



European Education Area Strategic Framework

Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training

Issue paper: Gender Equality in and through Education



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
Directorate A — Policy Strategy and Evaluation
Unit A.1 — Strategy and Investments

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Working Group on Equality and Values in Education
and Training

Issue paper on Gender Equality in and through Education

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This document was compiled and edited by Barry van Driel, Vicki Donlevy and Maria Melstveit Roseme (Ecorys) based on the work of the Working Group Equality and Values in Education and Training (2021-2025).

Manuscript completed in 2023

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1. Introduction

The Issue Paper on *Gender Equality in and through Education* has been produced within the framework of the European Commission's Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training (2021-2015). The Working Group (WG) operates within the context of the Commission's Communication of 30 September 2020 on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025¹ and the Council Resolution of 26 February 2021 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)². Participants of the WG comprise representatives from Member States and candidate countries, as well as from relevant European agencies, stakeholder associations, social partners and international organisations. The WG is coordinated by DG EAC of the European Commission, supported by three consultants from Ecorys³.

This Issue Paper summarises the various presentations and discussions that took place during two online WG meetings held on 20 January and 10 February 2022 and in the Peer Learning Activity (PLA) held online on 21 April 2022. In line with the WG mandate, it looks at various aspects of gender equality in and through education, with a special focus on gender gaps in education, gender segregation and non-traditional education and career pathways, confronting biases in textbooks and learning materials and gender-based violence.

The Issue Paper is intended to benefit related policy discussions at local, regional, national and EU level, making policymakers the primary target audience. Secondary target groups are education practitioners, as well as other stakeholders and individuals interested in the intersection between gender equality and education.

¹ European Commission (2020). 'COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS on achieving the European Education Area by 2025'. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1601687240311&uri=CELEX:52020DC0625>

² Council of the European Union (2021). 'Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030) 2021/C 66/01'. Available at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32021G0226\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32021G0226(01))

³ Barry van Driel, Vicki Donlevy and Maria Melstveit Roseme

2. Key concepts

Table 1: Key concepts

Concepts	Definitions
Gender (versus sex)	The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines gender ⁴ as 'the characteristics of women and men that are socially constructed, while sex refers to those that are biologically determined'. According to Article 3c of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence 'gender' refers to socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men ⁵ .
Gender bias	The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) defines gender bias ⁶ as: 'prejudiced actions or thoughts based on the gender-based perception that women are not equal to men in rights and dignity'.
Gender identity	Gender identity ⁷ , according to EIGE refers to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.
Gender equality	The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 aims for: 'a Union where women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are free to pursue their chosen path of life, have equal opportunities to strive, and can equally participate in and lead our European society'. Gender equality ⁸ , according to EIGE, implies that: 'the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, thereby recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is an issue that should concern and fully engage both men and women equally. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.' The Council of Europe, in a slightly different vein, in noting that some languages do not have a word for 'gender', defines gender equality ⁹ as: 'equal visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation for both women and men in all spheres of public and private life. It also means an equal access to and distribution of resources between women and men.'

⁴ World Health Organisation. 'Gender'. Available at: <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/gender/gender-definitions>

⁵ Council of Europe (2011). Council of Europe Treaty Series - No. 210: Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168008482e>

⁶ European Institute for Gender Equality. 'Gender bias | European Institute for Gender Equality'. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1155>

⁷ European Institute for Gender Equality. 'Gender identity | European Institute for Gender Equality'. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1179>

⁸ European Institute for Gender Equality. 'Gender equality | European Institute for Gender Equality'. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1168>

⁹ Council of Europe (2014). 'Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014 - 2017'. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680590174>

Gender equity	<p>The WHO contrasts the concepts of gender equality and gender equity. According to the WHO¹⁰: 'Gender equality is the absence of discrimination on the basis of a person's sex in opportunities, the allocation of resources and benefits, or access to services. Gender equity refers to the fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men. The latter concept recognizes that women and men have different needs and power, and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalance between the sexes'.</p>
Gender inclusive language	<p>The United Nations (UN) defines gender-inclusive language¹¹ as: 'speaking and writing in a way that does not discriminate against a particular sex, social gender or gender identity, and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes'.</p>
Gender mainstreaming	<p>According to the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025¹², gender mainstreaming 'ensures that policies and programmes maximise the potential of all – women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity. The aim is to redistribute power, influence and resources in a fair and gender-equal way, tackling inequality, promoting fairness, and creating opportunity'. According to EIGE, gender mainstreaming¹³ entails: 'a strategy towards realising gender equality. It involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination.'</p>
Gender stereotype	<p>According to the UN, a gender stereotype¹⁴ is: 'a generalised view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men... by reason only of her or his membership in the social group of women or men'.</p> <p>According to EIGE¹⁵, 'Gender stereotyping occurs when a person is expected to enact a series of norms or behaviours based on their sex...Gender stereotypes are complex and vary along the different and interrelated dimension of traits, role behaviours, physical characteristics and occupations'.</p>
Gender-based violence	<p>The UN defines gender-based violence¹⁶ as: harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms. It can include sexual, physical, mental and economic harm inflicted in public or in private. It also includes threats of violence, coercion and manipulation. EIGE points out¹⁷ that in an educational context, gender-based violence can include 'verbal or sexual harassment, sexual abuse, corporal punishment, stalking, cyber-harassment and bullying' and result in 'increased absenteeism, poor performance, school dropout, low self-esteem, depression, pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections such as HIV, all of which have a detrimental impact on the learning and well-being of students'.</p>
Intersectionality	<p>EIGE defines intersectionality¹⁸ as the analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination.</p>
Gender segregation	<p>EIGE defines gender segregation¹⁹ as differences in patterns of representation of women and men in the labour market, public and political life, unpaid domestic work and caring, and in young women's and men's choice of education.</p>

Horizontal segregation	EIGE defines horizontal segregation ²⁰ as the concentration of women and men in different sectors and occupations.
Vertical segregation	EIGE defines vertical segregation ²¹ as the concentration of women and men in different grades, levels of responsibility or positions.

