about the school and thus not entirely representative of the whole year group. In addition, in some of the focus groups there were strong individuals



who may have influenced the other responses in the group. Further, all researchers were White British, which may have influenced participants' responses.

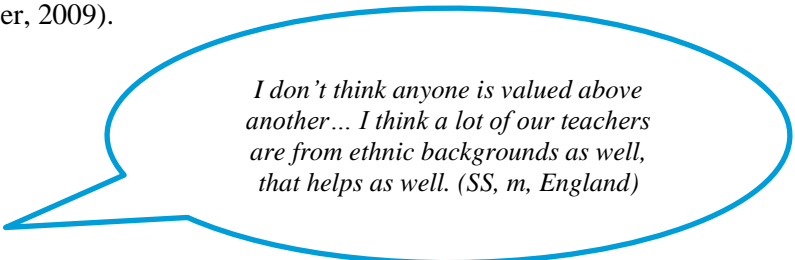
## Discussion

We used pupils' religious background as marker with which to compare and contrast the experience of children from different religious backgrounds in the quantitative study. Findings were then further elaborated in the qualitative study where we were able to go deeper into exploring pupils' lived realities and the impact, if any, of interethnic violence in their school lives and the interplay between religious background and violence. This also enabled triangulation with responses from experts in the field of race equality and school staff we interviewed. In this way, we wished to compare whether children and staff perceived the school environment in the same way, as much literature points to the fact that staff often deny or are oblivious to racism within their school (Hill et al., 2007; Crozier and Davies, 2008; Gillborn and Rollock, 2010).

## 4 Perceptions and experiences of school

In relation to the school environment, the majority of pupils in the quantitative study agreed that their school was a place in which equality and understanding for others was promoted. Pupils in the quantitative survey were asked to comment on their perception of how inclusive their school was, and whether it was a place where they felt all were treated equally irrespective of their religious background using a five point scale from 1 - "strongly disagree" to 5 - "strongly agree".

Students from all religious backgrounds were in agreement that their school was a place where teachers treated students equally and where an inclusive environment was promoted. These findings are reflected in the qualitative study. In general, children in both primary and sixth form centres felt they were treated equally by teachers and school staff. Institutional discrimination or prejudice was not a feature within the fieldwork schools. Students also noted that many staff were from diverse ethnic backgrounds, which aided the feeling of inclusion and being in a diverse environment. Students obviously valued and appreciated the diversity in the staff body. Indeed, positive role models can play a key role in promoting inclusion and feelings of belonging in children from ethnic minority backgrounds, as previous research has shown (Henze et al., 2000; Halstead, in Meer, 2009).



*I don't think anyone is valued above another... I think a lot of our teachers are from ethnic backgrounds as well, that helps as well. (SS, m, England)*

Despite their overall general positive experiences with staff, children in one primary school gave examples of some isolated incidences of children not being treated equally by all staff. However, this seemed to be related to a supply teacher – a teacher called in to cover a class when the usual teacher is unable to work due to sickness or other leave. As such, the teacher would have been coming from an external environment and thus may not have been so privy to school policies as permanent staff members:

*Pupil Because I wear a headscarf in year five, one of the teachers they said to me oh you have to take it off or you're not doing PE – but I won't take it off so I ended up sitting out.*

*Res: Okay, so what happens now? Do you do PE now?*

*Pupil Yeah.*

*Res: Was that a school rule or something?*

*Pupil No, it wasn't a school rule.*

*No.*

*Miss just made it up.*

*Teacher made a mistake.*

*Because with school you're allowed to wear your culture. (PS, f, England)*

This example clearly highlights how the usual practice of the school was understood by the pupil as inclusive and enabling; allowing students to express their identity and culture. The pupil was confident that not being able to “wear her culture” was simply a mistake and out of line with normal proceedings in her school.

Both primary school and sixth form pupils expressed the view that the schools were very diverse and that pupils mixed well. Whilst some instances of conflict did arise, the general everyday experiences reported by pupils in focus groups were positive. There was no association between religion and school experiences in the quantitative sample.

Whilst sixth formers described their sixth form centres in very positive terms and asserted that there was little interethnic tension, the situation appears more complex in that although very little actual overt tension or conflict is reported between ethnic groups, social groups are often based around ethnicity. Students in both focus groups and staff in a sixth form centre noted forms of segregation along ethnic lines occurring in the centre's canteen. They referred to the “Black canteen”, the “Asian canteen” and “Eastern European groups”. One student reported that he was “*scared of going in to the black canteen, I've never been in there before; I always walk the other way. The longest way just to get something.*” (SS, m, England).

However, students also stated that groups mixed in classes as well as in sports or other clubs. This reflects the findings of Henze et al. (2000)'s study on racial or ethnic conflict in multicultural schools in the USA

that social groupings along ethnic lines in our sixth forms appeared to form and deform depending on the context. The findings of our research underline the complexities of interethnic relations and within school identities.

### **Perceptions of violence within the school environment – safety**

Levels of reported safety in school were high in both primary and secondary school in the quantitative study, although slightly lower in primary school, particularly in relation to the toilets and the playground. Areas in which respondents felt least safe were the less supervised areas of the playground, which corresponds to other studies in this field (for example, Wolke et al., 2001; Brown and Winterton, 2010).

### **Violence within the school environment – personal experiences**

Pupils in the quantitative study were asked to respond to questions around their perceived personal experiences of violence due to their ethnic background.

#### ***Primary***

Overall, the most common form of bullying reported by all pupils was other pupils talking behind their backs with 40% reporting that it occurred at least sometimes, followed by name calling (32%), which is a consistent finding in other literature (e.g. Smith and Shu 2000, Monks et al., 2008). Twenty-five per cent of all pupils reported experiencing physical violence at least sometimes<sup>12</sup>, which is slightly lower than the figure of approximately 30 per cent reported in other studies (Monks et al., 2008). Muslims, Sikh and particularly pupils of “Other” religious backgrounds in primary school experienced higher frequencies of name-calling and social exclusion due to their ethnic background than other groups. Fifty-two per cent of pupils from an “Other” religious group reported experiencing physical violence at least sometimes, compared to lower percentages in all other groups.

#### ***Sixth forms***

Levels of violence experienced in sixth forms were lower than in primary schools, in line with other literature which shows a decline in instances of violence as age increases (e.g. Smith and Shu, 2000). When analysed overall, the most commonly experienced form of violence due to ethnic background in sixth forms in our sample was name calling, with 16 per cent reporting having experienced it sometimes, 3 per cent often and 1 per cent very often. Levels of physical violence (5% at least sometimes) were lower in sixth forms than in primary.

Qualitative research also highlighted that experiences of violence due to ethnic background in the fieldwork schools was fairly low according to pupils’ perceptions. Primary pupils did offer some contradictory statements and there appeared to be some lack of clarity about levels of name-calling and whether this amounted to “violence” or could be taken as a joke and therefore not considered harmful. Perceptions of

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<sup>12</sup> Data was missing from 2.6% of primary school children who failed to complete this section.

what constitutes violence may be different, which leads to difficulties in ascertaining levels of violence. As this seems to be the most prevalent form of violence perceived and experienced by children, it would be interesting to research this phenomenon more thoroughly.

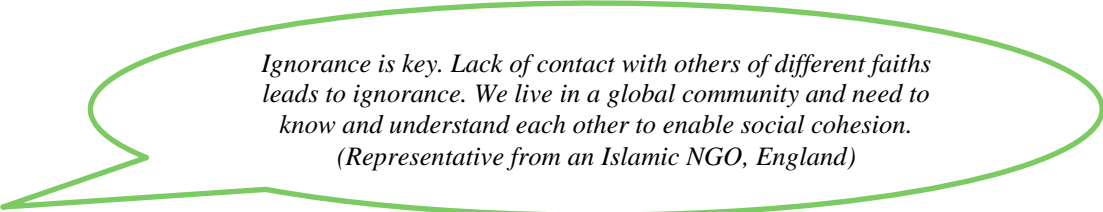
Sixth formers also asserted that overt interethnic violence was not a feature of their experiences within the centre. However, they mentioned occurrences of more low level forms of violence experienced in the form of banter, which they felt not to be harmful but rather joking between friends. The consensus from staff and students was that interethnic violence was not an issue in those centres.

Primary school pupils were also of the opinion that those most at risk of violence were those who were visibly different in some way unrelated to ethnicity; for example, children who might be overweight or spotty. Staff supported this view, stating that violence was rare and that when it did occur it was across different identity boundaries and was variable and changeable. The qualitative fieldwork schools all had very diverse student cohorts, save for one where there was a majority of Bangladeshi students.

The research findings demonstrate a similarity in pupil and staff perceptions of the school environment. There was no divergence on perceptions of racism and/or bullying in the primary schools or sixth form centres.

## 5 “Ignorance is key”: why violence arises

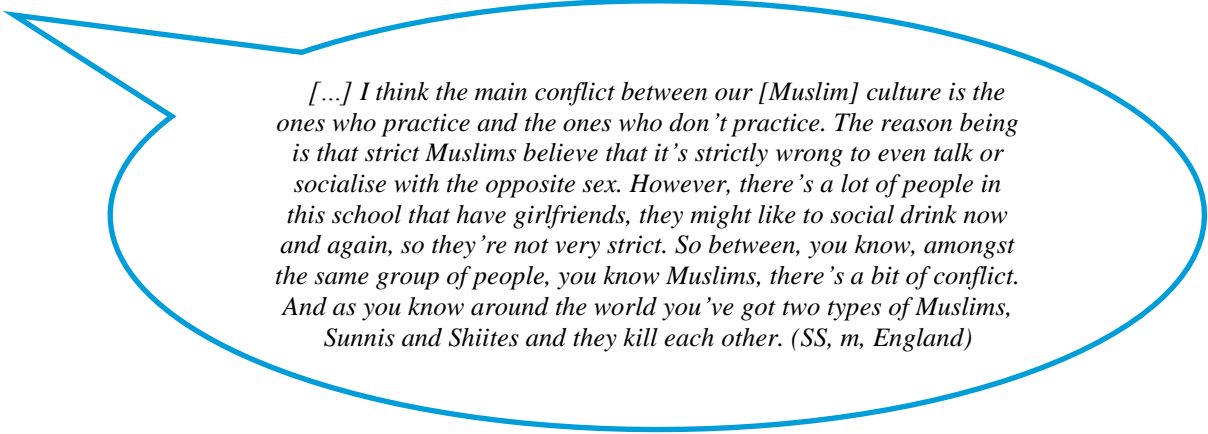
Ignorance and a lack of understanding were cited as reasons for violence by both students in primary schools and sixth forms, as well as some experts. The furthering of stereotypical identities was also reported to be harmful to ethnic relations.



*Ignorance is key. Lack of contact with others of different faiths leads to ignorance. We live in a global community and need to know and understand each other to enable social cohesion.  
(Representative from an Islamic NGO, England)*

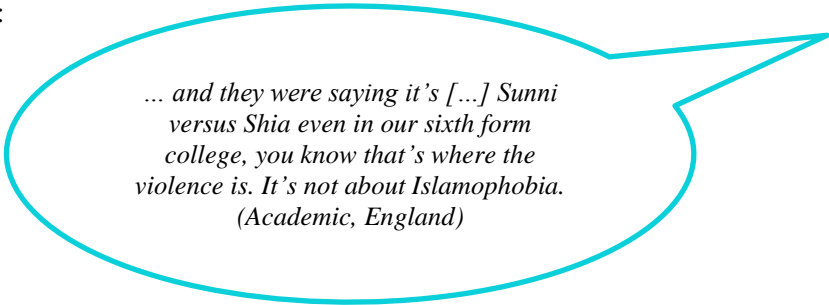
In line with other literature (Harris, 1997), experts also noted how the underlying socio-economic and political context were often the root causes of violence, as opposed to ethnic divisions, but that violence often manifested itself in a seemingly interethnic way.

Whilst instances of Islamophobia between students at our schools did not emerge, students and staff raised the issue of some conflict between students of different Muslim backgrounds. This underlines the complexities of the “Muslim” identity. As previously discussed, Muslim communities can be strongly internally differentiated (Archer, 2003).



*[...] I think the main conflict between our [Muslim] culture is the ones who practice and the ones who don't practice. The reason being is that strict Muslims believe that it's strictly wrong to even talk or socialise with the opposite sex. However, there's a lot of people in this school that have girlfriends, they might like to social drink now and again, so they're not very strict. So between, you know, amongst the same group of people, you know Muslims, there's a bit of conflict. And as you know around the world you've got two types of Muslims, Sunnis and Shiites and they kill each other. (SS, m, England)*

One of the experts we spoke to also reported this issue, which again highlights the complexities in analysing interethnic violence:

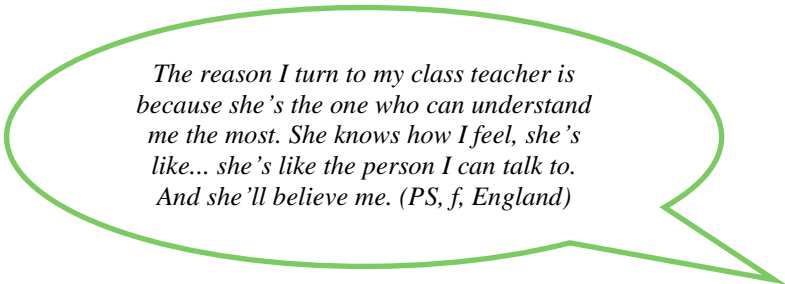


*... and they were saying it's [...] Sunni versus Shia even in our sixth form college, you know that's where the violence is. It's not about Islamophobia. (Academic, England)*

## 6 Disclosure and response patterns

Those pupils that reported experiencing violence due to their ethnic background were then asked to whom they disclosed this information. In primary schools, of the sub sample of 40% of children who experienced some form of bullying because of their ethnic background, 54% of pupils would tell their mother/carer, followed by friends (51%) and teachers (39%). Of the sub sample of 21% of sixth formers<sup>13</sup> who experienced violence due to their ethnic background, 64% reported they would disclose to friends and 21% would disclose to a teacher.

Pupils also reported feeling able to disclose any problems to teachers and confident that it would be dealt with, despite some concerns around being called a “snitch” and bullies being made aware of the disclosure. They felt their concerns would be taken seriously and they would be believed.



*The reason I turn to my class teacher is because she's the one who can understand me the most. She knows how I feel, she's like... she's like the person I can talk to. And she'll believe me. (PS, f, England)*

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<sup>13</sup> Data was missing from 18% of this sub sample, as they failed to answer the rooted questions about their experiences of being subjected to bullying.

Pupils in primary schools also reported using circle time<sup>14</sup> and Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE)<sup>15</sup> as a way of dealing with any tensions. Both were seen as safe spaces in which to discuss issues and where the consequences of one's actions could be discussed. Children appeared to value the opportunity for them to have an open discussion whereby those children who may have engaged in bullying behaviour are helped to understand the consequences of their actions in a public forum.

Sixth formers came across as very confident and knowledgeable about their sixth form centre's policies on anti-bullying. Students were very clear that interethnic violence would not be tolerated in their centre and thus it was not really an issue, at least in terms of overt conflict. Again, confidence in the consequence of any violence created feelings of security in stamping out violence and prejudice, which encouraged feelings of safety within the school and a low level of violence. Students also expressed feelings of confidence in staff responses to any disclosures.

Thus, it would appear that religious background is not a major determinant in pupils' experiences of violence and that perceived levels of institutional violence are low, as pupils in both primary schools and sixth forms in our sample reported feeling able to be themselves. In school they could "wear their culture" and be themselves. Further, a high percentage of students reported that they would disclose to teachers any incidences of their experiencing violence.

## **7 Religious discrimination within the school space**

Pupils in the quantitative study were asked about their perceptions of the level of respect afforded to different religions in three arenas of their lives: school, local area and the media. For the purposes of this report, only results pertaining to the school environment will be discussed.

In schools, figures reporting that religion was not equally respected in their schools were very low: 7% of primary pupils and 6% of sixth formers. The sub sample of pupils that reported that religions were not equally respected, were then asked to identify which particular religions they feel were not respected. Although the sub sample is very low, a higher percentage of both primary and sixth form pupils reported that Islam was not respected, compared to other religions. Of the 7% of primary school pupils who felt religions were not all equally respected in their school, 59% of this sub sample felt Islam was not respected in their school, 52% felt Hinduism was not respected and 30% felt Christianity was not respected. Of the 6% of sixth formers who stated religion was not respected in their school, 67% felt Islam was not respected equally, 47%

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<sup>14</sup> Circle time is a mechanism in class for children to share within a safe environment. Tools such as a sharing stick giving children the right to speak may be used to encourage all to have a say. For further information see: <http://www.circle-time.co.uk/>.

<sup>15</sup> PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) education is a planned, developmental programme of learning designed to help learners develop the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to manage their lives now and in the future. For further information see: <http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/uploads/media/27/7396.pdf>.

felt Judaism was not respected and 26% felt Christianity was not respected. It should be noted that as the percentages of pupils who felt religion was not respected were so low, the numbers in the sub sample are very small.

The primary schools and sixth form centres in which we did the qualitative fieldwork were all institutions that were committed to accommodating different religious practices as part of their commitment to race equality. Pupils in the primary schools provided evidence of the schools accommodating different foods, prayer needs and religious clothing. They also were clear that any requests for additional accommodation of religious practices would be listened to and taken seriously and, if feasible, addressed. Clearly, children felt confident to raise such issues with teachers and that their needs would be taken seriously – an important part of enabling people to live their religious identities in full in the school environment.

Pupils in the sixth form centres were positive about how the centres accommodated the needs and beliefs of different religions. Halal and other dietary needs were catered for in all four schools, and a prayer room was available to accommodate religious practices. Staff in both primary schools and sixth form centres also spoke positively about the need to make appropriate provision for religious differences, for example providing Halal food and permitting the wearing of headscarves and other religious items.

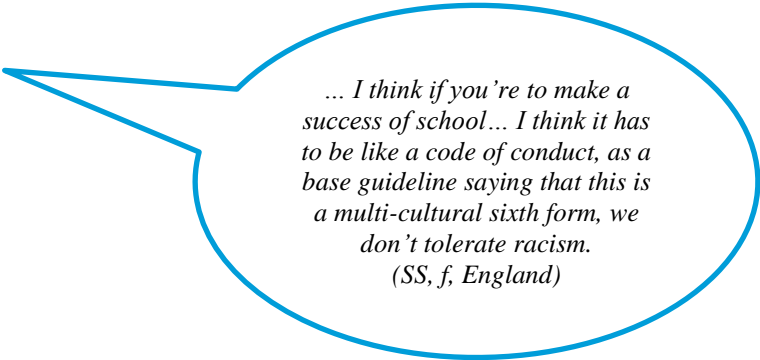
The experts we interviewed were more mixed in their feelings about how far schools nationally accommodated religious differences. Some of the experts believe that things have improved and there is more accommodation than used to be the case. But experts felt that much depended on the individual headteacher and that often provision was made as an obligation and was done for a variety of reasons rather than necessarily being carried out as an integral part of the school's ethos and values.

Accommodation or not of religious difference is a key issue in that it conveys a strong sense of whether or not a child's beliefs and culture are legitimated and valued in the school and in the wider society. Thus religious accommodation can be seen as an important indicator of equality and freedom. The importance of enabling children to live out all aspects of their identities in the school is recognised as an important part of creating an inclusive environment. However, not all practices can necessarily be accommodated and there is sometimes a delicate need to balance the ethos of the school and the belief systems of particular religions.

## 8 Addressing interethnic violence

The interviews with pupils and staff in the primary schools and sixth form centres would suggest that if ethnic violence were to occur in these institutions it would be recognised and dealt with through well established procedures. In fact, it is a requirement for schools to report any incidents of interethnic or other form of violence to the local authority and the issue is treated with due concern.