3. Contextual background

In the following sections, we look at gender equality issues as they relate to several key education-related themes, starting with some background information in these areas.

a) Addressing gender gaps in education

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results have 'consistently found that girls outperform boys in reading and, to a lesser extent, that boys outperform girls in mathematics, on average across all participating countries and economies'²².

A study on gender behaviour and education outcomes²³ notes that girls strongly outperform boys in reading proficiency in every EU Member State²⁴, that boys are more likely than girls to be early leavers from education and training²⁵ and that boys' and girls' educational and career choices are still strongly influenced by gender stereotypes. In terms of boys' underachievement, the report concludes that:

'Despite some variation, there is a clear and worrying general pattern of boys underachieving on most key indicators of educational success across all EU Member States. Also of concern is the evidence that these gaps begin early,

¹⁰ World Health Organisation. 'Gender'. Available at: <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/gender/gender-definitions>

¹¹ UNITED NATIONS Gender-inclusive language'. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/>

¹² European Commission (2020). 'COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025'. COM(2020)152 final. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2020:152:FIN>

¹³ European Institute for Gender Equality. 'What is Gender mainstreaming | EIGE'. Available at <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming>

¹⁴ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights. 'OHCHR | Gender stereotyping'. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/women/gender-stereotyping>

¹⁵ European Institute for Gender Equality. 'Education | European Institute for Gender Equality'. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/education#genderinequalitiesinthepolicyareainissues>

¹⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 'UNHCR – Gender-based Violence'. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/gender-based-violence.html>

¹⁷ European Institute for Gender Equality. 'Education | European Institute for Gender Equality'. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/education#genderinequalitiesinthepolicyareainissues>

¹⁸ European Institute for Gender Equality. 'Intersectionality | European Institute for Gender Equality'. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1263>

¹⁹ European Institute for Gender Equality. 'Gender segregation | European Institute for Gender Equality'. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1210>

²⁰ European Institute for Gender Equality. 'Horizontal segregation | European Institute for Gender Equality'. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1247>

²¹ European Institute for Gender Equality. 'Vertical segregation | European Institute for Gender Equality'. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1423>

²² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2019). 'PISA 2018 Results (Volume II): Where All Students Can Succeed'. p. 142. Available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/b5fd1b8f-en.pdf?expires=1658836400&id=id&accname=quest&checksum=46BB4ED4471BDCAC270DD50323483EC4>

²³ European Commission (2021). Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Staring, F., Donlevy, V., Day, L., et al., *Study on gender behaviour and its impact on education outcomes (with a special focus on the performance of boys and young men in education) final report*, Publications Office, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/509505>

²⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2018). 'Data – PISA'. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/>

²⁵ Eurostat (2020). 'Early leavers from education and training by sex and labour status'. Available at: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_ifse_14&lang=en

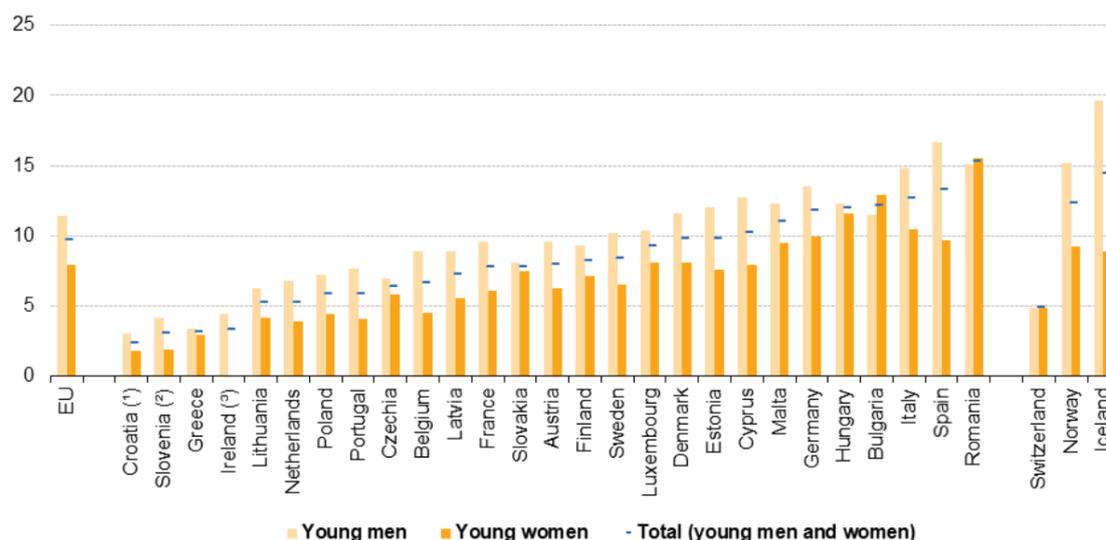
already by primary education stage (ISCED level 1) and, in some cases, even at pre-school level (although comparative evidence is lacking at this level)²⁶.

In addition to gaps in performance, there are also notable gender gaps in educational attainment, as men are overrepresented among early school leavers (people aged 18-24 who fail to attain upper secondary education)²⁷, and are underrepresented in completion of tertiary education²⁸.

In particular, the proportion of early leavers from education and training was observed to be 3.5 % higher for young men (11.4 %) than for young women (7.9 %) in the EU in 2021²⁹. Nearly all EU Member States reported a higher proportion of early leavers for young men than for young women, with a particularly large difference (7.0%) in Spain, as observed in Figure 1 below. In contrast, there were two exceptions among the Member States, as the proportion of early leavers was lower for young men than for young women in Bulgaria (1.4%) and Romania (0.4%).