Interviews with teachers evidenced the very clear policies of the schools in our sample on anti-bullying. One term that came across strongly from staff in schools was “zero tolerance” – a term which almost all fieldwork school staff mentioned when interviewed about dealing with interethnic violence in their school. Staff were very clear that any forms of violence would not be tolerated within the school and that a clear and implemented policy was at work which all staff, and pupils, were aware of. Teachers cited the need to maintain this policy in order to ensure violence could not be seen to be an acceptable form of behaviour and that confidence in policies would remain high amongst pupils. Students in sixth form centres endorsed this approach, again as incorporating a duality of multiculturalism and no tolerance for violence as a means of reducing interethnic violence in school.



*... I think if you're to make a success of school... I think it has to be like a code of conduct, as a base guideline saying that this is a multi-cultural sixth form, we don't tolerate racism.*  
(SS, f, England)

Experts reflected these views. School leadership was cited as a key aspect of preventing violence as well as the need to ensure that initiatives were incorporated in a whole school approach. Initiatives also need to be sustained to maintain the overall ethos. Teachers interviewed also reported feeling confident in institutional support and that they had received sufficient training to deal with any interethnic violence (or violence for another reason), should it occur. They stated that they were confident in knowing policies and receiving support for any more complex issues.

A UNICEF initiative, the Rights Respecting Schools Programme<sup>16</sup>, in which one of the schools was involved, was also mentioned by pupils as having had a positive impact in creating an inclusive ethos and reducing instances of violence within their primary school as well as their confidence that teachers would deal with any concerns. The experts also mentioned the Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) as well as other international educational rights programmes as mechanisms for preventing violence and valuing diversity. It was felt such initiatives gave a focus to children's minds and enabled them to have a greater

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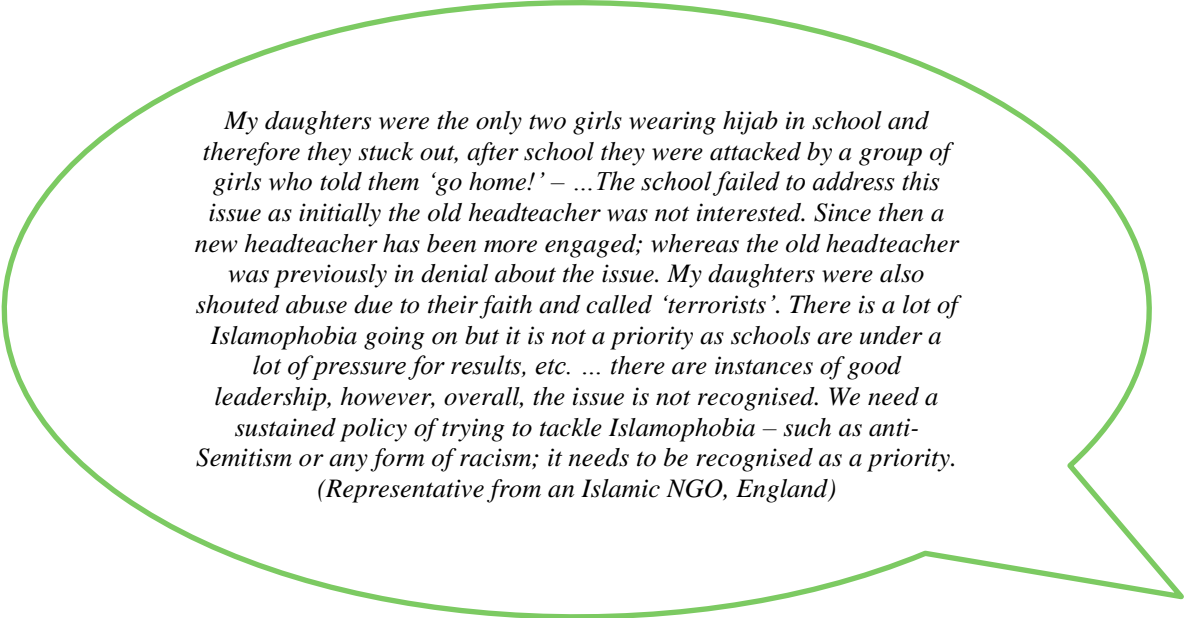
<sup>16</sup> For further information see: <http://www.unicef.org.uk/Education/Rights-Respecting-Schools-Award/>



understanding of others and the boundaries of what is and is not acceptable.

The picture emerging from the fieldwork schools was in contrast to that painted by the experts we interviewed, who raised concerns as to how far teachers nationally are trained to understand different faiths and cultures – particularly in relation to Islam – and in understanding issues of race equality generally and particularly Islamophobia. Experts did not feel sufficient training was taking place and felt also that often quality varied from institution to institution. They argued for the need for a more comprehensive approach rather than leaving it to institutions to implement good practice.

Experts further expressed concerns that schools did not always recognise or deal with issues of interethnic violence. Some had had direct experience of schools failing to recognise and address issues, particularly in relation to Islamophobia. For instance, one expert from the Muslim community gave examples of the targeting of their own children, who wore the hijab to school, and of this not been taken seriously by the headteacher.



*My daughters were the only two girls wearing hijab in school and therefore they stuck out, after school they were attacked by a group of girls who told them 'go home!' – ...The school failed to address this issue as initially the old headteacher was not interested. Since then a new headteacher has been more engaged; whereas the old headteacher was previously in denial about the issue. My daughters were also shouted abuse due to their faith and called 'terrorists'. There is a lot of Islamophobia going on but it is not a priority as schools are under a lot of pressure for results, etc. ... there are instances of good leadership, however, overall, the issue is not recognised. We need a sustained policy of trying to tackle Islamophobia – such as anti-Semitism or any form of racism; it needs to be recognised as a priority.*  
(Representative from an Islamic NGO, England)

In light of such comments from the experts, it would seem that the fieldwork schools, particularly the qualitative schools, were examples of good practice in this area, as their policies and practices were understood and implemented by staff and pupils felt confident in anti-bullying strategies and the mechanism within the school to create a secure environment or deal with any violence that might arise.

Experts and school staff also raised concerns around changes to educational policy and legislation, particularly the removal of community cohesion from Ofsted inspection, the expansion of Academies and the development of free schools, which will be outside local authority control<sup>17</sup>. It was felt that multicultural awareness would drop off the agenda and race equality would be less likely to be promoted.

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<sup>17</sup> For more information on academies see <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies> for free schools see: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/freeschools>.

## 9 Conclusion

The research findings highlight that in contrast to the increasingly Islamophobic discourse prevalent in wider society in the UK, children's experiences and perceptions of violence in our fieldwork schools were, in the main, not affected by their religious background and Islamophobia was not found to be a feature of our pupils' school lives. In terms of the different forms of violence experienced by pupils in our quantitative sample, overall 40% of primary school children reported experiencing rumour spreading and 32% experienced name calling at least sometimes because of their ethnic background, which corresponds with findings in other literature on racial name-calling (Eslea and Mukhtar, 2001). Levels of violence due to ethnic background experienced in the sixth form cohort were lower than primary school, which is in line with other literature in this area (e.g. Smith and Shu, 2000), with the highest frequency of violence experienced being 20% of all students reporting having experienced name calling.

In sixth forms, there was no association between religious background and experiences of violence. Primary school quantitative data, however, did reveal an association between religion and experiences of violence, with those from a Muslim, Sikh and "Other" religious background reporting higher frequencies of name-calling and rumour-spreading. Further, those from an "Other" religious background also experienced higher levels of physical violence. Children from a Christian or no religious background experienced lower levels of all forms of violence. Numbers of pupils in the "Other" and Sikh categories were fairly low. However, pupils from Muslim background were a large group and constituted the largest religious group in most schools. Conclusions are therefore difficult to draw and such findings highlight the difficulties in researching interethnic violence, underling the need for more detailed analyses into children and young people's lived realities of interethnic relations and how they interact with one another. Whilst children in this age-group's understanding of the questions may have been somewhat limited and we cannot be certain they were accurately reporting these forms of violence occurring because of their ethnicity, as opposed to another reason, the findings reveal an association that merits further study.

Nonetheless, as levels of reported safety in school were high and not associated with pupils' religious background in either primary schools or sixth forms, it would appear that respondents were not afraid in school and that such experiences were not defining of the majority's school experience. Both Muslim and non-Muslim pupils overwhelmingly stated their school to be a place that promoted equality, where students could be themselves and "wear their culture". Within the school environment, pupils perceived religions to be equally respected and religious accommodation was high, as qualitative data revealed. Religious background was not associated with disclosure patterns and pupils were confident that were they to suffer any violence, teachers would deal with it appropriately. Thus pupils' perceptions of institutional levels of violence can be said to be low within our school sample.

Qualitative data reinforces findings in other literature (e.g. Henze et al., 2000; Tippet et al., 2011; Ofsted, 2012) that a dual approach of zero tolerance and the overall inclusive ethos of school are key mechanisms in

preventing violence. The schools we worked with showed a strong ability to address interethnic violence and had high levels of religious accommodation and an inclusive ethos. However, these schools may well skew data in that all were very multicultural with a strong Muslim presence. The fact that they had agreed to take part in the research could imply that they were more committed to race equality since one would assume that schools suffering from problems of interethnic violence would be less likely to wish to participate in a project of this nature. In fact, evidence from the experts and elsewhere suggests that there are still schools that do not routinely provide the ethos and structures found in the fieldwork schools and where Islamophobia may be an issue. Thus, the picture might not be the same in different sorts of schools (e.g. less urban, faith schools; schools with a higher proportion of white pupils). It would thus be interesting to conduct research into other types of school – perhaps those in less multicultural settings – to ascertain whether there are any differences. The concerns raised that work around race equality may also diminish in schools under current government education policies and the impact this may have on interethnic relations is an additional area that merits further analysis.

In conclusion, our findings show that schools can make a difference to the lives of children and young people, where they provide safety, a sense of belonging, and a valuing of diversity. But we may be in a position whereby pupils experience a form of equality in schools that is at odds with the wider society, in light of previous research findings on the prevalence of Islamophobia in the UK. Schools can only do so much within the particular space in which they operate.

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# **PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS TOWARD INTERETHNIC BULLYING AND (PEER) VIOLENCE: EXISTING GOOD PRACTICES**

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University of Trieste,  
Department of Social and Political Sciences

Donatella Greco  
Chiara Zanetti

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# 1 Introduction<sup>18</sup>

The European project Children's Voices represents an *excursus* on the subject of violence in schools with a particular focus on the interethnic peer violence: its aim is understanding the current situation in different national contexts involved (Austria, Cyprus, England, Italy, and Slovenia) and analysing the good practices implemented in each single country in order to combat and prevent the phenomenon. According to the European and international trends, the five countries have been developing specific programmes or interventions in order to promote children's rights and prevent generalized violence. Moreover, programmes orientated to the promotion of integration of migrant/ethnic minority pupils in schools have been developed to widespread the concept of equality in diversity in all schools of any order and grade. The attainment of good education in a safe and positive environment should be a right for everyone because through scholastic education it is possible to build a positive future and for this reason it is very important to receive it in a safe place, in which fundamental values of equality and integration are well widespread and respected. Nowadays, many governmental and non-governmental organizations throughout the world are working to ensure children's education in a safe place where they live and learn. The promotion of human rights and the equality of all people and violence prevention are the central topics on which the European programmes are more and more focalized. Europe has recognized school violence as an important issue on which it is necessary to intervene; despite this, the lack of a common European legal framework regarding violence in schools is incontestable. Furthermore, single European countries are dealing with this issue in different ways, according to their national resources and legal provisions.

Since the problem of violence and bullying in schools has become a topic that must be addressed, in recent years Europe has taken action on this issue by adopting some recommendations and resolutions: in 2001, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted Recommendation 1501 on *parent's and teachers' responsibilities in children's education*, and in 2003, Resolution 160 about *local partnership for preventing and combating violence at school*. In 2006, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) issued the Recommendation No. 10 on *combating racism and racial discrimination in and through school education*. Moreover, in 2004, the Council of Europe promoted the European Charter for Democratic Schools without Violence<sup>19</sup>: a group of young students from across Europe wrote the Chart on the basis of fundamental values and principles shared by all Europeans citizens<sup>20</sup>. The Chart should be considered a model for European schools (according to the specific characteristics of the national school systems) to be used in order to promote the democratic

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<sup>18</sup> The contents of this chapter and, in particular, the quotes and excerpts from interviews, are contained in each national *State of The Art, Quantitative Report* and *Qualitative Report* produced by each partner in the context of the project *Children's Voices: Exploring Interethnic Violence and Children's Rights in the School Environment*. For further information see the national reports (available at: <http://www.childrenvoices.eu/>).

<sup>19</sup> The full text of the Chart is available on: <http://www.coe.int/>.

<sup>20</sup> In particular, reference is made to the rights set in the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms: <http://www.echr.coe.int/>.



principles of safe schools without violence. The Chart has established some fundamental rights (for example, the right to a safe and peaceful school environment) but, above all, it underlines that conflicts in school should be resolved in a “non-violent and constructive way in partnership with all members of the school community” (Article 5). Furthermore, the Chart stresses an important element in violence prevention at school since it is “a part of the local community. Co-operation and exchange of information with local partners are essential for preventing and solving problems” (Article 7). All these documents underline two fundamental aspects of combating and preventing violence at schools:

- the importance of monitoring and supervising the violent behaviour in schools of any levels and grades;
- the necessary involvement of parents and local communities who, in collaboration with schools, have the task of combating all forms of violence and laying the foundations of a *moral decalogue* to be transmitted to young European citizens.

As the literature shows, violence and bullying in schools are complex anti-social behaviours that require a multidimensional approach. School is itself a community inserted in a larger public space made by many organizations (institutions, voluntary associations, NGOs, religious institutions, etc.) that can and should be involved in definition of anti-violence/bullying programmes (Gini and Pozzoli, 2011). Through these initiatives, even in the absence of a specific legal framework, the European institutions give prove to be sensitive regarding this issue and suggest an integrated approach, useful for treating the phenomenon of violence in schools. With this in mind, the purpose of this paper is to analyse selected good practices put in place in the five countries involved in the project using quantitative and qualitative data collected during the two years of the research; selected project and good practices implemented against school violence and bullying will be presented in a comparative way in order to describe different characteristics, purposes and goals, always referring to the national context.

## 2 Good practices: what are they supposed to mean?

The term “good practice” refers to effective experiences that become synonymous with *reference point* in a specific context due to their proven efficacy of action; therefore, a good practice may be considered a *small guide*, useful to create other operative experiences suitable to solve and prevent a problem<sup>21</sup> (Stradi, 2005). The purpose of the research on good practice is usually to collect, describe and disseminate positive experiences in order to make them available to a wider audience that may

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<sup>21</sup> There are some factors that characterize the experiences of good practices like, for example, the presence of positive and innovative ways and methods which application can solve problems and the possibility to replicate the experiences from time to time in different contexts and situations that may require a model to refer to.

benefit from them. Within this aim, some selected examples from the Children's Voices research will be exposed in the following pages.

Selected programmes and interventions promoting human rights, equality, integration for pupils with different ethnic background in relation to the predominant local community and combating violence in schools presented by the five countries involved in the Children's Voices project, are the result of legislative prescription, various NGO activities and autonomous initiatives taken by schools according to the national legal framework. Analysis of the selected good practices will be exposed in three stages, based on the level of their promotion and implementation:

- programmes implemented by the State at national level;
- programmes implemented by NGOs and associations;
- programmes implemented by schools.

Indeed, in each country, a fundamental role is played by the national legislation that establishes the frame in which all programmes and good practices take place. Each of them is focalized on some topics that represent the turning point as regards combating violence in schools, linguistic integration and fostering the intercultural attitude toward students in order to achieve the common goal to make schools a safe place for students. Furthermore, NGOs and national and local organizations are important in promoting well-being of population and combating anti-social behaviours. Finally, schools have a crucial role in these matters for several reasons. Indeed, a school represents a community where young boys and girls experience the socialization with both peers and adults and learn how to balance (or not) their behaviours; according to all these considerations, schools have a major role in the prevention of violence and promotion of the equality of people of different cultural backgrounds, but they need support from the community in order to succeed in this important task.

Programmes and good practices proposed by the five countries participating in the research have common lines of action. The interventions described are often not exclusively focalized on the school environment and are also oriented to transmit intercultural values in order to improve tolerance and respect in children and youth. Moreover, the selected good practices are often addressed to students, school staff (teachers, headmasters, etc.) and parents; in other words, all the adults involved in the process of socialization and education should be considered for the activities of prevention and information. Thus, the prevention of violence and the promotion of equality are like puzzles composed piece by piece, which have to be supported by national and local institutions, schools and families. Moreover, in order to achieve the integration of foreigners in every single country, programmes and their implementation have been focused on the inclusion of foreigners and the promotion of diversity. In fact, each country should contemplate different legal provisions, through which those aim are to be pursued.

As mentioned above, since when violence and bullying in schools started to be considered social phenomena at the national level, all European countries have established some legal provisions and recommendations in order to combat the arising of youth violence. Moreover, in June 2007, in the city of Kandersteg near Berne (Switzerland), the international *Joint Efforts Against Victimization Conference* was set up; during the Conference, an international debate among specialists from all over the world on the theme of bullying arose from the exchange of different perspectives and national and international experiences. The main outcome of the Conference was a document known as the *Kandersteg Declaration*<sup>22</sup>, drawn up by a group of scholars from various universities, which prescribes a set of actions for violence prevention, adult education, social policies, intervention programmes and monitoring in order to fight the spread of bullying and to promote positive relations without violence among children and youths (Guarino, et al., 2011, 71-72). Analysing the topic of good practices, it could be interesting to focus on some recommendations emerging from the *Kandersteg Declaration*; from the general point of view, the *Declaration* recommends to decisively hinder all bullying phenomena in all places where children and adolescents live, study and play. Another general provision foresees to activate preventive measures to foster positive relationships between children and youths from an early age with the dual purpose of reducing risk factors and enhance protective mechanisms. Moreover, the *Kandersteg Declaration* also underlines the importance of information and training on the themes of bullying and violence for all adults who are in contact with children and youths in order to promote healthy relationships and prevent bullying and to recognize it when it appears in daily life inside and outside schools. Furthermore, the *Kandersteg Declaration* focuses on the actions of monitoring and on-going evaluation of the paths of action to verify the benefits of the various programmes activated to protect the rights of children and adolescents and to sensitize the youths and adults towards the topics of bullying.

Starting from these turning points, it appears that the selected good practices, carried out in the five countries participating in the Children's Voices project, go along with the Kandersteg provisions:

- Austria, for example, implemented a series of activities and programmes in the framework of the existing national strategy for violence prevention in schools and kindergartens. The national strategy was implemented in 2007, representing a good practice and a step forward in tackling the problem of violence in schools. Under its umbrella, the national strategy includes projects that differently pursue the same aim of prevention and intervention against violence in kindergartens and schools (Spiel and Strohmeier, 2007, 28). For example, within the national strategy framework, Austria implemented two programmes with the total aim of violence prevention: *Wener Soziale Kompetenz Training (WiSc – Viennese Social Competence Training)* and *Faustlos*. Both programmes have the purpose of fostering social and emotional competence of pupils in

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<sup>22</sup> The full text of the Declaration is available on: <http://www.kanderstegdeclaration.com>.

order to create a positive school atmosphere. In details, *WiSc* is designed with the aim of including the whole school environment, i.e. the students, teachers, school headmasters and parents. *WiSc* programme represents an example of a holistic approach that involves not only students, but also the school environment and families. *Faustlos* is also a violence prevention programme which aims at fostering social and emotional competences and it is mainly dedicated to Kindergarten, primary and secondary school children.