Figure 1: ELET by sex, 2021

(% of population aged 18-24)



Source: Eurostat (edat_lfse_14), 2022³⁰

While in the EU the overall proportion of early leavers fell between 2011 and 2021 by 3.5%, consequently, the gender gap narrowed slightly from 4.1% in 2011 to 3.5 % in 2021. Since the *issue persists*, continued research about its causes and subsequent counter-action is needed to avert the enormous social and financial costs of boys' disengagement from education.

²⁶ European Commission (2021). Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Staring, F., Donlevy, V., Day, L., et al., *Study on gender behaviour and its impact on education outcomes (with a special focus on the performance of boys and young men in education): executive summary*, pg. 158-159. Publications Office. Available at: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/164742>

²⁷ Eurostat (2022). *Early leavers from education and training*. Available at:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Early_leavers_from_education_and_training

²⁸ In 2021 a larger share of women aged 25-34 had completed tertiary education than men (47% women, 36% men). Eurostat (2022). 41% of young adults hold a tertiary degree. Available at:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20220524-2#:~:text=In%202021%2C%2041%25%20of%20the,women%2C%2036%25%20men.>

²⁹ Eurostat (2022). *Early leavers from education and training*. Available at:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Early_leavers_from_education_and_training

³⁰ Eurostat (2022). *Early leavers from education and training by sex and labour status (edat_lfse_14)*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/edat_lfse_14/default/table?lang=en

An EIGE report points out that there are different reasons and challenges for girls and boys who drop out of education, and that initiatives to address educational attainment for girls and boys should be tailored to their specific needs³¹.

Recent research studies^{32 33} assessing the size of students' learning losses after the first waves of the Covid-19 pandemic found little and inconsistent gender differences, sometimes pointing towards slightly bigger losses for girls.

b) Non-traditional education and career pathways

A study on gender behaviour and education outcomes notes that³⁴:

'Educational choices and career expectations of pupils in compulsory education are still strongly influenced by gender stereotypes, with qualitative data showing that in general a more limited effort is made to break down those affecting the choices of boys. Boys are much more likely to choose STEM subjects, while girls typically predominate in subjects such as art, the humanities, care and education. Boys are also more likely to choose vocational rather than academic pathways'.

The **number of students enrolled at tertiary education levels by sex and education-field** is an important indicator to gauge gender segregation in educational choices and subsequent career trajectories.

Gender segregation in education choices is significant and, like the attainment gap, it persists over time. The 2022 Education and Training Monitor³⁵ shows the distribution of women and men enrolled in higher education in the EU in 2020 across broad fields of study (see Figure 2):

'Men are underrepresented in the fields of education (21.5%); health and welfare (28.1%); arts and humanities (35.5%); and social sciences, journalism and information (35.6%). This contrasts female enrolment in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines, where women only represent 31.3% of the enrolled students despite good employment opportunities in this area. Sweden (37.2%), Romania (36.8%), Italy (36.2%) and Poland (35.6%)'.

³¹ European Institute for Gender Equality (2017). 'Gender in education and training'. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-education-and-training>

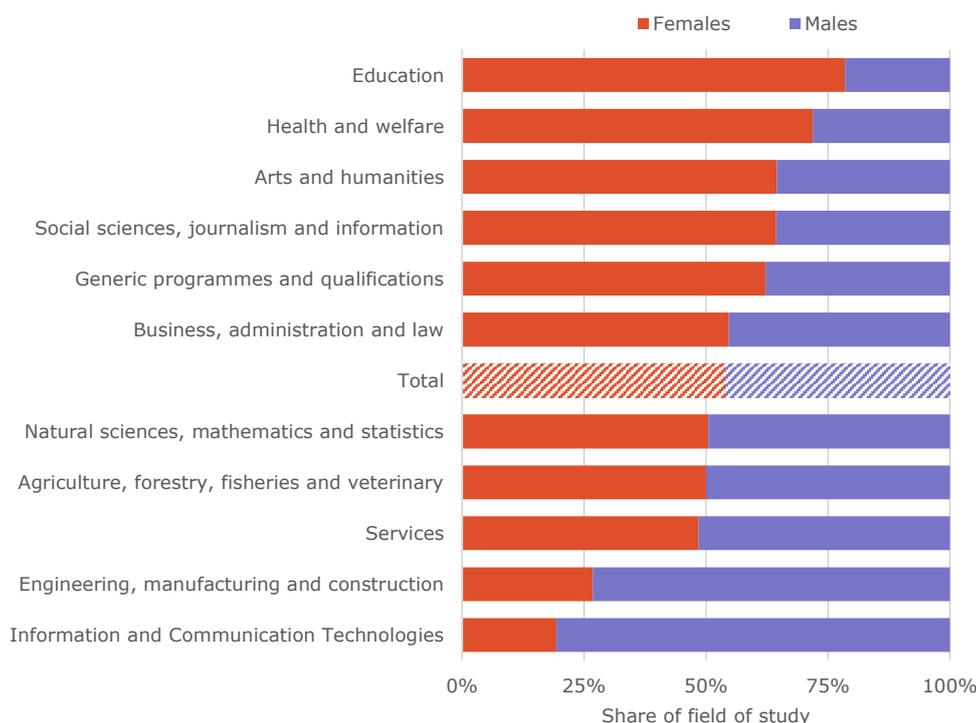
³² European Commission (2020), Joint Research Centre, Di Pietro, G., Biagi, F., Costa, P., et al., *The likely impact of COVID-19 on education : reflections based on the existing literature and recent international datasets*, Publications Office, 2020. Available at: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/126686>

³³ Blaskó, Z., Costa, P.D., & Schnepf, S.V. (2022). Learning losses and educational inequalities in Europe: Mapping the potential consequences of the COVID-19 crisis. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 32, pg. 361-375. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/09589287221091687>

³⁴ European Commission (2021). Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Staring, F., Donlevy, V., Day, L., et al., *Study on gender behaviour and its impact on education outcomes (with a special focus on the performance of boys and young men in education): final report*, Publications Office, 2021. Available at: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/509505> (p.159).

³⁵ Education and Training monitor 2022. pg. 41-42. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2022/en/>

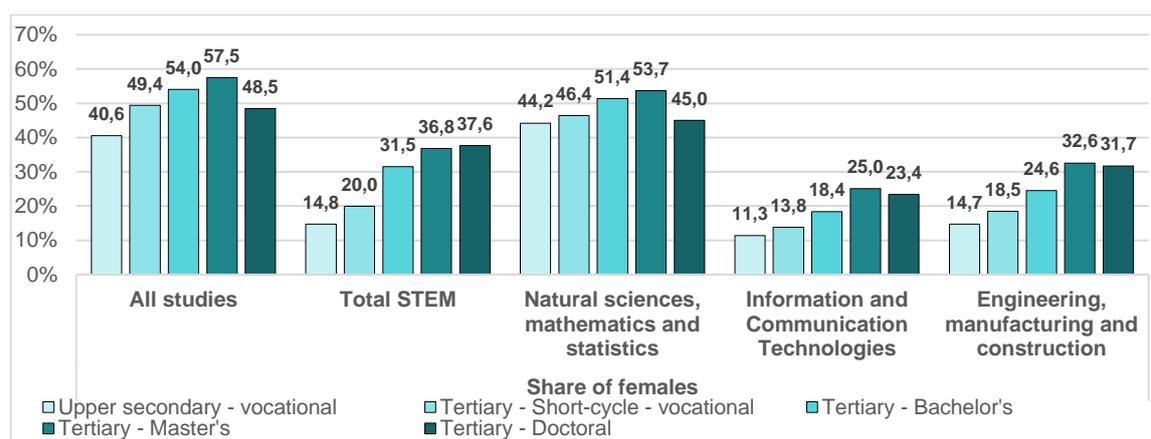
Figure 2: Gender disparities across fields of study



Source: Education and Training Monitor, 2022³⁶

Looking at the percentage of women (see Figure 3) and men among students in traditionally male-dominated (e.g. STEM) and female-dominated (e.g. education, health, welfare, humanities, arts) fields provides important insight to understanding persistent gender wage gaps,³⁷ since STEM professions are typically amongst the highest-paying occupations on the labour market.

Figure 3: Share of female students (new entrants) in STEM fields by education level in the EU, 2020 [%]



Source: Eurostat, 2022³⁸

³⁶ Ibid. p. 42.

³⁷ Eurostat (2018). Gender overall earnings gap (GOEG). Available at : [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Gender_overall_earnings_gap_\(GOEG\),_2018_\(%25\).png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Gender_overall_earnings_gap_(GOEG),_2018_(%25).png)

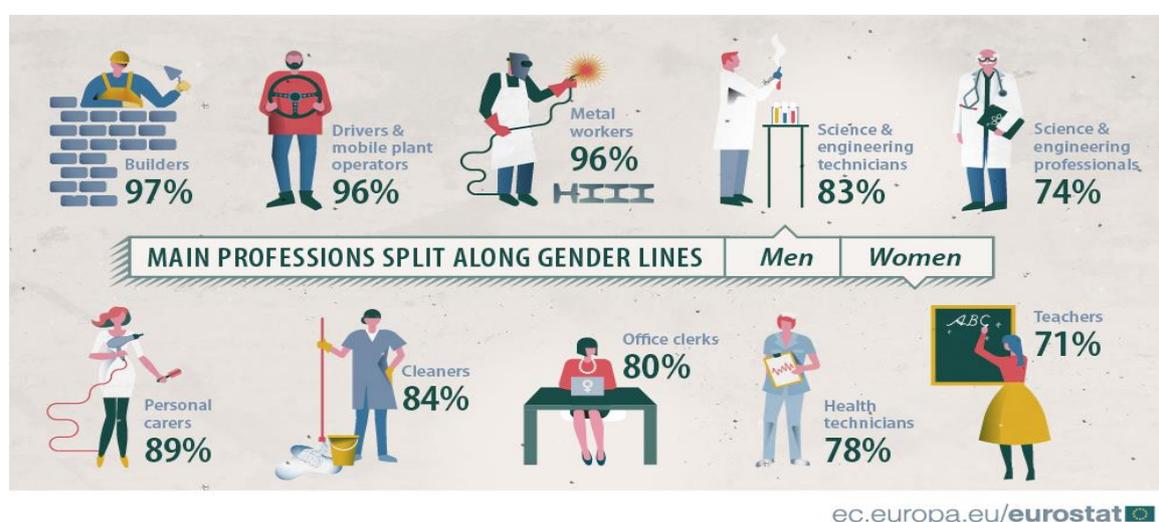
³⁸ Eurostat (2022). New entrants by education level, programme orientation, sex and field of education [EDUC_UOE_ENT02_custom_3038071]. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/product?code=educ_uoe_grad02

In the European Commission's 2021 edition of She Figures³⁹, it is concluded that despite progress, important gender differences persist in certain broad fields of study, and that progress has been very slow in recent years. Data from 2018 shows that at both European and country level, women doctoral graduates were over-represented in the field of education (67%) and under-represented in the fields of information and communication technologies (ICT) (22,4%), engineering, manufacturing and construction (29,4%)⁴⁰.

According to the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2022 report⁴¹, there is still a substantial gender gap with only one in five ICT specialists and ICT graduates and one in three science, technology, engineering and/or mathematics (STEM) graduates being women. European Commission's Women in Digital Scoreboard 2022⁴² shows that ICT female specialists represent only 1.9% of total employment in 2021, compared to 7,0% of the male representation⁴³.

The image below (see Figure 4) provides a visual representation of the career trajectory gap between men and women in the EU⁴⁴.