- In 2007, the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture developed a Strategic Plan to improve the general quality of the educational system. The primary goal of the Ministry was to increase the awareness regarding multiculturalism and diversity in the school environments. Also, it aimed to adapt the educational materials to students' needs and therefore to support them regardless of any differences in ethnicities, socio-economic and religious statuses. The increase in foreigners enrolled in the school system has given rise to problems related to the integration, which schools have to deal with. As Zoletto (2007) affirmed, in the last decades, school has become a real borderland in which many diversities (ethnic, cultural, etc.) make contact; the complexity of this new kind of environment underlines the need of schools to be supported in responding to the issues of violence and other forms of delinquency. Moreover, as mentioned above, bullying is a complex phenomenon that involves several individual and social dimensions; as literature shows (Buccoliero and Maggi, 2007; Gini and Pozzoli, 2011), starting from this assumption, working with parents and the whole school environment is probably the most incisive method to be used in order to achieve a positive outcome. On these topics, beside the programmes of promotion of intercultural values, the Ministry of Education and Culture established the *Emergency Intervention Team*, a national measure that provides support to schools in their everyday activities on combating all forms of violence and delinquency. The provisions and procedures followed by this Team concern all students in a school, without making exceptions based on gender, age, ethnicity, religion, etc. Also, the Emergency Intervention Team has contributed to the regulation of conflicts occurring in elementary schools between the Greek Cypriot and Palestinian students; it has provided a list of intervention for Palestinian students in order to ameliorate and foster their integration at school. Some general actions implemented by the Emergency Intervention Team were, for example, the assignment of school escorts (for educational, linguistic and psychological purposes), provision of supportive lessons based on students' school curricula, grant of extracurricular activities, the assignment of psychologists and psychiatrists and financial assistance (letter sent by the Ministry of Education and Culture, 2011). In 2003, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched another supportive programme: *Zone of Educational Priority*, with the main purpose of helping students through specific projects to gain trust and self-confidence also toward the themes of multiculturalism. Moreover, this programme has a double mission: to assist students from different ethnic background to be easily integrated in public

school environments and to reinforce teachers' awareness on the topic of multiculturalism. Currently, it is applied in many schools in Cyprus.

- National initiatives oriented to fostering the integration of students with different ethnic backgrounds into the school environment are also promoted and implemented in England, one of the first European countries faced with cultural plurality due to the substantial presence of foreigners. In 1998, the *Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG)* was set up; it was designed for pupils from minority ethnic groups in order to satisfy their particular linguistic needs. From April 2011, EMAG was no longer available to schools directly, but with the agreement of schools forums; local authorities may retain a portion of the funding to continue running the centralized EMAG services for schools.

From the wide national experience on the topic of multiculturalism, England implemented another national programme called *School Linking Networks (SLN)*; the purpose of this programme, implemented first in Bradford in 2001 and in Tower Hamlets in 2006, is to facilitate links between schools in England to help children and young people explore their identity, celebrate diversity and develop dialogue. The overall aim of the programme is supporting the children and young people in becoming active citizens. Also, the SLN is an instrument of communication for school on the national territories. As the SLN evaluation report underlines, "There is mixed evidence for the programme's impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding, their willingness to express their opinions, and perceptions of school and wider community climate (e.g., perceptions of the incidence of bullying)". SLN adopts a particularly effective tool in making changes at different levels of children's lives and in prevention and spreading the message of intercultural work network, that is to say, the network approach. The reticular perspective has several advantages, first of all the possibility of exchange of knowledge with other institutions about the raised and raising problems and possible solutions (Gini and Pozzoli, 2011, 41).

- The reticular perspective appears to be shared by Slovenia too, where the *Networks of Learning Schools 1 and 2* are implemented. The programme offers new opportunities for learning, co-operation and development to both individual and schools/pre-schools institutions, stimulating systematic exchange of good practices between teachers/pre-school teachers and school/pre-schools institutions that participate in education and form the so-called "co-operation network". This system fosters the exchange of experiences, problems and solutions among the hubs of the network in order to establish systematically cooperative activities in schools and inter-schools levels. The overall mission of the *Networks of Learning Schools 1 and 2* is to foster training in problem solving skills. A particular segment of this Slovenian programme, called *Strategies for Preventing Violence*, deals specifically with the sensible confrontation with violence in pre-

primary and secondary schools, acting on three levels: the assessment of the situation, development of an action plan/strategy for improvement in the field of violence prevention and the execution of activities. Establishing a whole-scale operational approach, the Slovenian programme takes into account all types of violence. Moreover, the approach of this programme is to analyse and evaluate episodes of violence already happened and, at the same time, emphasize the importance of preventive actions. In addition, the program wishes to encourage co-operation and dialogue between schools with the ultimate goal to create and develop, as much as possible, a pervasive and widespread non-violent climate in schools.

Other selected operative good practices implemented at the national level in Slovenia give the chance to analyse other approaches against bullying/violence highlighted in the literature so far. It has been shown that the privileged approach against bullying is the so called *Whole School Approach* (Gini and Pozzoli, 2011, 43), which appears necessary to succeed in the promotion of non-violence in schools (Cowie and Jennifer, 2007, 24). The main feature of this method is to involve the whole school community in managing and prevention of bullying and violence. As stated on the European Charter for Democratic Schools without Violence and also by the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child<sup>23</sup> (UN, 1989), all the school members are responsible for the prevention and management of bullying and violence. The Slovenian *Preventive Programme for the Reduction of Violence in Primary schools*, for example, is designed to raise awareness on the phenomenon of violence, recognizing different forms of it and different ways to react and manage it. The *Preventive Programme* approach deals with the issue of bullying and violence on a systemic and structural level and foresees the implementation in the regular school curricula (teaching, class work, etc.). As prescribed by the Whole School Approach, the Slovenian Preventive Programme includes all school staff members: management, teachers, counsellors, etc. Moreover, the Programme also envisages the participation of students' parents. This feature of the Preventive Programme introduces another fundamental element, i.e. the active involvement of families and, in particular, parents. Family is the very first place where children form their personality and learn to socialize, which is the reason why children's parents must be involved in their children's school lives, especially when issues of violence are debated.

Two other Slovenian programmes (*My Peers and Me – Let's talk* and *School for Peace – Knowledge and Teaching of Children's Rights*) develop the method of *peer education*. The first one is addressed to pupils, parents and teachers and it is based on the use of peer mediation and peer education, especially nowadays, during an historical period where the authority of teachers and parents is fading and the borders of authority are blurred. Peer education is an approach which involves children and youths directly; they become protagonists of their own formation

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<sup>23</sup> The full text of the Convention is available on: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>.

and education and, simultaneously, they can be empowered in their choices and actions. The main purpose of peer education is to promote the establishment of a positive environment, characterized by a culture of respect and solidarity among peers (Croce et al., 2011). The second quoted program, *School for Peace – Knowledge and Teaching of Children’s Rights*, is a national project addressed to pupils divided in two sections: the first panel has the aim to improve mutual respect and love in heterogeneous groups while in the second panel children learn to express their opinions regarding equality and choice, to hear each other out and to talk about mutual relationships and rules. Both programmes are also useful in strengthening the students’ social skills as a method to combat and prevent bullying and violence among peers. The remarkable academic researches disseminated during the last years focused on the role of strengthening of students’ social skills as a prevention strategy against bullying and peer violence, led the World Health Organization of the United Nations (WHO) to consider teaching methods based on life skills education,<sup>24</sup> as an incisive technique against aggressiveness and, at a general level, any form of dependence.

- Italy also implemented programmes and good practices in order to prevent violence and bullying at school. In 2007, the Italian legislator promulgated the ministerial directive No. 16, containing national guidelines for the control and prevention of bullying. The document is issued for the purpose of making available to the school at any local level a set of opportunities, resources and tools to combat bullying (Battista et al., 2010, 297). According to this legal framework, the directive established the *Permanent Observer on School Bullying*<sup>25</sup> (*Osservatori permanenti sul bullismo*) in every Italian region, which can be considered as a hub for exchanging experiences in bullying and violence among schools. Since *Permanent Observers* are implemented at regional level, significant differences can be found among the Italian regions. For example, one of the most beneficial is the observer of the Lazio Region. Moreover, the *Permanent Observer* aims to provide advice and support for teachers, headmasters and members of the territorial network dealing with this topic in order to help them to establish new projects and new links useful for monitoring, preventing and combating the phenomenon. This Italian national provision is very inclusive because it carries out actions of monitoring and prevention, involving the whole local community and provides a pervasive support at schools, involving teachers, headmasters and the whole staff (Gini and Pozzoli, 2011). The same ministerial directive (16/2007) also established a toll-free number for reporting and asking for help in the event of bullying or violent acts. Furthermore, it is possible to send messages, telling own stories and asking for advice by e-mail.

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<sup>24</sup> WHO describes *life skills* as “psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. They are loosely grouped into three broad categories of skills: cognitive skills for analysing and using information, personal skills for developing personal agency and managing oneself, and inter-personal skills for communicating and interacting effectively with others”. [http://www.unicef.org/lifeskills/index\\_7308.html](http://www.unicef.org/lifeskills/index_7308.html)

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.informagiovani-italia.com/direttiva\\_ministero\\_contro\\_bullismo.htm](http://www.informagiovani-italia.com/direttiva_ministero_contro_bullismo.htm)

All measures established by directive 16/2007 are implemented and described in a programme called *Smonta il bullo*<sup>26</sup>, which is the framework of the MIUR proposed activities against bullying (and also the raising form of cyber-bullying) carried out from 2007. The related website also has a practical function for educators because it collects materials (films, books, etc.) dealing with the issue from a psycho-sociological and cultural point of view.

From the analysis conducted across the selected good practices implemented by the five countries, it is possible to find specific programmes of intervention promoting on one hand the children's rights and intercultural values and, on the other hand, combating and preventing bullying and (peer) violence. But it is harder to observe specific programmes against interethnic peer violence. This kind of violence, when it occurs, is treated on a case-by-case basis.

Table 1 shows good practices by target, implementation and purpose. From a general point of view, they are designed in order to combat/prevent bullying. However, some selected programmes are also designed with a broader overall purpose, i.e. to foster integration of foreigners and enhance intercultural competences of children and youths. These elements are strictly connected to the issue of interethnic (peer) violence, especially in the current international context where migration flows have been leaving a deep mark in the society and, consequently, in schools where different cultures daily get in contact.

**Table 1: Selected programmes and good practices implemented at national levels**

	Good Practice	Target	Purpose
<b>Austria</b>	Viennese Social Competence Training WiSc	Students, teachers/school staff, family	Violence prevention programme
	Faustlos	Students	Violence prevention programme
<b>Cyprus</b>	Emergency Intervention Team	Students	Intervention team for violence and delinquency in schools
	Zones of Educational Priority	Students, teachers/school staff	Foster integration of students with different ethnic background in public schools
	Strategic Planning	Students	Increasing the awareness regarding multiculturalism and diversity in the school environment
<b>England</b>	EMAG	Student	Assist students from different ethnic background in schools
	School Linking Networks	Teachers/school staff, school and local authorities	Support and training for schools and local authorities
<b>Italy</b>	Smonta il bullo	Students, schools, teachers/school staff, family, the whole community	Prevention, information and support
	Regional permanent observer on bullying	School and local authorities	Prevention, monitoring, dissemination of good practices

<sup>26</sup> [www.smontailbullo.it](http://www.smontailbullo.it)



	Good Practice	Target	Purpose
Slovenia	School Mediation	Students, teachers/school staff, family	Improve the culture of relationships between pupils and school staff
	School for peace	Pupils	Combating peer violence
	Preventive Programme for the Reduction of Violence in Primary School	Students, teachers/school staff, family	Violence prevention programme
	My Peers and Me – Let's Talk	Students, teachers/school staff, family	Peer mediation and peer education
	Networks of Learning Schools	Teachers/school staff, school and local authorities	Systematic exchange of good practices: education in problem solving

Moreover, it is important to underline that all five countries are focused also on the importance of teaching the language of the host country for students with a different background that are enrolled in the national school system. In fact, sharing a common language is the very first vehicle of integration. For this reason, additional hours of language are a tool of integration and, indirectly, for the prevention of violence acts, especially among young people who will possibly become more aware and integrated adults.<sup>27</sup> For his purpose, England implements the English as an Additional Language (EAL) programme, including the guidelines for supporting pupils with English as an Additional Language. Since the 1992/1993 school year, the Austrian legislation provides measures for improving German language skills of pupils with an everyday language other than German. Italy also provides specific measures in school as regards the Italian language for foreigners; in 2005, the master plan Action Italian L2 (*Language of Contact, Language of Culture*) was launched, promoted by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Regional School Boards and 21 Italian universities. The project, based on the e-learning model, has been evenly spread throughout the national territory with the purpose to train teachers to work in multilingual/multicultural classes at any level of the school system. Cultural and linguistic mediation is also provided in school for foreign students and their families. In Cyprus, the Ministry of Education and Culture announced in 2008 the decision of the Council of Ministers to intensify Greek language courses first in secondary school (where the percentage of foreigners is higher). The announcement also included training of all educators in intercultural awareness.

### 3 School perspectives

Another perspective useful to analyse good practices is looking at what happens at schools. According to Sharp and Thomson (2004), school policy influences the whole organization of school, including students, teachers, school staff and families and it becomes a sort of guideline for each stakeholder of

<sup>27</sup> It is also important to underline the important role of the native language in the process of learning and in order to preserve personal identity. An example of this could be the Austrian mother-tongue classes.

the school. Schools and teachers can play a relevant role in increasing the well-being of children and reducing the probability of bullying. In fact, when families and local communities fail in their educational task, schools can compensate. Moreover, school has a central role in strengthening and sensitizing the local institutional network and the community to promote the wellness of children.

Actually, the interviews with teachers and experts as well as focus groups with students reveal both non-formalized and formalized practices implemented by each school. The first reported behaviours usually adopted by teachers and school staff; these practices are not formalized in programmes or projects but they are important in order to create a positive and inclusive climate for children. The second includes projects, programmes and interventions formalized and implemented by schools. For example, it is common to find actions aimed to improve the moral atmosphere of a school/class (cooperative learning, social values promotion, promotion of empathy through specific projects and events). Moreover, teachers and school staff deal with pupils every day and they become a reference point for them.

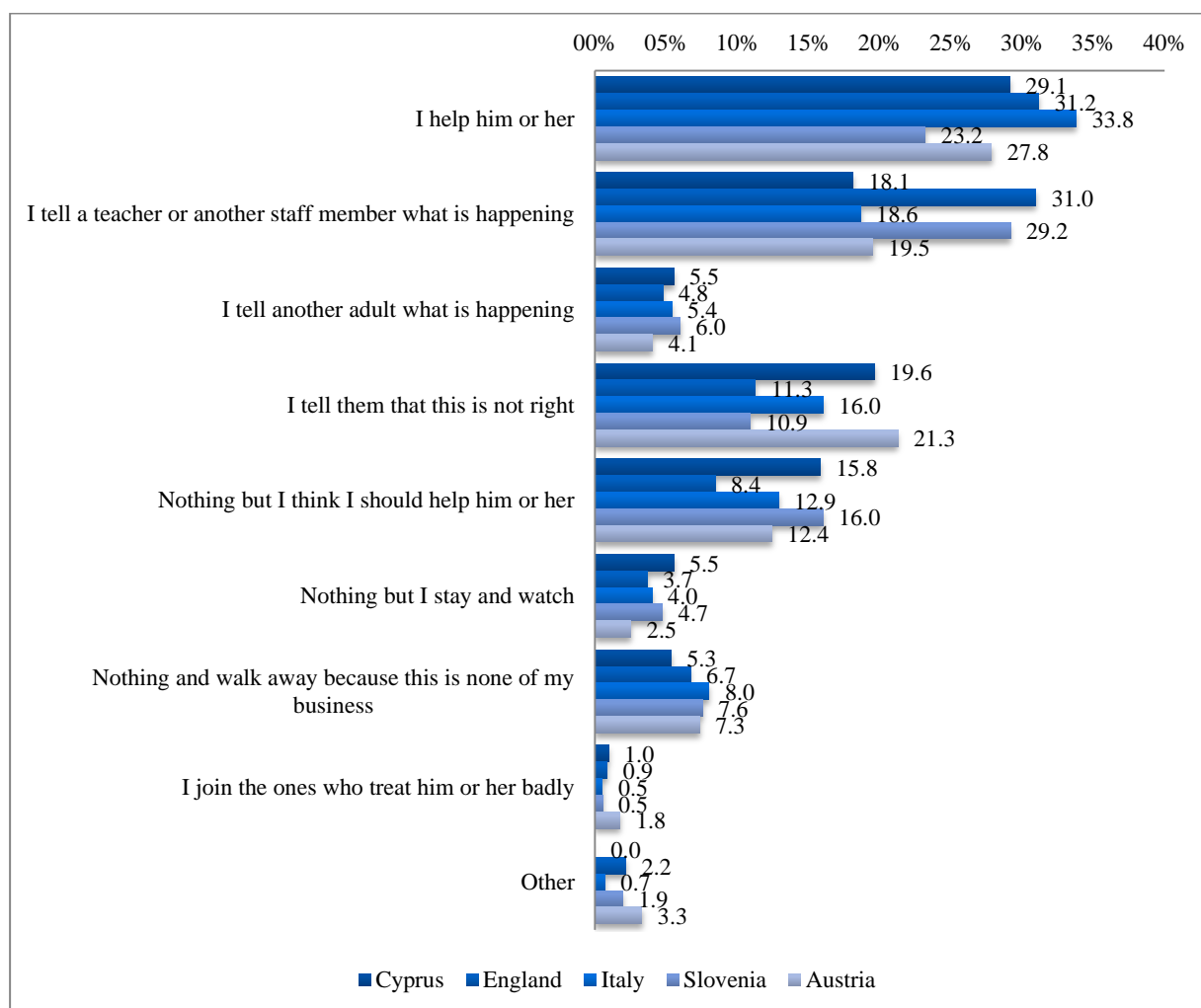
Another point to be considered is that prevention actions are related both to specific institutional and socio-cultural framework of each country and also to each school. For this reason, good practices consider bullies as embedded in a social context, where several actors (perpetrators, victims, observers, adults in schools, families) interact together. Consequently, if attitudes and individual characteristics of bullies are the cause of their violent behaviour, it is necessary to consider his/her social influences in the peer group and in the school too (Craig and Pepler, 2000).

### **3.1 *Teachers and school staff***

As regards the safety at schools, teachers and other school authorities have the ethical and legal responsibility to maintain a safe atmosphere in their schools; therefore, when the episodes of violence happen, an appropriate involvement of teachers and other school staff is very important. The Children's Voices research also investigated the attitudes of teachers towards ethnic violence (kind of intervention or activities). Moreover, the research tries to understand how students react to bullying due to ethnic causes.

In order to understand the role played by teachers in the prevention and solving the situations of violence, it is relevant to observe how pupils react when they are witnesses to interethnic violence (Figure 1). In all five countries, the most frequent response of primary school pupils to violent acts is that they either actively step in and help the victim of violence or inform a teacher (or another school staff member).