Figure 4: Career gap between women and men in the EU



Source: Eurostat, 2018

The EIGE also points to the impact of the STEM gap and notes that gender segregation in education and occupations impacts women's and men's chances in the labour market and in society in general⁴⁵. A more recent EIGE report notes that this occupational

³⁹ European Commission (2021). Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. 'She figures 2021: Gender in research and innovation: statistics and indicators'. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/web/eu-law-and-publications/publication-detail/-/publication/67d5a207-4da1-11ec-91ac-01aa75ed71a1>

⁴⁰ Ibid. p.31

⁴¹ The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2022). Available at <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/redirection/document/88764> (p.14).

⁴² European Commission (2022). 'Women in Digital Scoreboard 2022'. Country profiles. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/redirection/document/88777>

⁴³ The gap is significantly smaller for the use of internet and internet user skills: 87% of females used the internet regularly in 2021 compared with 88% of males. Women are the most digital in Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands Sweden and Denmark. Women in Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Germany and Slovakia score lowest on female participation in the digital economy and society.

⁴⁴ Eurostat (2018). 'Jobs still split along gender lines'. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/edn-20180307-1>

⁴⁵ European Institute for Gender Equality (2017). 'Gender segregation in education, training and the labour market: Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States'. Available at: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14624-2017-ADD-2/en/pdf>

segregation is particularly harmful for women, as STEM careers tend to be more highly paid while sectors in which women are overrepresented are often under-paid⁴⁶.

c) Textbooks and learning materials

Across the EU, several national studies have looked into gender bias in textbooks and learning materials, showing that 'textbooks often still tend to use language that depicts men and women in traditional social contexts: women are most often represented in caregiver roles and as those who worry about their appearance; there are fewer stories representing experiences of women; and men's activities and experiences are represented as being more important than women's.'⁴⁷.

UNESCO's 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report⁴⁸ notes that, in many countries around the world, girls and women remain under-represented in textbooks, and when they are included, they are depicted in gender-based stereotypical roles. The report recommends that partnerships and participatory processes at all phases of textbook development and delivery need to be in place for successful reform.

d) Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence in educational settings can take the form of sexual harassment, sexual abuse, corporal punishment, stalking, cyber-harassment, or bullying and can have significant negative impacts on the learning and well-being of students⁴⁹. School-related gender-based violence can occur across gender lines (e.g. between boys and girls) or within the same gender group (e.g. among female students), and may also occur between teachers and school students⁵⁰.

The Gender equality strategy 2020-2025⁵¹ highlights that gender-based violence, violence that is directed against a woman or girl because she is a woman or girl, affects them disproportionately.

Bullying and violence happens more and more online⁵². Cyber violence also disproportionately affects women and girls in educational settings, negatively affecting their further education and their mental health⁵³. An EIGE report also notes that it has

⁴⁶ European Institute for Gender Equality (2020). 'Beijing +25: the fifth review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States – Area B: Education and Training of Women'. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/beijing-25-fifth-review-implementation-beijing-platform-action-eu-member-states>

⁴⁷ European Commission (2021). Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Staring, F., Donlevy, V., Day, L., et al., *Study on gender behaviour and its impact on education outcomes (with a special focus on the performance of boys and young men in education) : final report*, Publications Office, 2021, Available at: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/509505>

For examples from Finland, France, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, see the citations on p. 107

⁴⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2020). 'A new generation: 25 years of efforts for gender equality in education: 2020 Gender Report'. Available at: <https://gem-report-2020.unesco.org/gender-report/>

⁴⁹ European Institute for Gender Equality (2017). 'Gender in education and training'. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-education-and-training>

⁵⁰ Leach, F., Dunne, M., and Salvi, F. (2014). 'School-related gender-based violence. A global review of current issues and approaches in policy, programming and implementation responses to school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) for the education sector'. Available at: https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/sites/default/files/resources/schoolrelatedgenderbasedviolenceunesco_globalreviewjan2014.pdf

⁵¹ European Commission (2020). 'COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025'. COM(2020)152 final. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2020:152:FIN>

⁵² In March 2021 the Commission adopted the [EU strategy on the rights of the child](#), which called for an update of the 2012 Better Internet for Children strategy. The Commission has adopted a new [European strategy for a Better Internet for Kids](#) (BIK+) in May 2022.

⁵³ European Commission (2022). Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022PC0105>

been found across multiple studies that a higher percentage of young women report being a victim of online harassment than young men⁵⁴.

The Fundamental Rights Survey 2020⁵⁵ shows that the highest percentage (14%) of respondents who experienced recent incidents of physical violence in the past 5 years at school or college is reported in Cyprus, Romania and Malta.

Educational settings have a critical role in violence prevention and response. A challenge to address gender-based violence, including in education and training, is that much of it goes unreported. The responses to sexual harassment described by students in the Irish higher education student survey from 2021 'show that less than half were able to tell the person to stop, only 17% asked someone for advice or support, and 5% reported the person.'⁵⁶

EU policy initiatives

Equality between women and men is enshrined in the EU Treaties⁵⁷; it is a core value of the EU, a fundamental right and a key principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The promotion of equality between women and men is a task for the Union as the **Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025**⁵⁸ recalls it. Annual reports⁵⁹ on gender equality in the EU take stock of where the EU and its Member States stand on gender equality, highlighting the EU's achievements and showcasing inspiring examples from the Member States and EU-funded projects in these areas.

While the EU is a global leader in gender equality⁶⁰, and its Member States have been making comprehensive efforts to achieve gender equality, according to the **Gender Equality Index 2022**⁶¹, no Member State has achieved full gender equality and the EU average is 68.6 out of 100.

In order to achieve the goal of ending gender-based violence comprehensively and effectively throughout the Union, the European Commission adopted a **proposal for a Directive to combat violence against women and domestic violence**⁶² in March 2022. Concerning **preventive measures**, the proposal included the following education-related preventive measures: strengthening sexuality education and socio-emotional competencies, empathy and developing healthy and respectful relationships, addressing cyber violence and ensuring that education measures include the development of digital literacy skills, including critical engagement with the digital world.