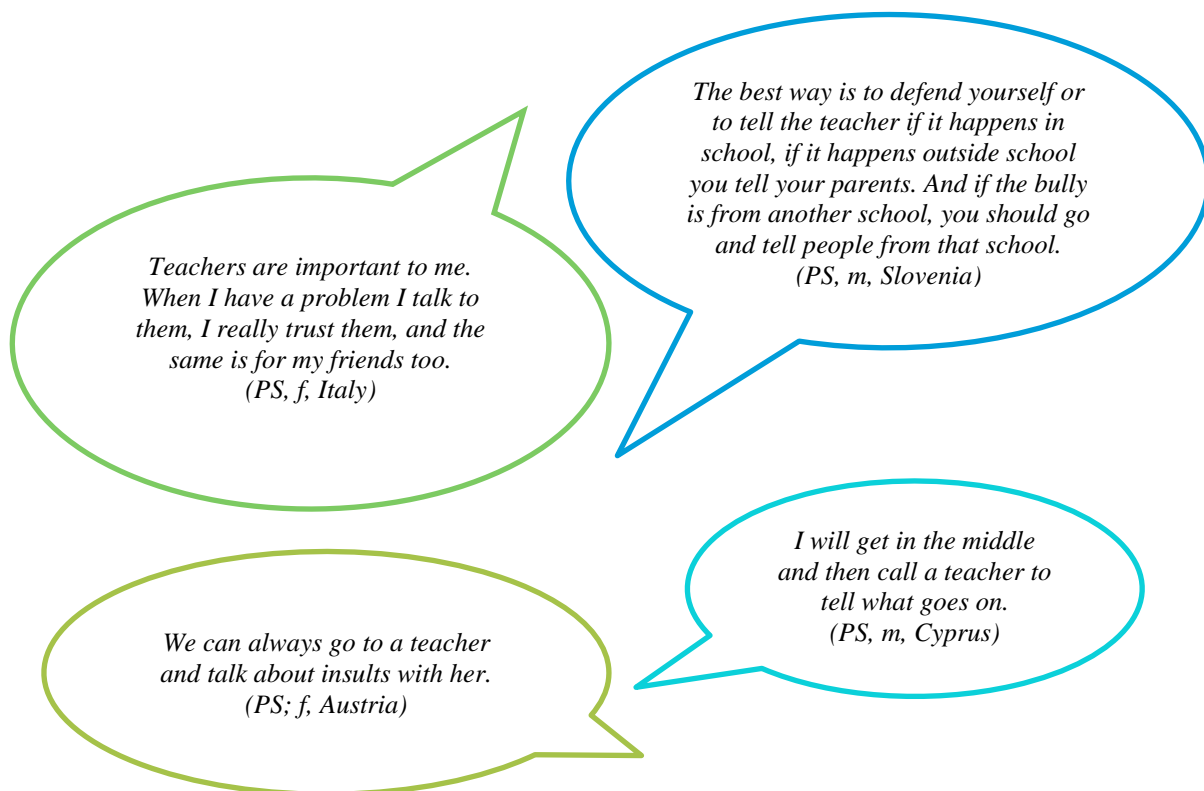
**Figure 1: What do you usually do when you see that a pupil is treated badly because of his or her nationality/ethnic background (cultures, languages, religions)? (%)**



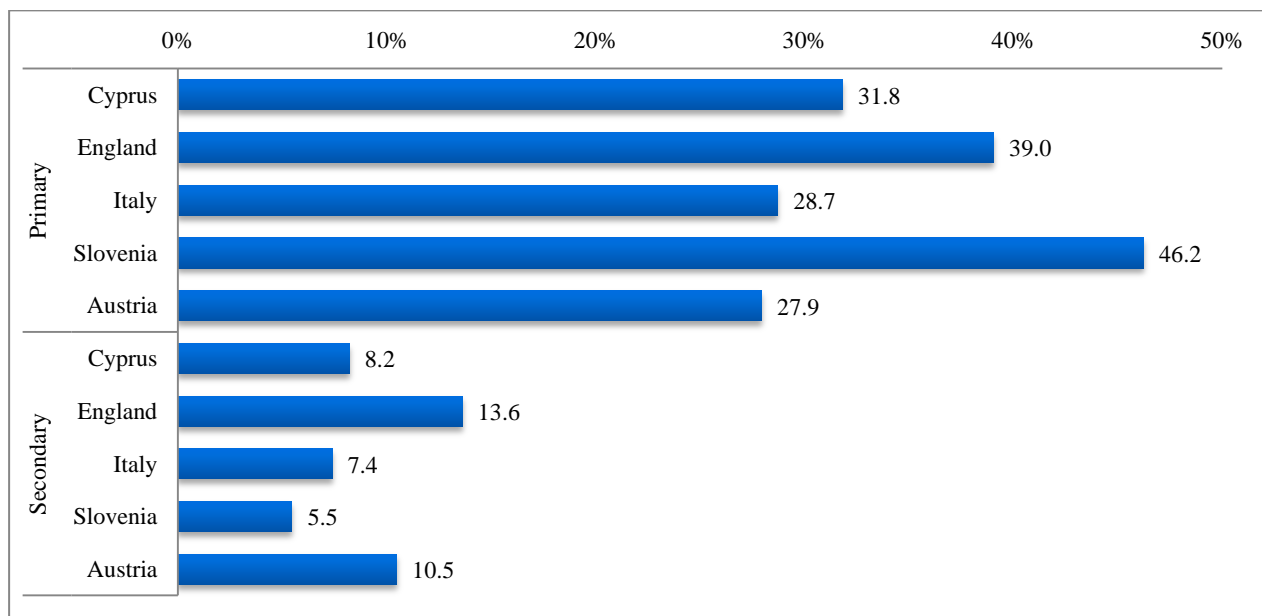
In detail (Figure 2), the primary school pupils seem to involve teachers (46.2% in Slovenia, 39.0% in England, 31.8% in Cyprus 28.7% in Italy and 27.9% in Austria) more than secondary school students (13.5% in England, 10.5% in Austria, 8.2% in Cyprus, 7.4% in Italy and 5.5% in Slovenia). Furthermore, the primary school pupils tend to help the victim more than secondary school students. On the contrary, the latter are more inclined to verbal mediations (“tell them that this is not right”) or “to do nothing” even if “they think they should help him/her” or “because is not their business”.

Figure 3 shows that in Slovenia and Austria, students with mixed and other ethnicities are more willing to ask the teachers for help when the episodes of violence occur. However, in Italy and Cyprus, pupils with different ethnic background are less in favour of teachers’ interventions.

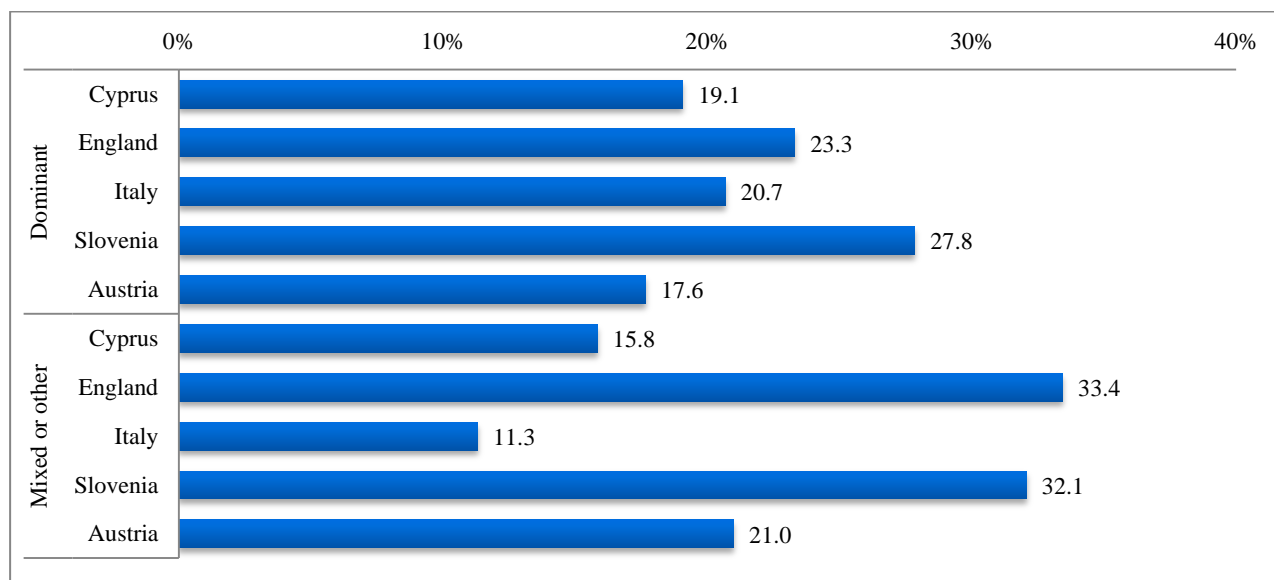
Indeed, pupils adopt several coping strategies (to avoid the conflict by ignoring the insulting remarks, to engage in the quarrel by insulting back, to react (rarely) by fighting back) when they see interethnic bullying or when they are target of violent acts. In addition, as described above, a lot of them report about the incident to a teacher or other adults in school:



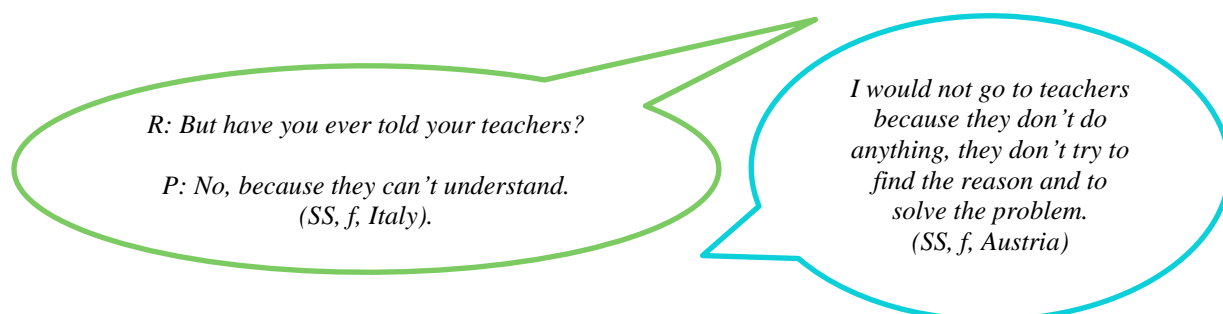
**Figure 2: I tell a teacher or another staff member what is happening, by kind of schools (%)**



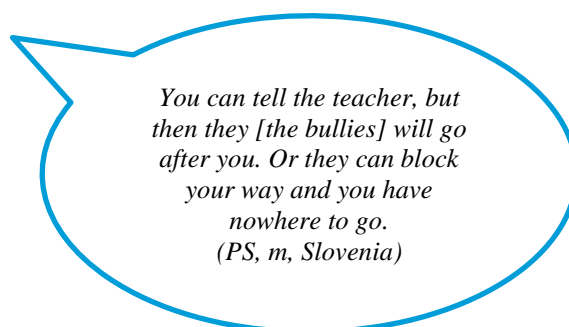
**Figure 3: I tell a teacher or another staff member what is happening, by ethnicity (%)**

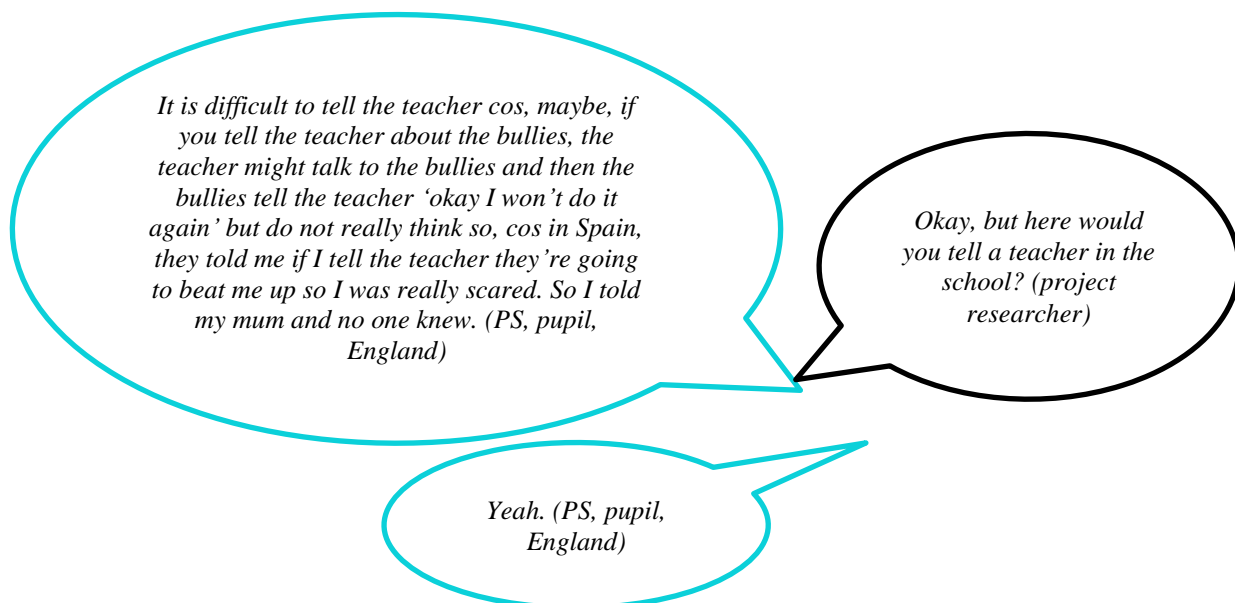


But, as some pupils stated, sometimes teachers tend to minimize or not recognize the presence of interethnic violence. Confirmations of this are found in Italian and Austrian focus groups.

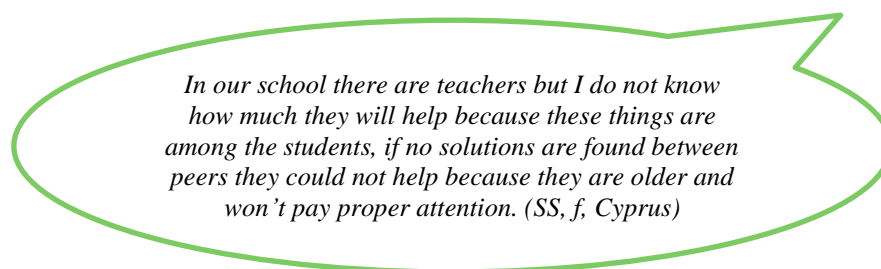


On the other hand, both in primary and secondary schools students are sometimes afraid of being too exposed to further harassment and retributive measures by bullies if they refer to an adult about their violent behaviours:





In general, secondary school students appear more sceptical about the effectiveness of teachers' interventions. In particular, this was especially evident in the Cyprus focus groups:



In all five countries, with the exception of Cyprus, teachers and other school staff feel that in their school (at the moment of the data collection) significant cases of interethnic violence do not occur. As a matter of fact, in order to maintain a positive climate and to prevent peer violence and bullying, the role played by adults working in school is crucial. In fact, they spend a lot of time with students and therefore they are aware of the problems in schools. Moreover, they can facilitate the integration of children with different ethnic background by redirecting aggressive behaviour and supporting vulnerable pupils. Furthermore, as reported in many interviews, teachers can explore the issue of diversity thanks to specific projects and activities designed to promote the interest in different cultures and foster mutual coexistence.

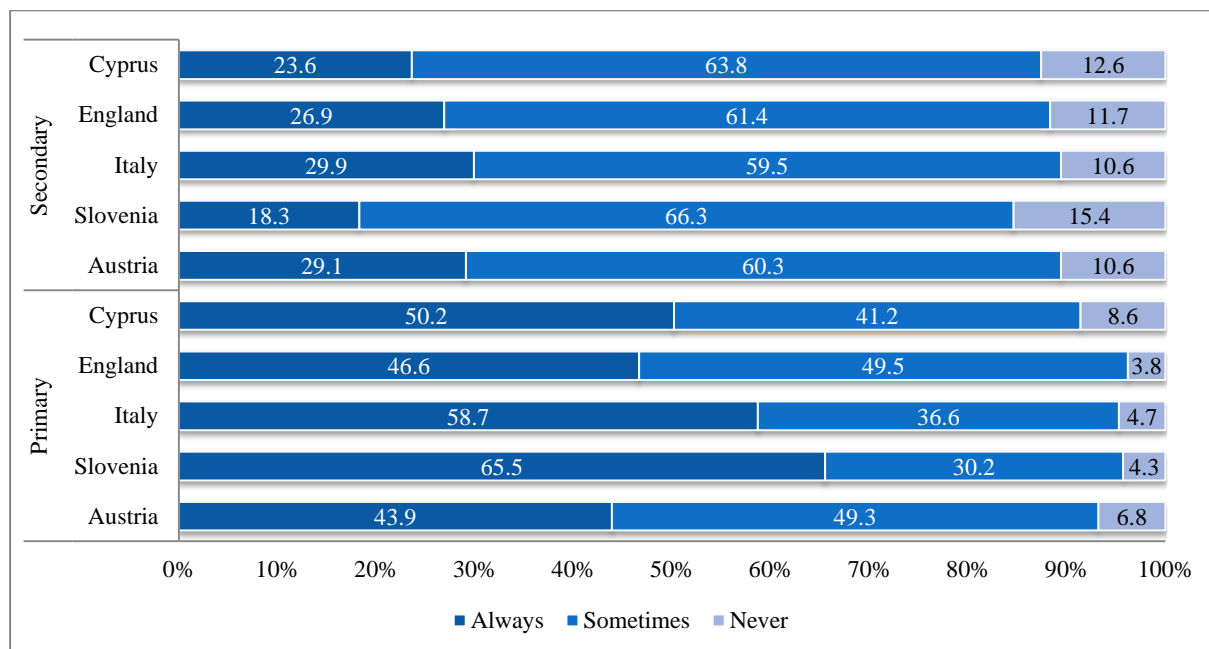
The survey conducted in the five countries confirmed the teachers' relevance (Figure 4). In fact, on average around 40% of respondent students (both from primary and secondary schools) think that teachers always intervene when episodes of bullying or violence occur.<sup>28</sup> It is significant to underline that in each country more primary school pupils stated that teachers always intervene than secondary school students. On the other hand, more students from secondary than primary schools affirmed that

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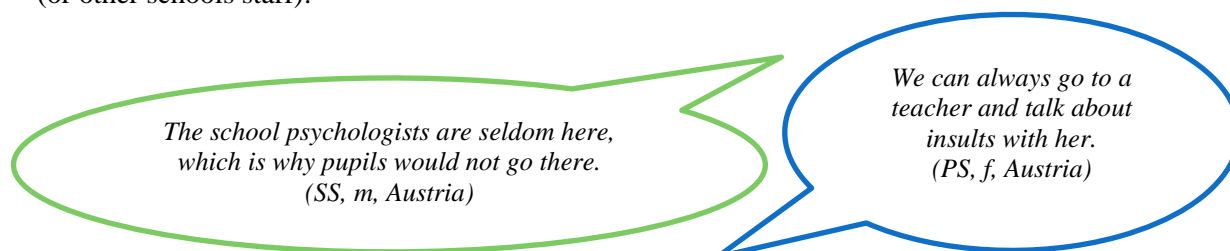
<sup>28</sup> In detail, Italy and Slovenia are leading with about 45%, followed by England with 40.4% and finally by Austria and Cyprus (with 36.8% and 34.8% respectively). About half of respondents believe that teachers intervene sometimes; this percentage is lowest in Slovenia (44.9%) and highest in Austria (54.6%). Only about 8% of the whole sample think that they never intervene and in any country this value exceeds 10%.

teachers never interfere. As regards the reasons for non-intervention of teachers when violence occurs, in all countries the majority of students who affirmed that teachers do not intervene answered that they do not step in because they are not aware of what is happening.

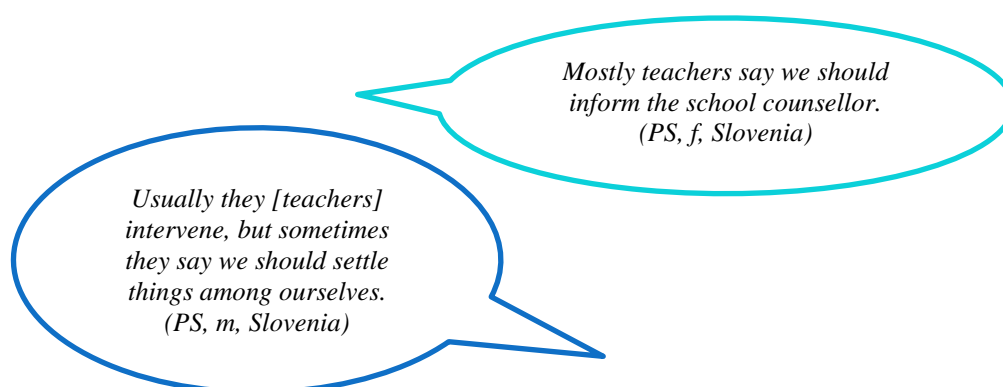
**Figure 4: Do teachers step in when someone gets bullied by his/her schoolmates?, by kind of school (%)**



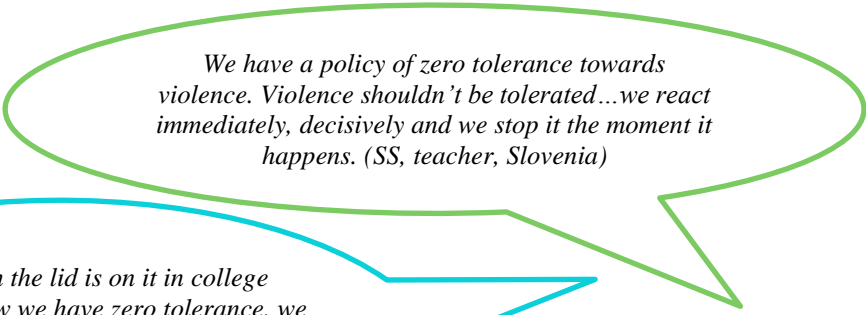
In Austria, this is confirmed by some pupils' quotes, which affirmed that they usually involve teachers (or other schools staff):



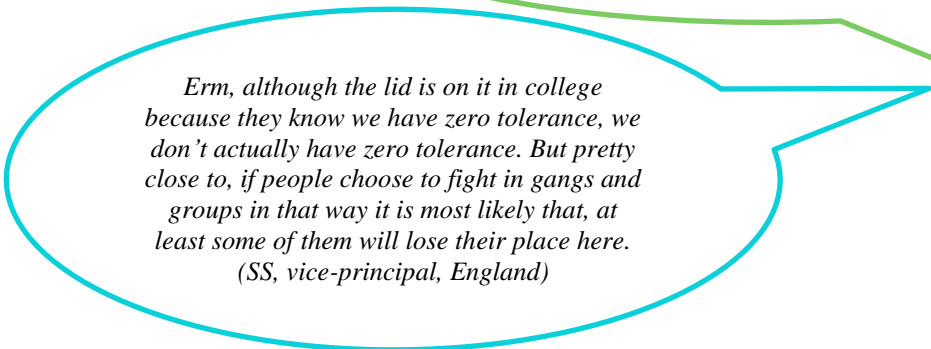
In Slovenia, pupils both from primary and secondary schools suggest that teachers usually intervene:



In Cypriot, Italian and English focus groups, pupils also confirm this perception. This attitude is also confirmed by teachers. It is interesting to notice that in Slovenia and England teachers affirmed to adopt a *zero tolerance policy*:



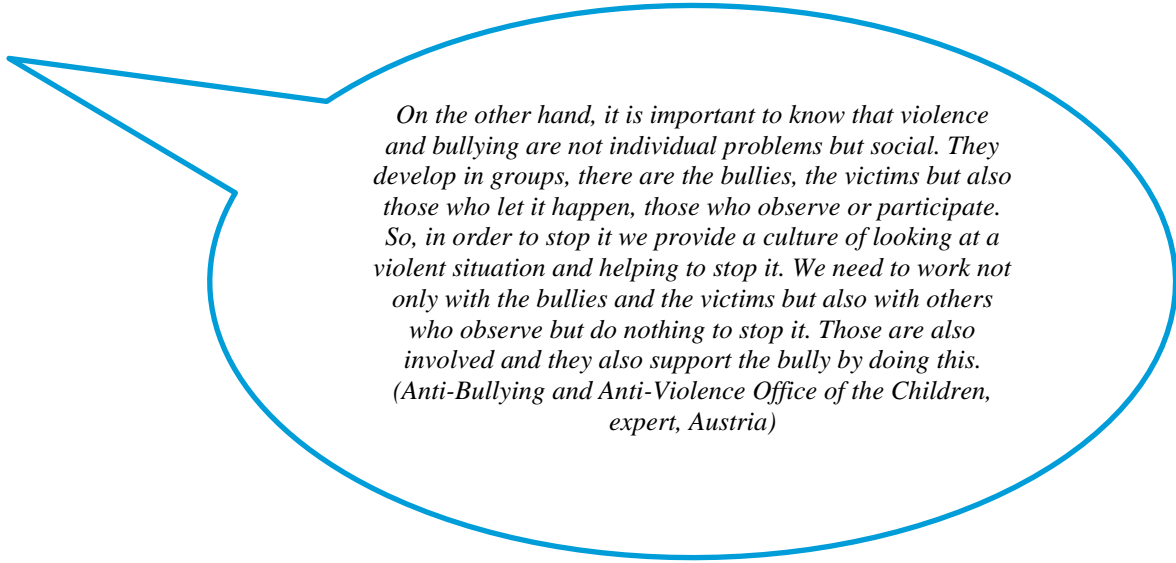
*We have a policy of zero tolerance towards violence. Violence shouldn't be tolerated...we react immediately, decisively and we stop it the moment it happens. (SS, teacher, Slovenia)*



*Erm, although the lid is on it in college because they know we have zero tolerance, we don't actually have zero tolerance. But pretty close to, if people choose to fight in gangs and groups in that way it is most likely that, at least some of them will lose their place here. (SS, vice-principal, England)*

### **3.2 Schools and peer violence**

As underlined above, teachers have a key role in preventing school violence. But the experts interviewed in the five countries put in evidence that not all teachers are able to create a favourable environment for mutual exchange and tolerance, usually because they do not have adequate training or because they underrate violence or bullying. When teachers experience the phenomenon of bullying, they must be able to take control of the situation, demonstrating how problems can be solved using dialogue instead violence. Teachers and the whole schools staff (psychologists, pedagogues and counsellors) all contribute to this aim. In particular, the Austrian experts underlined that the “culture of looking away” among pupils needs to be oriented by anti-violence programmes to the “I care” attitude:



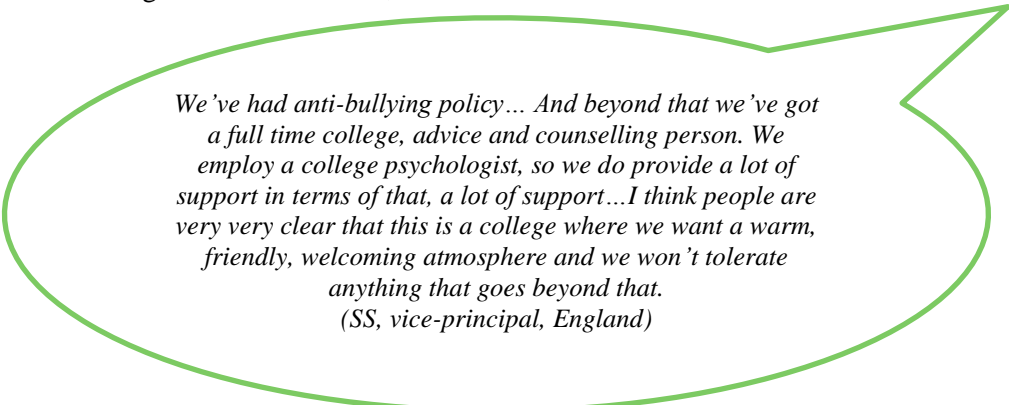
*On the other hand, it is important to know that violence and bullying are not individual problems but social. They develop in groups, there are the bullies, the victims but also those who let it happen, those who observe or participate. So, in order to stop it we provide a culture of looking at a violent situation and helping to stop it. We need to work not only with the bullies and the victims but also with others who observe but do nothing to stop it. Those are also involved and they also support the bully by doing this. (Anti-Bullying and Anti-Violence Office of the Children, expert, Austria)*



Interviews with teachers and experts revealed many strategies used by schools and teachers to promote a positive climate. The most important experiences are listed below.

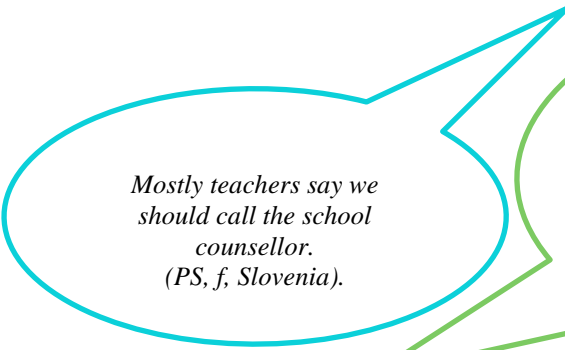
### 3.2.1 Policy of zero tolerance

As already underlined, at least on the declarative level, all teachers emphasized the policy of zero tolerance against violence. England school staff reported the importance of promoting the overall inclusive and welcoming ethos of the school, where racist attitudes would not be tolerated.

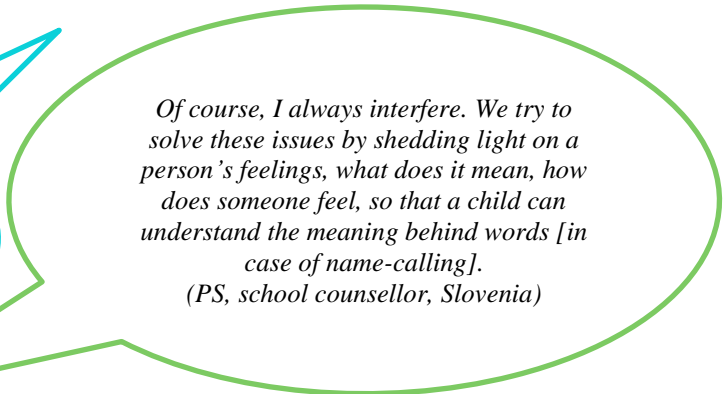


*We've had anti-bullying policy... And beyond that we've got a full time college, advice and counselling person. We employ a college psychologist, so we do provide a lot of support in terms of that, a lot of support...I think people are very very clear that this is a college where we want a warm, friendly, welcoming atmosphere and we won't tolerate anything that goes beyond that.*  
(SS, vice-principal, England)

Italian, Austrian and Cypriote interviews also evidence the same policy attitudes of schools. In particular, in Slovenia, when physical violence occurs, school personnel generally inform the school counsellor or psychologist considered more competent in solving conflict situations.

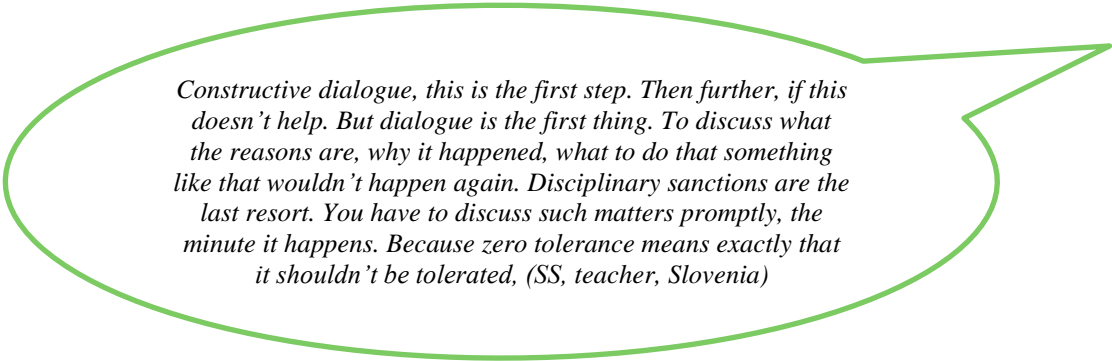


*Mostly teachers say we should call the school counsellor.*  
(PS, f, Slovenia).



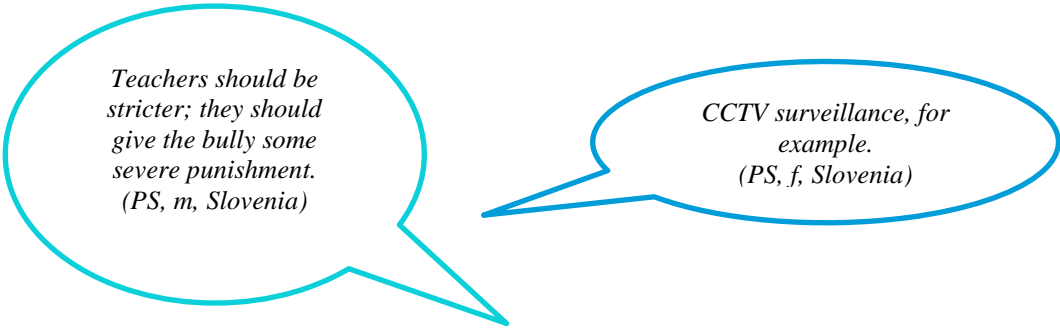
*Of course, I always interfere. We try to solve these issues by shedding light on a person's feelings, what does it mean, how does someone feel, so that a child can understand the meaning behind words [in case of name-calling].*  
(PS, school counsellor, Slovenia)

In Slovenia, teachers pointed out the importance of a constructive dialogue as the best way to deter pupils from repeating the wrong behaviour.



*Constructive dialogue, this is the first step. Then further, if this doesn't help. But dialogue is the first thing. To discuss what the reasons are, why it happened, what to do that something like that wouldn't happen again. Disciplinary sanctions are the last resort. You have to discuss such matters promptly, the minute it happens. Because zero tolerance means exactly that it shouldn't be tolerated, (SS, teacher, Slovenia)*

On the other hand, punishment and sanctions should be reserved for the most serious or persistent misbehaviour because they should have a scope of rehabilitation in order to make students learn by their own mistakes. In fact, school authorities try to explain to violent pupils the negative impact of their behaviours on themselves and others, with the purpose of increasing the responsibility for their own behaviour. However, some pupils believe that (severe) sanctions for improper behaviour are the best way to prevent (interethnic) violence in the school environment.

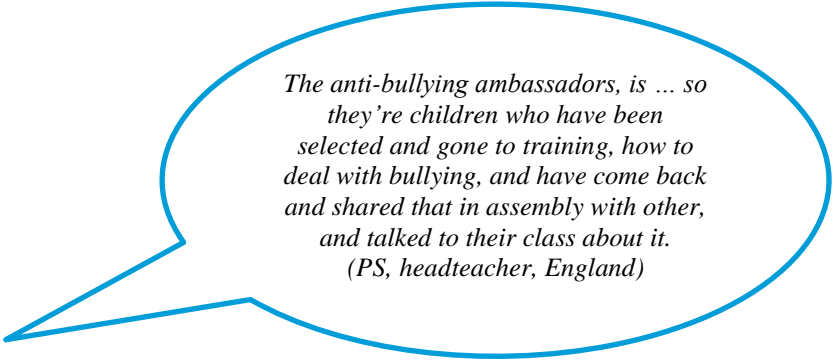


*Teachers should be stricter; they should give the bully some severe punishment.  
(PS, m, Slovenia)*

*CCTV surveillance, for example.  
(PS, f, Slovenia)*

### 3.2.2 Peer education

As emphasized in the first part of this paper, peer education is very important in order to develop social competences and cooperation between children. In the interviews with teachers, several examples of these had been found, in particular in England and Austrian schools. In England, teachers and pupils mentioned the *anti-bullying ambassador programme* and the *Circle time*. The first is a sort of peer-helper (*befriending*); some pupils are provided specific training in order to help their mates when violent behaviours occurred, as a headteacher explained:



*The anti-bullying ambassadors, is ... so they're children who have been selected and gone to training, how to deal with bullying, and have come back and shared that in assembly with other, and talked to their class about it.  
(PS, headteacher, England)*

The efficacy of this intervention is not shared in both focus group held in the school which implemented the anti-bullying ambassador programme:

*Res: If you saw somebody being treated badly because they were being bullied for any reason? If it was race or religion or anything, what would you do?*

*Pupil Erm, in our school we have erm, some anti-bullying ambassadors. So like if you see somebody being bullied and you're not sure what to do, you just go up to them and tell them and they'll act for you. Or you could just go and tell an adult.*

*Res: So the anti-bullying ambassadors they're the children, aren't they?*

*Pupil I'm one. (PS, England)*

In another focus group, where the anti-bullying ambassador was not there, all pupils reported that they would prefer to talk directly to a teacher the experienced or witnessed peer violence episode for the following reasons:

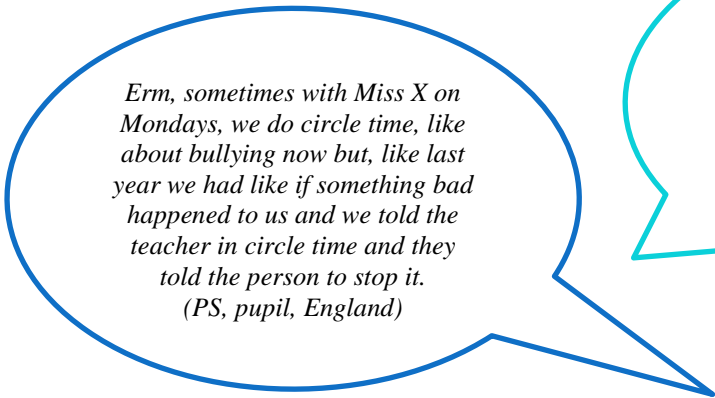
*Pupil 1 [...] the adults don't realise that most of the...bullying ambassadors are kind of silly.*

*Pupil 2 Cos they don't take their jobs seriously.*

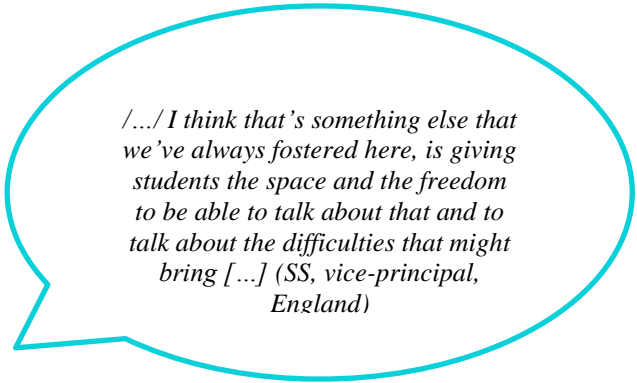
*Pupil 1 Some of them just like slack off their...they just erm, they just say bring the bully to me and then, they say...and then they say don't do it again. Erm, but then they do it again and the anti-bullying ambassadors don't notice it. That's why I talked to my teacher instead because she does her job properly, she cares about our health.*

*Pupil 2 Yeah because they're the same age as us, they're year 6 so they're like a bit lazy too. (PS, England)*

The second best practice cited by pupils of primary schools is to talk about diversity during class time, like in a circle time. Sometimes, other relevant topic discussed with this method are the consequences of any kind of violence; this may also represent a good method for combating violence as well as trips to significant places and institutions that promote interethnic coexistence or are considered valid initiatives.