⁵⁴ European Institute of Gender Equality (2019). 'Gender equality and youth: opportunities and risks of digitalisation – Main report'. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-and-youth-opportunities-and-risks-digitalisation>

⁵⁵ European Union agency for fundamental rights. Fundamental rights survey 2020. Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/data-and-maps/2021/frs?mdq1=dataset>

⁵⁶ Report on the National Survey of Student Experiences of Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions. Summary of Survey Findings (2021). Available at: <https://hea.ie/policy/gender/national-survey-of-the-experiences-of-students-in-relation-to-sexual-violence-and-harassment/>

⁵⁷ See Articles 2 and 3(3) TEU, Articles 8, 10, 19 and 157 TFEU and Articles 21 and 23 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

⁵⁸ European Commission (2020). 'COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025'. COM(2020)152 final. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2020:152:FIN>

⁵⁹ The 2022 report on gender equality in the EU is the second report under the new Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0fb69c07-e79d-11ec-a534-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

⁶⁰ As regards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality, according to the 2022 EM2030 SDG Gender Index. Available at: <https://www.equalmeasures2030.org/2022-sdg-gender-index/key-findings/>

⁶¹ European Institute for Gender Equality. *Gender Equality Index 2022. The COVID-19 pandemic and care*. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-index-2022-covid-19-pandemic-and-care>

⁶² European Commission (2022). *Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council to combat violence against women and domestic violence*. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022PC0105>

Making education and training more inclusive and gender sensitive and maintaining its institutions as safe environments is at the core of the **European Education Area strategic cooperation**. The European Commission's 2020 Communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025⁶³, proposes the following objectives for national reforms and European cooperation in education and training (among others): (1) developing a better gender sensitivity in education processes and institutions; (2) challenging and dissolving gender stereotypes; and (3) working towards a proper gender balance in leadership positions, including in higher education institutions.

In 2020, with **the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027**⁶⁴ and similarly in the updated **European Skills Agenda**⁶⁵, the European Commission set out measures and announced different actions to promote gender-balanced participation in STEM, including ICT-related occupations and digital skills development. In the same year, the Council of the EU adopted the reinforced **Youth Guarantee**⁶⁶ which supports measures addressing gender bias and discrimination in employment counselling and guidance, and the **Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience**⁶⁷, recommending targeted measures to achieve gender balance in traditionally "male" or "female" occupations.

The gender dimension is integrated into different **EU funding programmes** such as Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ programme. The Commission also continues to fund projects addressing different aspects of gender equality through the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme. The **Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027** strengthens gender mainstreaming in the spending of the EU budget, in particular through the EU Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). In their national Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRPs) Member States were expected to detail how proposed measures will contribute to promoting gender equality and equal opportunities for all.

The European Commission has created the **Women in Digital Scoreboard**⁶⁸. The scoreboard is one of the actions put in place to assess women's inclusion in digital jobs, careers and entrepreneurship. The scoreboard assesses Member States' performance in the areas of internet use, internet user skills, specialist skills and employment based on 12 indicators. Though not directly connected to education, the scoreboard indicates where education initiatives are needed.

The progress of gender equality in the EU is measured since 2010, via EIGE's **Gender Equality Index**⁶⁹, a composite indicator that consists of six core domains, including **the knowledge domain** that measures gender inequalities in educational attainment, participation in education and training and gender segregation.

⁶³ European Commission (2020). 'COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS on achieving the European Education Area by 2025'. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1601687240311&uri=CELEX:52020DC0625>

⁶⁴ European Commission (2020). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 Resetting education and training for the digital age'. Available at: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan>

⁶⁵ European Commission (2020). COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience. COM/2020/274 final. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0274>

⁶⁶ Official Journal of the European Union (2020). COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 30 October 2020 on A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee and replacing the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee (2020/C372/01). Available at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020H1104\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020H1104(01)).

⁶⁷ Official Journal of the European Union (2020): COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (2020/C417/01). Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32020H1202%2801%29>

⁶⁸ European Commission (2021). 'Women in Digital Scoreboard 2021'. Available at: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/women-digital-scoreboard-2021>

⁶⁹ European Institute for Gender Equality (2022). *Gender Equality Index 2022. The COVID-19 pandemic and care*. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-index-2022-covid-19-pandemic-and-care>

The 2022 Report⁷⁰ shows that Gender Equality Index score for the EU has increased only by 5.5 points since 2010 and Covid-19 has negatively affected the fragile gains made since 2010. **For the first time in a decade, gender inequalities** in employment (full-time equivalent employment rate (FTE) and duration of working life), education (tertiary graduation and participation in formal or informal education and training), health status and access to health services **have grown**.

Box 1: Gender Equality Index 2022⁷¹ – knowledge domain

The **domain of knowledge** score of 62.5 points ranks fourth in the Index and has decreased for the second consecutive year. Progress has been held back by gender segregation in education.