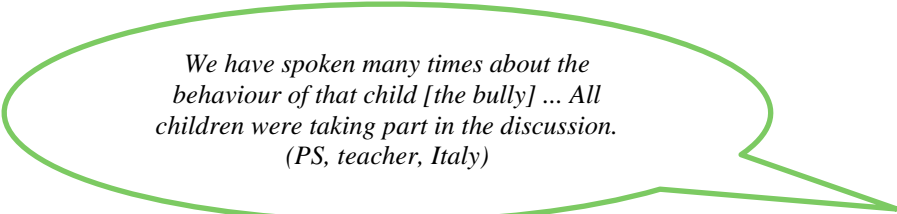
*Erm, sometimes with Miss X on Mondays, we do circle time, like about bullying now but, like last year we had like if something bad happened to us and we told the teacher in circle time and they told the person to stop it. (PS, pupil, England)*



*/.../ I think that's something else that we've always fostered here, is giving students the space and the freedom to be able to talk about that and to talk about the difficulties that might bring [...] (SS, vice-principal, England)*

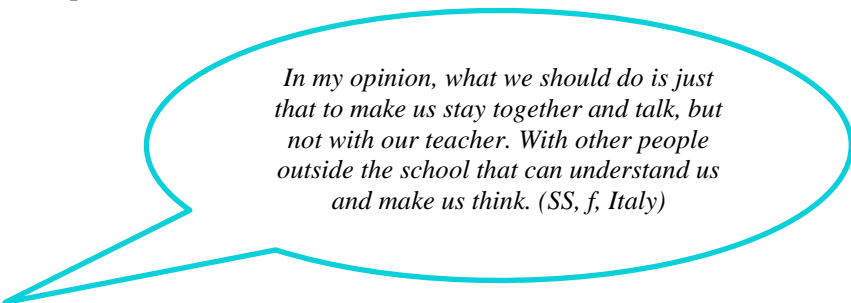
In Slovenia, pupils from primary schools and students from secondary school also think that a way for preventing (interethnic) peer violence is talking about diversity, cultures, religions and human rights in class time. They underline the importance of speaking and discussing with teachers and other experts in order to obtain information about various forms of violence, how to recognize them and how to react. Many schools have developed individual programmes and interventions aiming at peer violence prevention, such as “Together for a Safe School”, “From Quarrel to Tolerance”, “Violence is Out, We are In!”, “Safe Point School Project”. In some cases, these projects form a part of the school curriculum (for example, the unit “Let’s Silence the Violence”, under the primary school subject Civic and Homeland Education and Ethics).

Another example is Italy, where the initiative such as a circle time is not widespread. Anyway, when acts of violence occur in primary schools; teachers usually open a class discussion about the incidents.



*We have spoken many times about the behaviour of that child [the bully] ... All children were taking part in the discussion.  
(PS, teacher, Italy)*

In Italian secondary schools, many students identified the focus group of Children’s Voices research as a relevant tool to cope with violence; they underlined the importance to talk about this topic and to discuss these issues with experts:



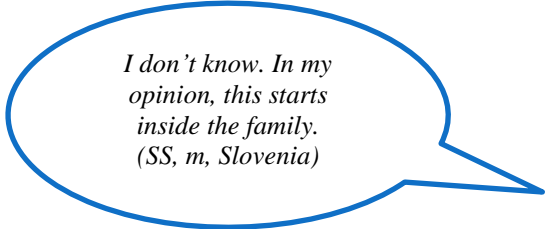
*In my opinion, what we should do is just that to make us stay together and talk, but not with our teacher. With other people outside the school that can understand us and make us think. (SS, f, Italy)*

As already mentioned, (see par. 2), in Austria, the selected schools provide different programmes and projects to promote a non-violent school environment as well as intercultural tolerance. Most schools provide peer mediation programmes where peers are trained to solve conflict situations among pupils. Some schools also participate in anti-violence programmes as, for example, the aforementioned WISK programme. If necessary, some teachers organise special activities, such as outdoor weeks in order to strengthen the team spirit of a particular class.

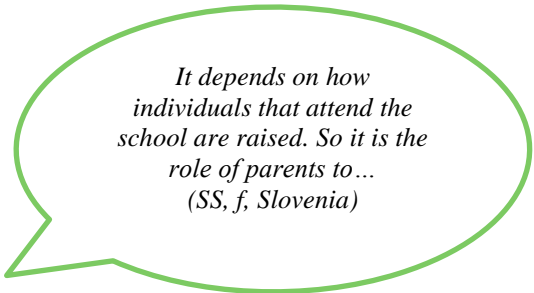
In Cyprus, there are not specific strategies followed by teachers to prevent and to cope with (intercultural) violence at schools. Nevertheless, there are some programmes, such as the Cypriot Xenios Program, which aim at the promotion of good practices in order to enhance the coexistence of other ethnic minorities and Greek Cypriot students in secondary schools.

### 3.2.3 Relation with family

In Slovenia, secondary school students think that family has an important role in solving and promoting non-violent behaviours in youth:

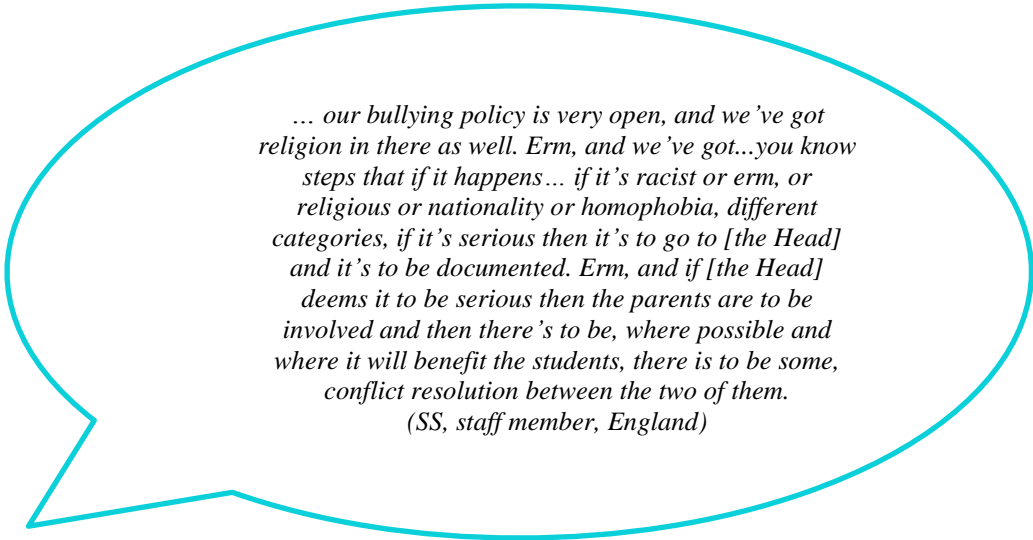


*I don't know. In my opinion, this starts inside the family.*  
(SS, m, Slovenia)

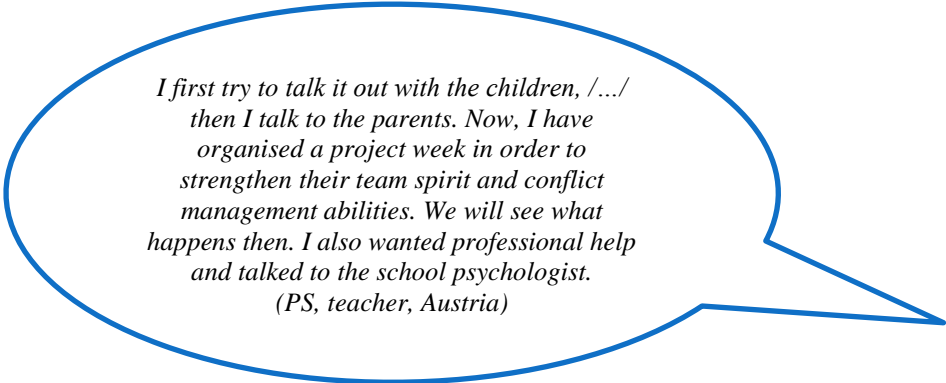


*It depends on how individuals that attend the school are raised. So it is the role of parents to...*  
(SS, f, Slovenia)

Teachers in England and Austria also underline this aspect:

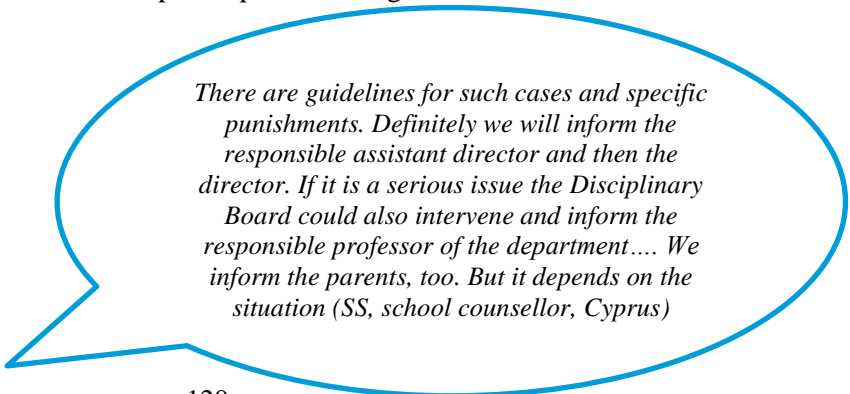


*... our bullying policy is very open, and we've got religion in there as well. Erm, and we've got...you know steps that if it happens... if it's racist or erm, or religious or nationality or homophobia, different categories, if it's serious then it's to go to [the Head] and it's to be documented. Erm, and if [the Head] deems it to be serious then the parents are to be involved and then there's to be, where possible and where it will benefit the students, there is to be some, conflict resolution between the two of them.*  
(SS, staff member, England)



*I first try to talk it out with the children, /.../ then I talk to the parents. Now, I have organised a project week in order to strengthen their team spirit and conflict management abilities. We will see what happens then. I also wanted professional help and talked to the school psychologist.*  
(PS, teacher, Austria)

In Cyprus, the majority of selected schools do not follow a specific policy in dealing with interethnic peer violence and for this reason the relationship with parents change from case to case:



*There are guidelines for such cases and specific punishments. Definitely we will inform the responsible assistant director and then the director. If it is a serious issue the Disciplinary Board could also intervene and inform the responsible professor of the department.... We inform the parents, too. But it depends on the situation* (SS, school counsellor, Cyprus)

Italian teachers underline that when they are faced with a problem of interethnic violence, they usually act quickly. Indeed, the adopted strategies vary depending on the severity of the offense and on the age of the children. They usually convene the parents and begin a process of accompaniment. Especially in the relation with the families of pupils with a non-Italian cultural background, teachers could collaborate with a linguistic and cultural mediator in order to obtain an effective result. The relation with family is not always easy. Teachers emphasised two kinds of problems:

1. Italian parents tend to defend their children and finally to transform the aggressor in a victim (particularly when victims are pupils with a non-Italian background because the latter does not have always the cultural and relational resources to face the situation);
2. a general difficulty to interact with the parents of pupils of non-Italian origin (they do not speak Italian, sometimes they do not understand the rules of Italian schools).

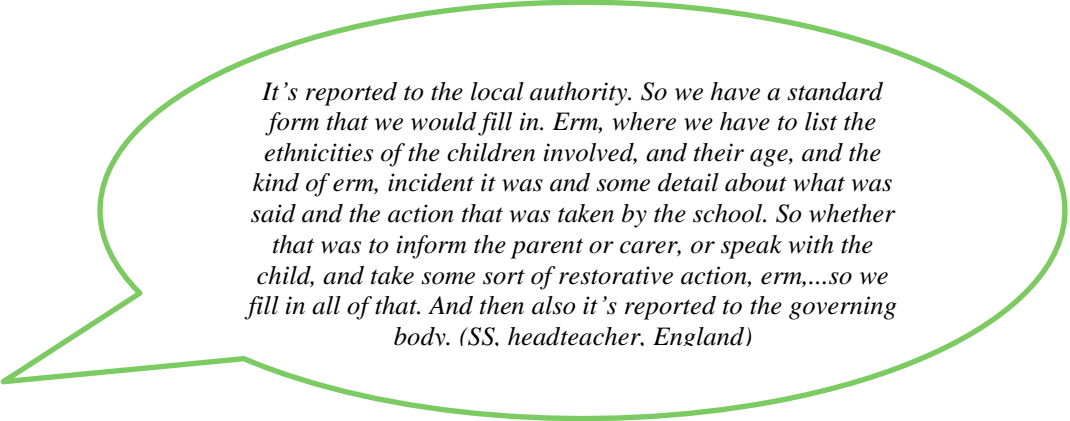
### **3.2.4 Relation with the local authority**

During the interviews with teachers, several evidences of school relations with local authorities in order to solve the most severe cases of racial violence have been found. As Italian teachers affirmed either the social services or the police are alerted occasionally. Sometimes, at the local level, protocols among school, social services, the police and Juvenile Courts may be established. Usually, these protocols are not focused on interethnic violence, but they are directed to all kinds of bullying. For example, a network composed of some schools in the Province of Gorizia,<sup>29</sup> the Municipality of Monfalcone and other local and regional authorities (The Juvenile Court of the Friuli Venezia Giulia and the local police) was established in 2010. The Protocol has the purpose to investigate and widespread knowledge on the issue of bullying, to foster collaboration between the entities involved and to increase dialogue between schools and institutions in order to curb violent behaviours. Following this protocol, the President of the Juvenile Court of Trieste proposed that the recurrent and very serious cases of bullying should be treated with the same legal instruments of the Italian law applied to stalking.

In English schools, a requirement exists to report racial incidents to the local authority. Thus, in the selected schools all stated that their anti-bullying policies included reporting the incidence of interethnic violence to the local authority.

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<sup>29</sup> Gorizia is one of the provinces in Friuli Venezia Giulia, the Italian Region selected for the quantitative and qualitative research according to the methodological framework established by the Children's Voices project.

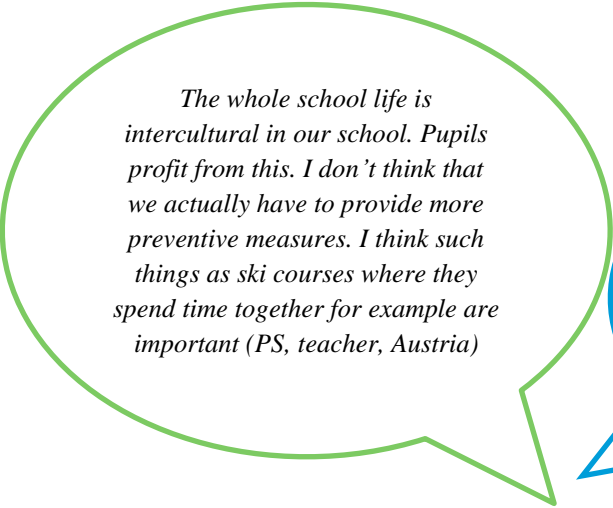


*It's reported to the local authority. So we have a standard form that we would fill in. Erm, where we have to list the ethnicities of the children involved, and their age, and the kind of erm, incident it was and some detail about what was said and the action that was taken by the school. So whether that was to inform the parent or carer, or speak with the child, and take some sort of restorative action, erm,...so we fill in all of that. And then also it's reported to the governing body. (SS, headteacher, England)*

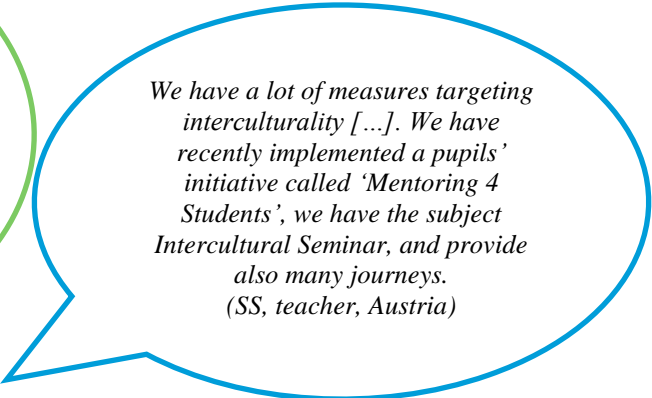
### **3.2.5 Interethnic violence practices and intercultural education**

As stated above, good practices against school interethnic violence also include the improvement of intercultural education. In particular, all teachers and experts interviewed in the five countries underline the importance of applying the principles of multiculturalism and tolerance in the school curriculum.

In Austria, with regard to intercultural tolerance, the interviewed teachers reported about different projects organised by pupils, by teachers themselves or implemented within the school curriculum, as for example the intercultural seminar where diversity and interculturality in school and the future working environment are discussed and trained. It appears that interculturality plays an important role in schools, especially in the bigger cities like Vienna or Linz, which have a very multicultural environment.



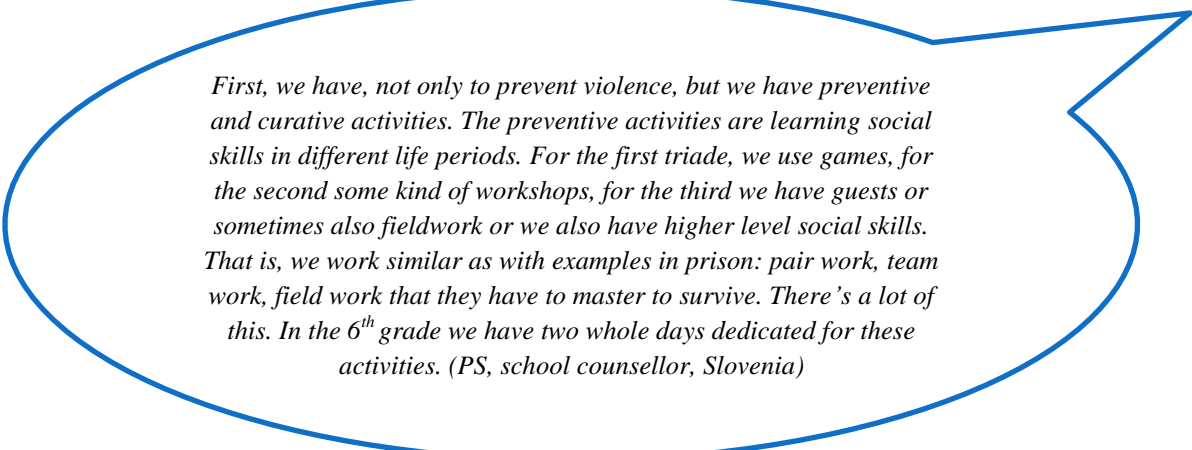
*The whole school life is intercultural in our school. Pupils profit from this. I don't think that we actually have to provide more preventive measures. I think such things as ski courses where they spend time together for example are important (PS, teacher, Austria)*



*We have a lot of measures targeting interculturality [...]. We have recently implemented a pupils' initiative called 'Mentoring 4 Students', we have the subject Intercultural Seminar, and provide also many journeys. (SS, teacher, Austria)*

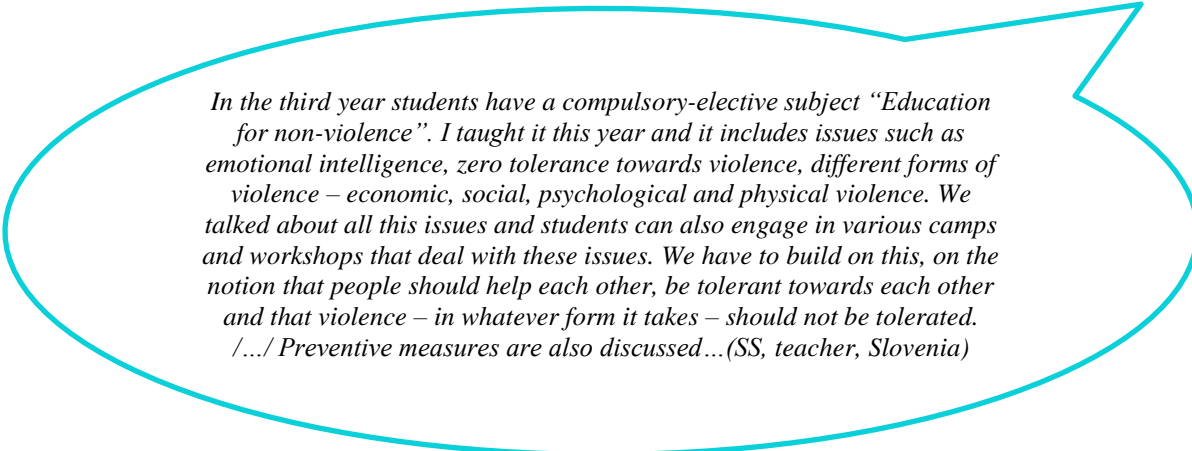
In Italy, interculturality also plays an important role in schools. Each Italian school can benefit from specific funds to realize intercultural projects<sup>30</sup>; they can promote project with experts (cultural and linguistic mediators, psychologists) or create opportunities to know different cultures (trips, multicultural festivals with the presence of children families and significant representatives of local community).

In Slovenian schools, interethnic peer violence does not seem to be an alarming problem and for this reason there are no special programmes or activities developed in this sense. School authorities deal with the eventual issue of interethnic peer violence in the broader context of violence prevention.



*First, we have, not only to prevent violence, but we have preventive and curative activities. The preventive activities are learning social skills in different life periods. For the first triade, we use games, for the second some kind of workshops, for the third we have guests or sometimes also fieldwork or we also have higher level social skills. That is, we work similar as with examples in prison: pair work, team work, field work that they have to master to survive. There's a lot of this. In the 6<sup>th</sup> grade we have two whole days dedicated for these activities. (PS, school counsellor, Slovenia)*

Nevertheless, teachers try to develop the topics of interethnic tolerance in several compulsory subjects (usually, geography, history, country language and foreign languages). On the other hand, interethnic tolerance and civic rights of minorities are compulsory subjects ("Ethics and Civic Education" in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school and "Education for peace, family and non-violence" in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the secondary school). Despite this, some experts underline that this is not enough. Interculturality as an educational principle should be present in all school activities from the earliest stage.



*In the third year students have a compulsory-elective subject "Education for non-violence". I taught it this year and it includes issues such as emotional intelligence, zero tolerance towards violence, different forms of violence – economic, social, psychological and physical violence. We talked about all this issues and students can also engage in various camps and workshops that deal with these issues. We have to build on this, on the notion that people should help each other, be tolerant towards each other and that violence – in whatever form it takes – should not be tolerated. /.../ Preventive measures are also discussed...(SS, teacher, Slovenia)*

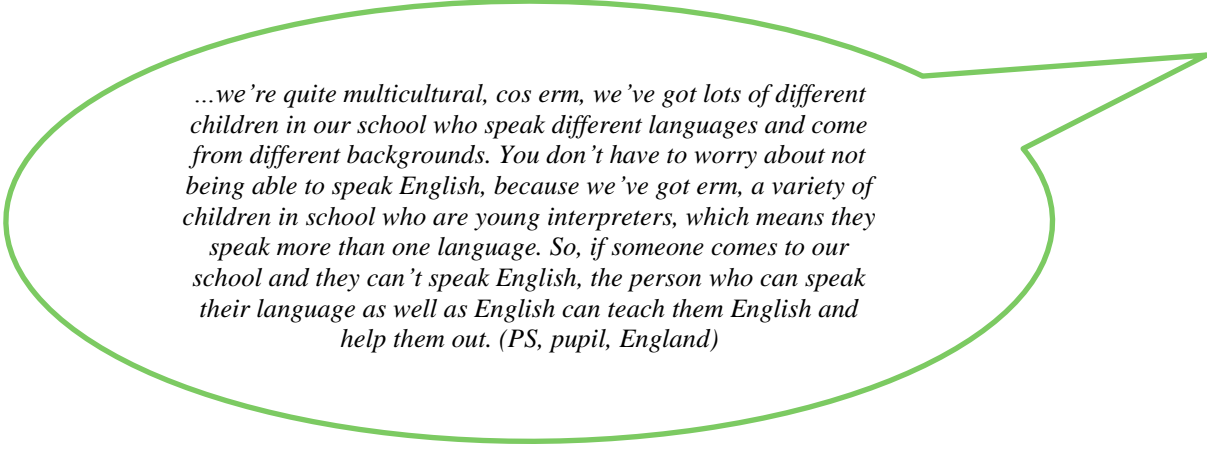
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30 The national legislation defines, in Art. 9 of the "National Supplementary Collective Agreement - School Compartment for 2006-09", the way through which the State may finance incentives for projects relating to risk areas with a very high percentage of immigration and for projects against school exclusion.



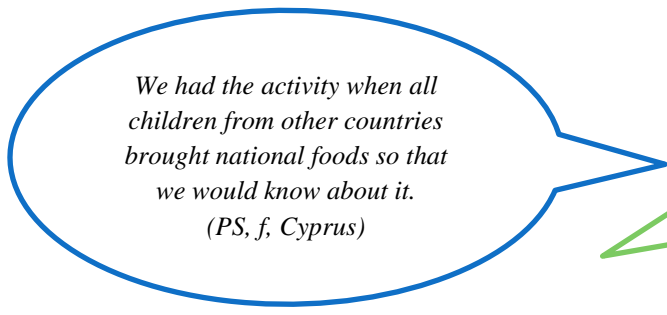
Another example of activities realized in Slovenia is a programme called *School Mediation – A New Culture of Relationships* executed by a primary school in Izola, addressed to pupils, teachers, school staff and parents. The purpose is to reinforce the culture of relationships between pupils, parents and school staff. Basically, the activities of the programme attempt to reinforce the children's ability in solving their conflicts in a constructive way and to teach them how to help themselves and others in conflict situations.

The interviews in England emphasized the role of all components at schools in order to promote the ethos of inclusion of diversity, with specific regard to the different expressions of socio-cultural belonging, such as religion, customs and traditions. In particular, pupils mentioned initiatives such as the *Young Interpreters Programme* (present in a selected school) as helpful.

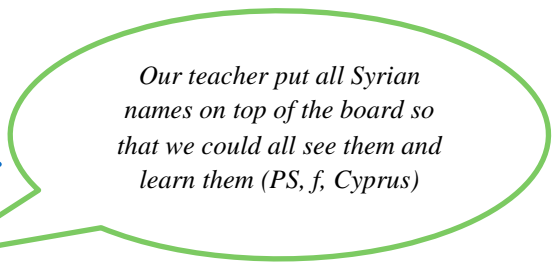


*...we're quite multicultural, cos erm, we've got lots of different children in our school who speak different languages and come from different backgrounds. You don't have to worry about not being able to speak English, because we've got erm, a variety of children in school who are young interpreters, which means they speak more than one language. So, if someone comes to our school and they can't speak English, the person who can speak their language as well as English can teach them English and help them out. (PS, pupil, England)*

In Cyprus, it is also possible to find intercultural interventions in schools activities. In detail, according to teachers and pupils interviews, primary schools organise several activities in order to help children from various ethnicity backgrounds to integrate in the class and school life.

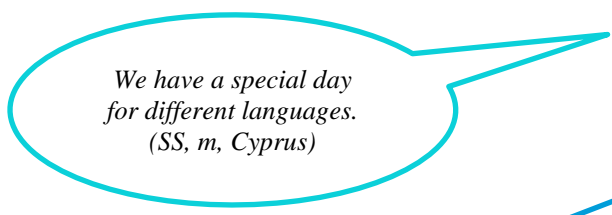


*We had the activity when all children from other countries brought national foods so that we would know about it. (PS, f, Cyprus)*

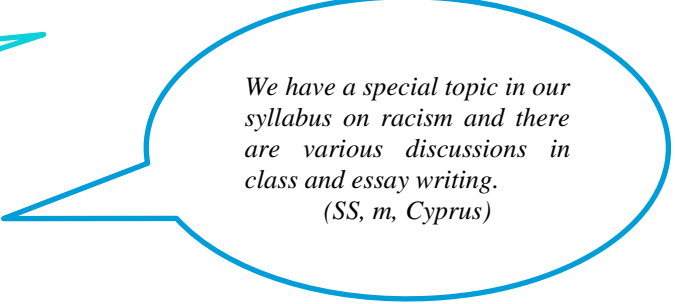


*Our teacher put all Syrian names on top of the board so that we could all see them and learn them (PS, f, Cyprus)*

In secondary schools, children also referred to organized activities on this issue in class.



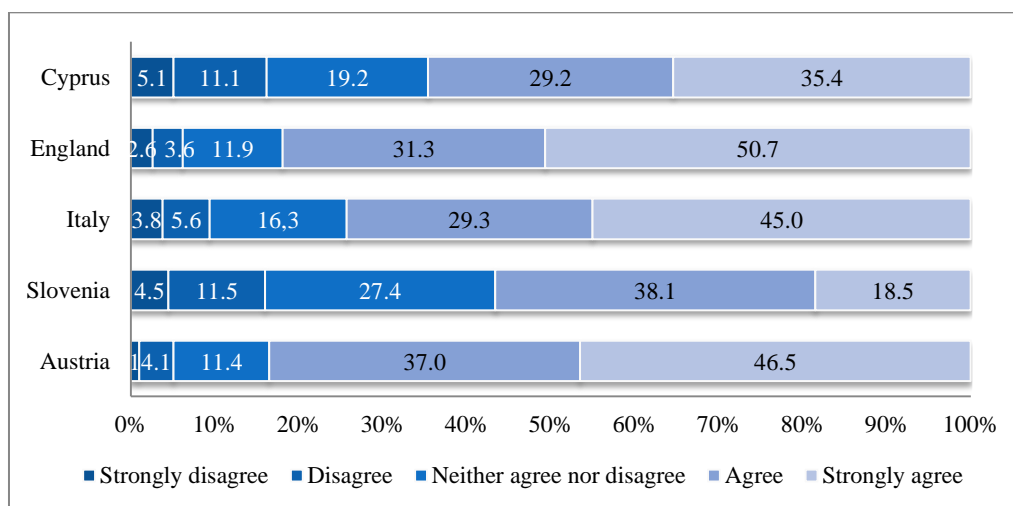
*We have a special day for different languages. (SS, m, Cyprus)*



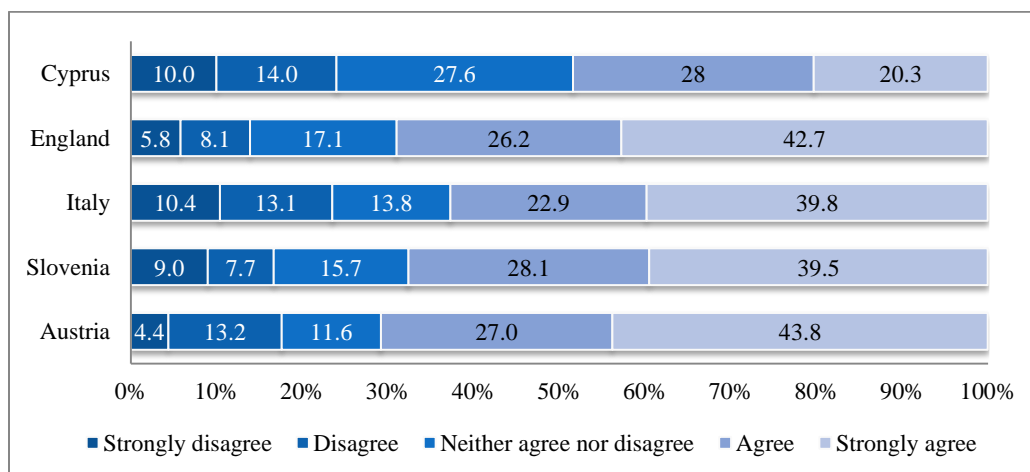
*We have a special topic in our syllabus on racism and there are various discussions in class and essay writing. (SS, m, Cyprus)*

*Last year during Christmas celebrations  
in school people from different countries  
appeared on stage and talked about  
customs and life in their country... but  
nobody paid much attention to it.  
(SS, f, Cyprus)*

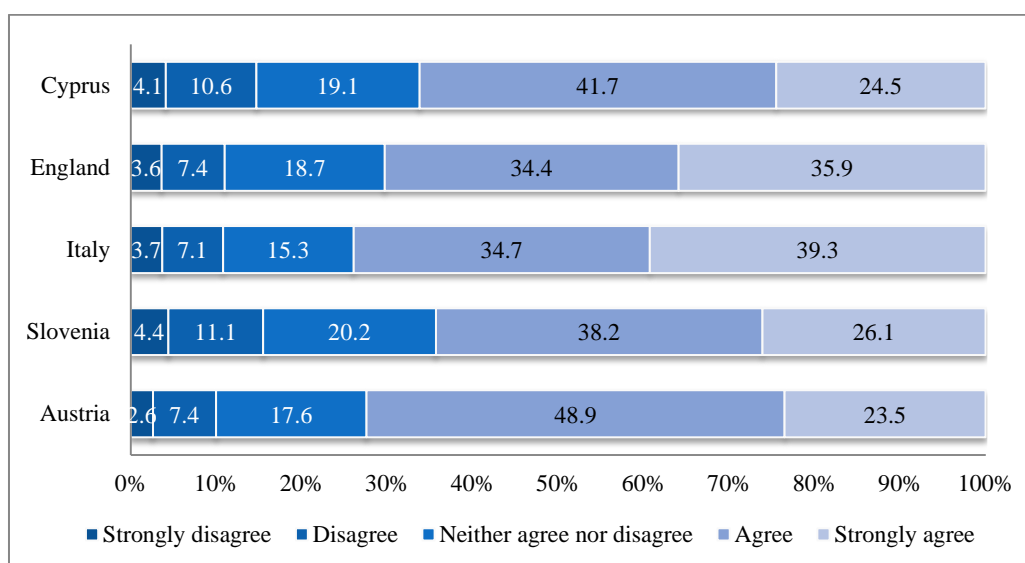
**Figure 5: My school is a place where everybody can be themselves whatever their ethnic background (%)**



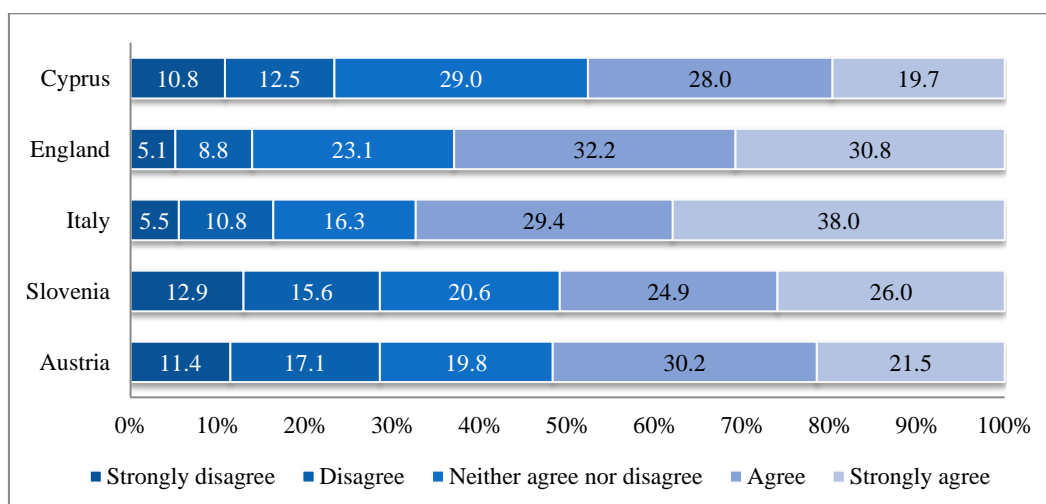
**Figure 6: Teachers treat pupils the same way regardless of their nationalities/ethnic background (%)**



**Figure 7: In the classroom we learn about different cultures and religions (%)**



**Figure 8: In the school we have special activities that encourage us to be equal and understand our differences**



Finally, within school activities designed to encourage the equality and the inclusion of linguistic, cultural and religious differences, the pupils' perceptions should be given careful consideration. The pupils were asked whether they agreed with four statements (*a. Teachers treat pupils the same way regardless of their nationalities/ethnic background – cultures, languages, religions?*; *b. My school is a place where everybody can be themselves whatever their ethnic background?*; *c. In the classroom we learn about different cultures and religions?*; *d. In the school we have special activities that encourage us to be equal and understand our differences?*). The majority of pupils seem to agree that their schools are a place where everybody can be themselves whatever their ethnic background is (Figure 5). England and Austria show the major agreement on this statement, while it is lower in

Slovenia and Cyprus. The perception of *equal treatment of teachers* and the *opportunities to learn about different cultures and religions in class* present a high level of agreement (Figure 6 and Figure 7). On the contrary, the agreement diminishes slightly when it comes to the statement *In the school we have special activities that encourage us to be equal and understand our differences* (Figure 8) because pupils do not always know such activities by name.

## 4 NGOs and other institutions

Various institutions, *NGOs* and voluntary associations have also developed programmes, workshops and interventions, mainly focusing on peer mediation, violence prevention and help lines for victims of violence. These organizations support schools in their activities. Some examples are reported below.

- Austrian NGOs programmes are mainly focused on peer-education/mediation strategy: *Mut zur Vielfalt* developed by the ZARA organization consists in a series of workshops for students (16 years old) with the aim to train teenagers to become anti-discrimination trainers and mediators in order to spread their knowledge on discrimination and racism among as many of their peers as possible. Moreover, with the signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of Child, Austria established the Child/Youth Ombudsman in each of the nine federal states of the country. The institution is an advocate of children and youths, which acts in the sole interest of them; it mediates in conflict situations and provides rapid help and, furthermore, it promotes the organization of workshops and projects focused on the improvement of social conditions of children and youth in order to help them to avoid violence. Based on the experience of Child and Youth Ombudsman, a pilot project was implemented in schools of the 9<sup>th</sup> district of Vienna in 2004, namely the NGO Together. The main feature of Together is the presence of professional mediators that help children and youths in solving problematic situations where peer mediation is not enough or when peer mediators are themselves involved in a conflict.
- In Cyprus, a non-governmental organization, the Centre for the Study of Childhood and Adolescence (CSCA) works in the field of awareness-raising regarding the issues of violence, racism, discrimination against children and the ways to reinforce and protect children's rights.
- In England, the Red Cross organization produces a range of humanitarian education materials addressed to schools; in particular, the Positive Image Project aims to promote positive attitudes among young people all around the European Union.

- Slovenia has a programme implemented by UNICEF called Speak Up! Let's Talk About Violence among Children; the project focuses on pupils and school personnel and aims to raise awareness about violence among children and tries to achieve zero tolerance for violence, preparing children to face violence. Moreover, the Association Against Violent Communication (DNK) implemented workshops addressed to primary and secondary schools with the aim to raise the consciousness on the issue of violence among children and adolescents and to teach them how to communicate without using violence.
- In Italy, organisations and NGOs implement projects against violence at the local and national levels. The website [www.stopbullismo.it](http://www.stopbullismo.it), for example, is a relevant source of information for all Italian teachers and it is completely dedicated to the issue of bullying. The web site provides a list of useful materials about different topics (what is bullying, how to recognize it, etc.) and a list of projects implemented in different Italian schools. Moreover, since 1987 the *SOS Il Telefono Azzurro Onlus*<sup>31</sup> has been committed to enforcing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and creating a society where children and adolescents are truly respected during all stages of their development. Telefono Azzurro was the first association in Italy dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect; it has become a reference point for young children and adolescents in difficulty and at risk.