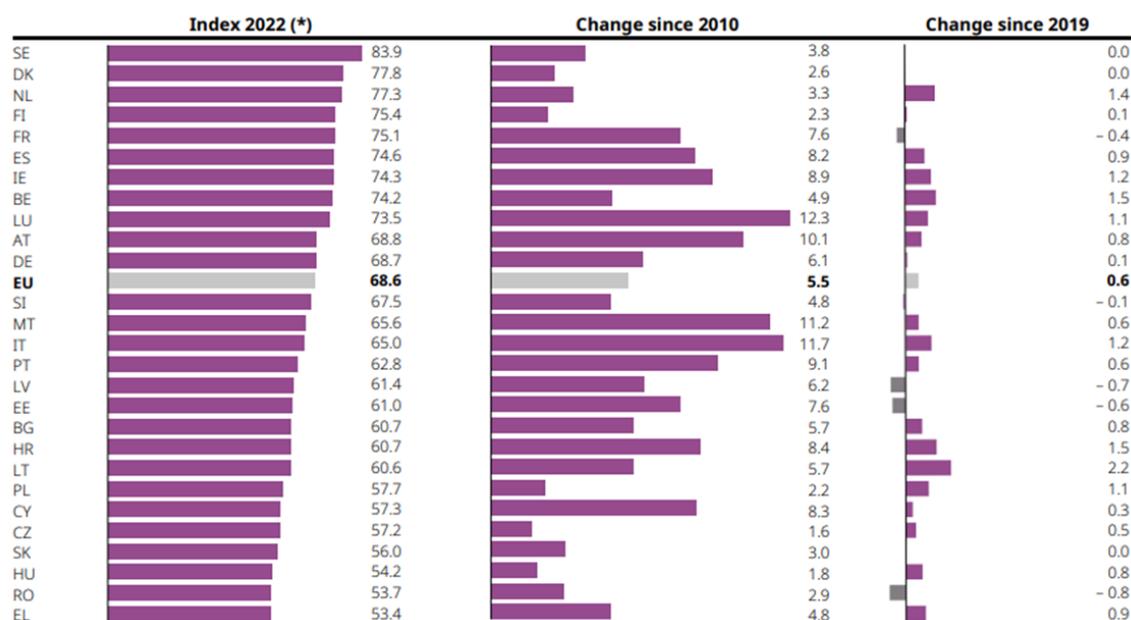
- Women students outnumber men in the fields of education, health and welfare, humanities and the arts, with 4.1 million women studying these subjects in 2020 compared to 1.7 million men.
- 27 % of women and 26 % of men in the EU are university graduates. Women's lead in education is particularly pronounced among graduates of working age (25–49 years).
- Disability impedes access to tertiary education, especially for women, with only 15 % of women and 18 % of men with disabilities having graduated from university.
- The lack of digital skills is especially evident among older women and women with a low level of education.
- The pandemic has aggravated educational inequalities. Academic performance and time spent on schoolwork are increasingly defined by a person's socioeconomic background. The share of young people neither in education nor in employment has increased, particularly among adolescent boys.
- The well-being of teachers – mostly women – has been greatly affected during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Response to COVID-19 has had a profound gendered impact. Additional care responsibilities resulting from home schooling, the suspension of childcare services and other family obligations has impacted women's participation in education and training as well as in employment.

⁷⁰ Ibid, pg. 17-18.

⁷¹ Ibid, pg. 34-37.

Gender equality levels vary considerably among Member States – from 83.9 points in Sweden to 53.4 points in Greece (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) Gender Equality Index 2022



Source: European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022⁷²

4. Highlights from Working Group discussions

The following challenges and points for further attention were identified based on some of the existing research on the topic and input from participants during the WG's two meetings on 20 January and 10 February 2022 and discussions during the PLA held on 21 April 2022:

Challenges

In general, WG members felt important to fight misperception that gender equality issues in education are less important than other issues or are no longer deemed relevant. Another concern was about inconsistent and excessively fragmented initiatives and policies to address gender equality in education, impacting the effectiveness, sustainability and scalability of these practices in a negative manner. Concerning the impact of pandemic and post-Covid-19 realities on gender-related issues in education, the WG felt that some further light needs to be shed on this matter.

⁷² European Institute for Gender Equality (2022). *Gender Equality Index 2022. The COVID-19 pandemic and care*. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-index-2022-covid-19-pandemic-and-care>

Some challenges with specific focus on:

a) Addressing gender gaps in education

- A range of interrelated factors contribute to boys' underperformance in education systems across the EU including individual attitudes and behaviour as well as family, school and societal factors.
- There is limited awareness or understanding among educational policymakers and practitioners of the reasons of boys' relative underperformance in education and how to address them. Policies and programmes to tackle boys' underperformance are piecemeal and rarely systematic.
- Gendered perceptions related to learning for pleasure and personal development may prevent men, especially older men, from participating in adult education. Accordingly, there may be fewer educational opportunities suitable to the learning needs, interests, expectations and work responsibilities of men⁷³.
- Underperformance may affect more women adult learners than men due to additional parenting, caregiving and household responsibilities, and discrimination, that the former have to face.

b) Non-traditional education and career pathways

- Career expectations among boys and girls have changed very little in the last two decades.
- Too many initiatives to address non-traditional career pathways have an ad hoc nature and are not sustainable or structural.
- Whole school approaches have been found to be effective vehicles to promote non-traditional career choices. They are still rare.
- Teachers gender biases (both conscious and unconscious) can impact grading and career choices. For example, teachers tend to have (often subtle) positive stereotypes of boys when it comes to STEM related subjects and girls when it comes to reading and the humanities. These stereotypes impact performance and scores.
- Men have low participation rates in careers associated with education, care and the humanities.
- Although women tend to choose careers in education more often than men, they continue to be underrepresented in higher level managerial positions and broader decision-making structures at the level of school leadership.
- School initiatives aimed at promoting non-traditional pathways may encounter opposition from parents or society at large.

⁷³ Golding, B. (2014). *Older Men's Learning and Conviviality*. In: Schmidt-Hertha, B., Krašovec, S.J., Formosa, M. (eds) Learning across Generations in Europe. Research on the Education and Learning of Adults. SensePublishers, Rotterdam, pg. 23-34. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6209-902-9_3

Golding, B. (2016). 'Critical Reflections on the Role of the Men's Shed Movement in Changing Perceptions about Learning by Older Men in Community Settings'. *Contemporary Issues and Perspectives on Gender Research in Adult Education*. Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy (University of Belgrade), European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) and Adult Education Society, Belgrade, 2016. pg.173-187. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/en/36240186/Contemporary_Issues_and_Perspectives_on_Gender_Research_in_Adult_Education_2016

- Women and girls tend to have less confidence when entering fields of study that have been traditionally male dominated⁷⁴.
- On the whole, women and girls have relatively low participation rates in STEM fields of education.
- There is still limited evidence on why the gap in STEM between males and females, mentioned above, has been pervasive.