Considering that migrations have become a concrete reality in most European countries, local NGOs and local or national institutions are implementing programmes and interventions focused on the general promotion of intercultural and integration values:

- In Italy, for example, a wide range of activities on this topic is carried out by the national and local segments of Caritas,<sup>32</sup> a non-profit organization particularly devoted to the support of people in difficulty, especially foreigners, in order to fight against poverty and social exclusion. Moreover, Intercultura<sup>33</sup> is a non-profit association devoted to the construction of an intercultural dialogue, also dealing with the presence of foreigners in the Italian school system.
- The Cypriot KISA is a non-governmental organization which aims is to raise awareness regarding the immigrants well-being; its activities aim to protect the rights of immigrants in Cyprus and to help them to integrate efficiently in the Cypriot society. In detail, the overall purpose of KISA is to enlighten all citizens about the ways to combat violence, racism and discrimination against immigrants.
- The Amnesty International developed the Human Rights Friendly Schools project and piloted it in a school in the United Kingdom. The project seeks to promote a holistic approach to the

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.azzurro.it/index.php/en/>

<sup>32</sup> [www.caritasitaliana.it](http://www.caritasitaliana.it)

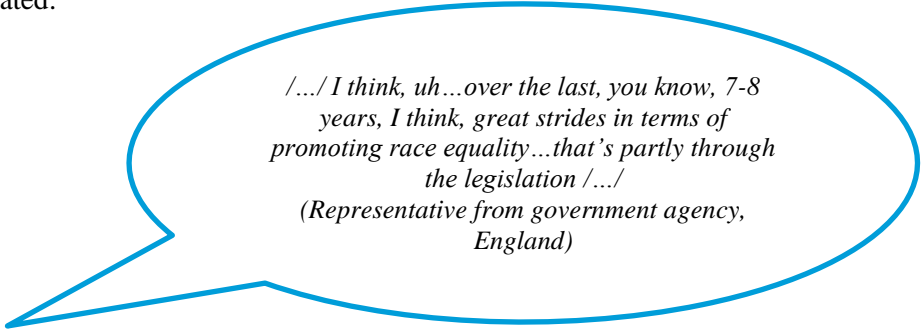
<sup>33</sup> <http://www.intercultura.it/La-scuola-e-Intercultura/>

integration of human rights into schools in countries all around the world with the overall purpose of sharing a common language among schools regarding the equality, dignity, respect and non-discrimination.

## 5 Summing up: some important findings of the Children's Voices project

As mentioned above, bullying is a multidimensional phenomenon for which an integrated approach is required. The selected projects and good practices put in place at national and local levels in the participating countries have highlighted some characteristics, namely that programmes should prevent bullying and (peer) violence in and outside schools. Notwithstanding the different approaches and targets, the project highlighted a selection of common elements that can lead to the improvement of the situation (Gini and Pozzoli, 2011, 117-119).


First of all, what clearly emerges from the empirical research is that a key role in prevention and combating violence is played by national institutions that provide the legal framework supporting all initiatives taken by other institutions and organizations. As a representative from an English government agency stated:



*/.../ I think, uh...over the last, you know, 7-8 years, I think, great strides in terms of promoting race equality...that's partly through the legislation /.../*  
(Representative from government agency, England)

Indeed, the legal national framework addresses the general policy at the national level, especially regarding the security of young people and the integration of foreigners in the local community.

Another crucial element of the community approach is the school environment, which must be considered in its broadest sense, contemplating the whole community: students, teachers, headmasters and all collaborators that have a role in school daily life. Basically, if a positive ethos is established at school, students will perceive it and their awareness about security and self-confidence will spread into their daily life. The qualitative research in England points out the importance of proactive school environment, as an English school staff member underlines:

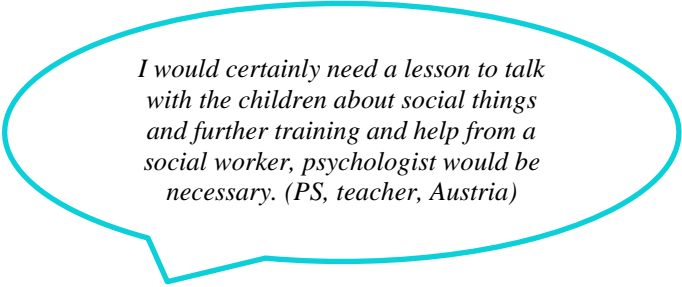


*/.../ I think it's so important for schools to promote equality and to learn about all these ... in our school it's wonderful, because we have display boards, we have artefacts, we celebrate every religion /.../*  
(PS, staff member, England)

The importance of schools in preventing violence is also underlined in literature; in detail, what is crucial is the establishment of a clear and grounded general school policy against bullying and violence. If properly formulated, a clear school policy against bullying allows clear communication between all school members, helps to make effective decisions and to establish an on-going relationship with families. School policy is a progressive process, which has to be improved step by step on the basis of different experiences and specific needs (Gini and Pozzoli, 2011).

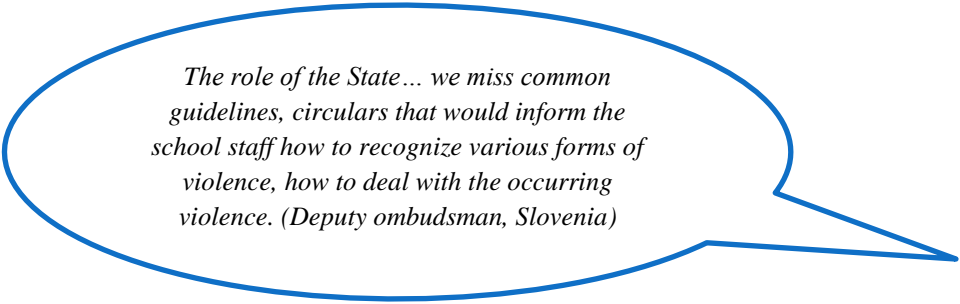
As regards the teachers' role in preventing and combating violence at school, all project partners' respondents agree that they play the key in the school system, first of all because their interactions with students are continuous. Consequently, the importance of lifelong training and formation of teachers is shared especially in the aforementioned context of school staff training in the recognition and treatment of violence and bullying episodes. However, an important perspective emerges from the Austrian qualitative research; namely, the perception of Austrian interviewed teachers is that they should not be responsible for conflict management and anti-violence measures at school. It appears necessary that experts, psychologist and social workers are (more often) present in schools, so that pupils and teachers can consult them preventively or when the problems arise.

This assumption leads to another topic, pointed out by Austrian teachers, namely, the formation and training of teachers in violence prevention:



*I would certainly need a lesson to talk with the children about social things and further training and help from a social worker, psychologist would be necessary. (PS, teacher, Austria)*

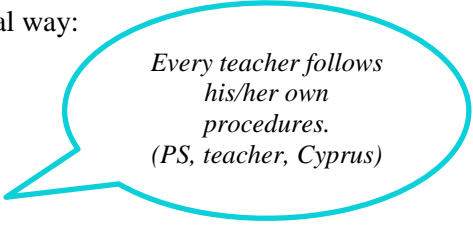
Therefore, external support for teachers should be provided by external experts, coordinated at national level. The need for national guidelines and coordination is also perceived by Slovenian expert who pointed out a practical operational need of Slovenian school institutions:



*The role of the State... we miss common guidelines, circulars that would inform the school staff how to recognize various forms of violence, how to deal with the occurring violence. (Deputy ombudsman, Slovenia)*

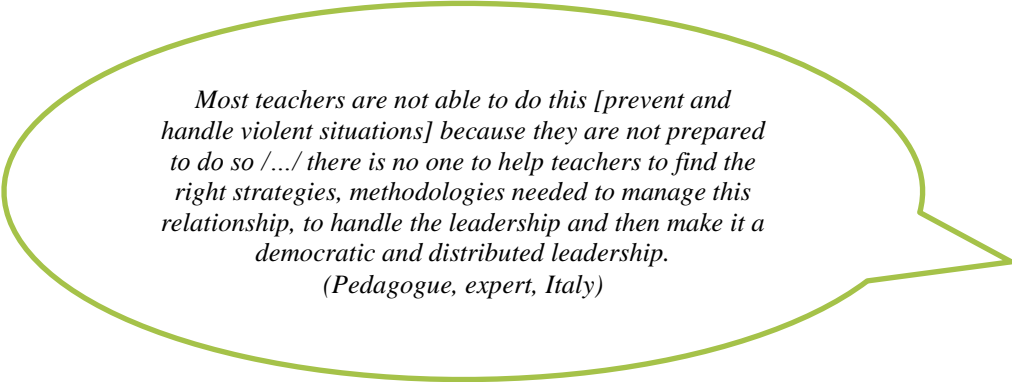
The Cypriot teachers also underlined the lack of a common policy in schools about how to fight and deal with violence. Most Cypriot schools do not follow a specific policy as to who is responsible for

dealing with interethnic peer violence. Some participants stated that counsellors and teachers deal with violent acts in school in their own personal way:



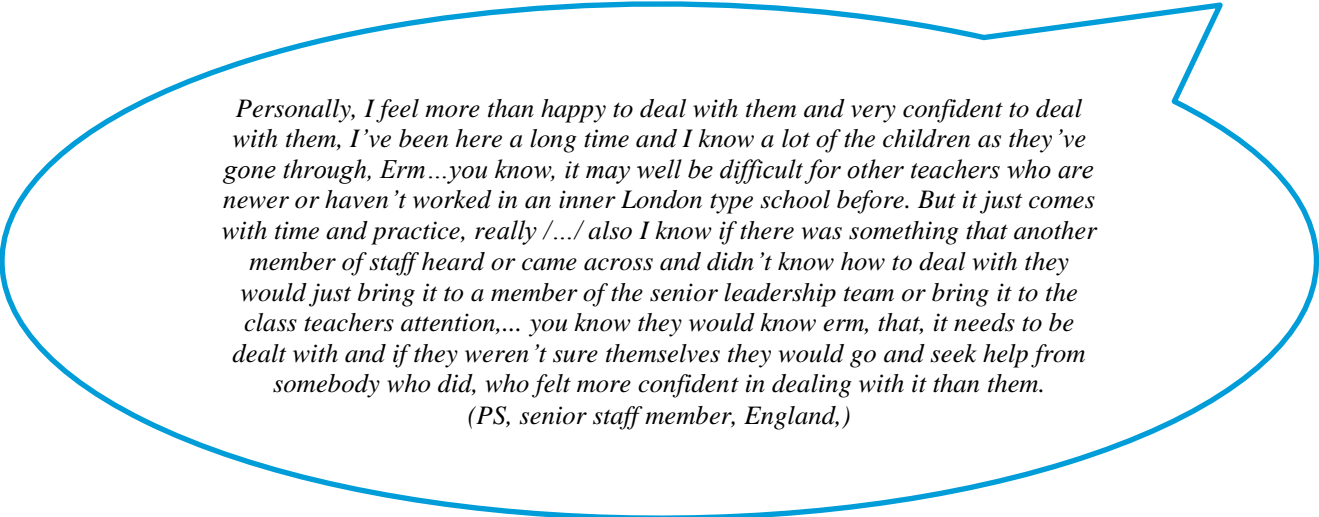
*Every teacher follows  
his/her own  
procedures.  
(PS, teacher, Cyprus)*

In Italy, the respondents shared the same perspective regarding the training of teachers and the necessity of a common intervention line of action in case of violence at school, emphasising the lack of a common guideline and specific training for teachers.



*Most teachers are not able to do this [prevent and  
handle violent situations] because they are not prepared  
to do so /.../ there is no one to help teachers to find the  
right strategies, methodologies needed to manage this  
relationship, to handle the leadership and then make it a  
democratic and distributed leadership.  
(Pedagogue, expert, Italy)*

The importance of teachers' formation and training in the issues of violence is also underlined by the English teachers who reported feeling confident in institutional support and that they had received sufficient training to deal with any interethnic violence (or violence for another reason)<sup>34</sup>:



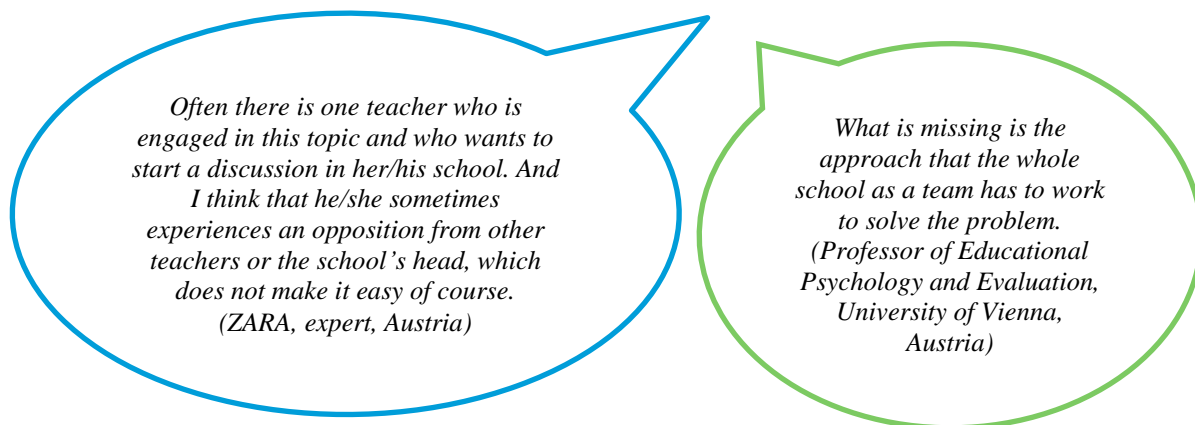
*Personally, I feel more than happy to deal with them and very confident to deal  
with them, I've been here a long time and I know a lot of the children as they've  
gone through, Erm...you know, it may well be difficult for other teachers who are  
newer or haven't worked in an inner London type school before. But it just comes  
with time and practice, really /.../ also I know if there was something that another  
member of staff heard or came across and didn't know how to deal with they  
would just bring it to a member of the senior leadership team or bring it to the  
class teachers attention,... you know they would know erm, that, it needs to be  
dealt with and if they weren't sure themselves they would go and seek help from  
somebody who did, who felt more confident in dealing with it than them.  
(PS, senior staff member, England,)*

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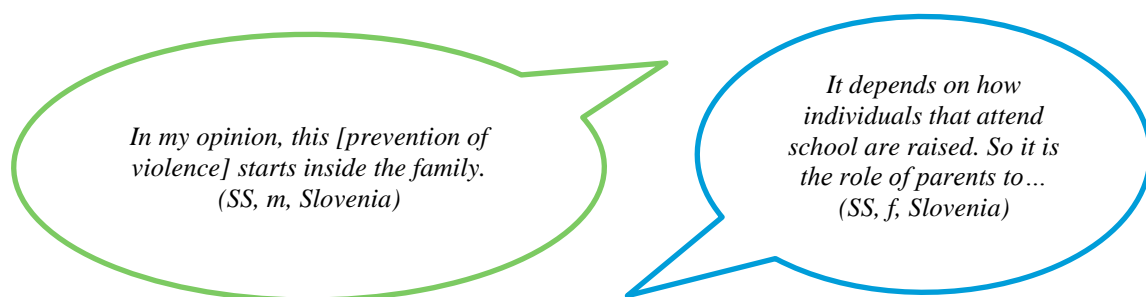
<sup>34</sup> However, as regards the English case it is important to report that teachers' opinion are in contrast to the picture painted by interviewed experts who raised concerns as to how far teachers are trained to understand different faiths and cultures – particularly in relation to Islam, and also trained to understand and deal with issues of race equality generally and, in particular, with Islamophobia. It was also felt that quality often varied from institution to institution:  
*I think it's declined because of, well obviously the amount of time, the length of the course, and so much is school based now. ... Whereas I remember the days it was a whole program that used to teach on, on diversity and that was a whole sort of module that went across them. And I have a horrible feeling that it's all got collapsed into things. I don't know, obviously that would vary across institutions. (England, academic)*



Furthermore, two Austrian experts pointed out the importance of involving the entire school community for schools to be successful in preventing violence. Assigning the management of conflicts and violence among students to a single person (or two or three teachers), is not the right answer to the problem even for organizational and practical reasons:



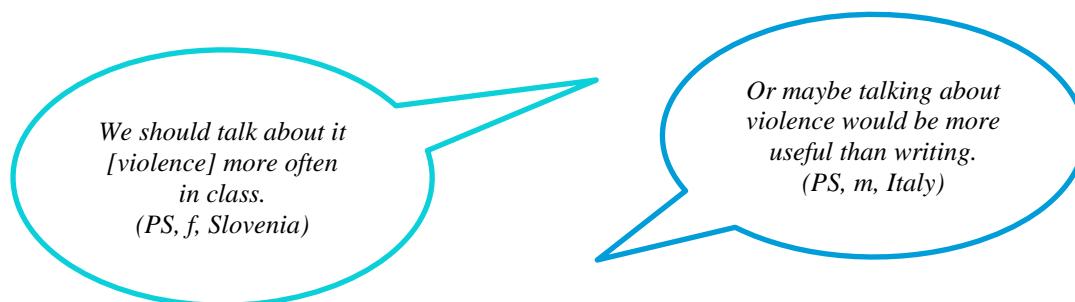
In the aforementioned community approach, in addition to schools and national institutions, families also play a key role in the prevention of violence, which was recognised by all participating experts and teachers. As stated several times, the family education of students is the element that is really the basis of any form violence prevention and promotion of integration and intercultural values. Even students who participated in focus groups seem to be aware of this. The Slovenian focus groups gave an example of the student perspective:



Thus, families must be involved in the programmes and they should be constantly aware of what happens to their children and what are the provisions that schools activate in order to prevent violence.

This consideration leads to a general conclusion of what should be done to improve the prevention of interethnic and general violence at schools. In the short term, an improvement of school activities designed to strengthen the students' awareness toward the topics of violence, multiculturalism and so on may be a positive solution; consequently, a constant share of students' emotions, feelings and

experiences (as, for example, in the circle time technique) was reported as a good practice also by students who consider this a good methods to solve, and even prevent, problems and (also) violence:



Besides this kind of interventions, all partners agree that a series of improvements should be implemented in the long term in order to enhance school activities for the prevention and reduction of violence. Cyprus in particular underlines the importance of effective cooperation and contact with external agencies, such as non-governmental organizations, the Ministry of Education and policy makers. Austria also emphasises the importance of schools involvement with external agencies in order to prevent violence and promote tolerance; schools, in cooperation with teachers, administration, parents and pupils and working together with external experts, should provide for measures to foster integration and violence prevention in the long run. However, both Austria and Cyprus underline that the long-run provisions should be provided by a suitable quantity of time and economic resources. Basically, long-term instructive ideas require extensive period of time due to the fact that processes must be followed outside the school environment, involving external actors (family, society and the state), which in turn might lead to a long-term successful outcomes.

Finally, the aforementioned elements (national level, school and teachers, families and external experts and organizations) are the main features that compose the so-called community approach which seems to be the common base supporting the formation of different programmes and good practices against violence in schools. From what emerges across the five different countries, these elements seem to confirm that this kind of approach is, despite the differences in each national context, the basis on which to build the interventions. In recent years, the growing interest toward the issues on bullying has enriched the conceptual framework for interpreting and understanding the phenomenon. Moreover, the elements underlined above represent permanent features which generally contribute to the creation of a positive environment, enhancing the efforts in the field of violence prevention in schools and the creation of a favourable environment where children and youths can express themselves and learn how to respect equality in diversity.

## 6 References and useful links

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### 6.2 *Useful links*

[www.azzurro.it/index.php/en/](http://www.azzurro.it/index.php/en/)

[www.caritasitaliana.it](http://www.caritasitaliana.it)

[www.coe.int/](http://www.coe.int/)

[www.informagiovani-italia.com/direttiva\\_ministero\\_contro\\_bullismo.htm](http://www.informagiovani-italia.com/direttiva_ministero_contro_bullismo.htm)

[www.intercultura.it/La-scuola-e-Intercultura/](http://www.intercultura.it/La-scuola-e-Intercultura/)

[www.kanderstegdeclaration.com](http://www.kanderstegdeclaration.com)

[www.psicogiuridico.it](http://www.psicogiuridico.it)

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[www.unicef.org/lifeskills/index\\_7308.html](http://www.unicef.org/lifeskills/index_7308.html)

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