c) Textbooks and learning materials

- Some gains have been made in recent years with respect to addressing textbook biases, but progress is still limited.
- In some Member States, textbook and learning material publishers have taken their own initiatives to mainstream gender equality in textbook and learning materials. In other Member States responsible national authorities have taken such actions. However, there has not always been effective collaboration between the two sectors.
- Although some research has been conducted on gender stereotypes in textbooks, teachers and students increasingly use online materials. It is still unclear as to what the opportunities and threats this poses and how policymakers can best address this issue.
- Apart from unbalanced gender representation in textbooks, women and men are still often portrayed in stereotypical manner. Many of the gender stereotypes in learning materials appear to be subtle and not blatant. They are not always recognised though they do have an impact on school students. Some initiatives to combat gender stereotypes involve removing (classic) texts, which promote such stereotypes, from reading lists and/or libraries. The question is whether this is an appropriate measure and what the alternatives, if any, are.
- Terminology and inclusive language matters. Too often the terminology in various resources is either outdated biased and/or inappropriate.

d) Addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in education

- Gender-based violence in school encompasses a continuum, from sexist jokes and language, to bullying and harassment, and ultimately physical violence.
- Public spaces like corridors, canteens, playgrounds and toilets are often a place where bullying and harassment in schools is happening. Gender stereotypical behaviour and gender segregation are often reproduced in these spaces; e.g. boys dominating 'center space' on the playground with ball games, boys being afraid to play/sit with girls due to fear of judgment.

⁷⁴ For example, according to EIGE (Gender Equality and Digitalisation in the European Union, 2018), 73 % of boys aged 15-16 feel comfortable using digital devices that they are less familiar with, compared with 63 % of girls in the same age bracket. In countries where young people have a lower level of confidence in their digital skills (e.g. Latvia, Austria and Finland), the confidence gap between women and men is notably wider, reaching as much as 25 percentage points in Finland. Low self-confidence among girls goes hand in hand with lower aspirations of engaging in digital jobs. There are only four EU countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Malta and Romania) where teenage girls express an interest in working as an information and communications technology (ICT) professional at the age of 30. Even in these countries, the interest is very low (between 1 % and 3 %). In other EU countries, almost no interest is noted. In contrast, between 3 % and 15 % of teenage boys across the EU aspire to become ICT professionals. This shows how strongly gender stereotypes influence subject choices. Later down the line, this leads to certain study and work fields being persistently dominated either by women or men. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-and-digitalisation-european-union>

- There is a prevalence of underreporting incidents of gender-based violence in schools. The most frequent reason for not helping victims of gender-based violence relates to fear of retaliation.
- In addition to violence against victims, there is also a prevalence of violence exerted by harassers against those who support their victims - Isolating Gender Violence (IGV).
- There is in general a lack of appropriate GBV prevention, training, reporting and investigation mechanisms and policies in educational settings.
- Although a good deal of attention has been devoted to bullying issues in recent years, the gender dimension in bullying has been neglected.
- There are insufficient incentives (including at the national level) to report and take action against gender-based violence.
- As GBV includes different forms of violations it is not always clear how to recognise, confront and report on GBV in educational settings.

Points for attention

In general, WG members felt that addressing gender equality in education requires a dual approach, comprising both gender mainstreaming in all areas and targeted actions, with intersectionality (the consideration of the impact of different forms of disadvantage) as a horizontal principle in implementation.

Furthermore, holistic strategies and practices are key to fighting gender inequality in education. Exchanges of best practices, scientific studies and rigorous policy evaluations should be promoted at the European, national and local level. Depending on the context, targeted interventions based on local needs can be an effective solution, but must be combined with strategic, transversal action at national policy level.

Gender equality should be a transversal focus of all policies and programmes in the field of education. Such gender mainstreaming would both promote a renewed focus on gender equality, but also avoid policies and programmes that are 'gender blind', which can reinforce existing (including subconscious) inequalities and stereotypes.

Some points for attention with specific focus on:

a) Gender gaps in education

- More awareness-raising is needed for educational policymakers, practitioners (principals, teaching staff), parents and wider society concerning gender gaps in education.
- Addressing boys' underperformance requires a combination of policy measures tackling individual attitudes and behaviour (e.g. boys read less, disruptive behaviour), family factors (e.g. parental attitudes), school factors (e.g. gender stereotyping in textbooks, differentiation) and societal factors (e.g. gender stereotypes in society).
- Tackling the multiple causes of gender gaps can be achieved by specific measures targeting identified issues for boys or girls, ensuring that gender equality is a transversal priority area of all education and training policy/practice and introducing policies to tackle general underperformance (e.g. early school leaving).

- Research⁷⁵ shows that gender disparities begin early and widen over the education trajectory. Actions to combat gender stereotyping in early childhood education and care can help improve educational achievement for all learners.
- More research is needed on the impact of dominant masculinity norms on the educational performance of boys and young men. This could, for instance, examine detrimental gendered attitudes/expectations such as boys being expected to be 'naturally intelligent' while it is okay for girls to be hardworking, as well as the belief that it not "cool" for boys to study hard.
- Active monitoring of educational disparities between boys and girls can be used as a foundation to identify areas and patterns of poor performance, raise awareness and shape policy and practice to tackle specific issues for both boys and girls.

b) Non-traditional career education and pathways

- Supporting long-term career counselling focused on promoting career choices free of gender bias can be an effective tool for promoting gender equality.
- Providing gender-related anti-bias training for career guidance teachers and counsellors.
- Addressing gender biases associated with teacher expectations deserves attention in teacher education programmes (both in-service and pre-service).
- Since sustainable change needs the active involvement of multiple stakeholders, both awareness raising initiatives and training need to also target school principals, local education authorities, parents (or guardians) and the community at large.
- Introducing gender equality across all subject areas can help to break down stereotypes about gender roles and career choices.
- As part of a whole school approach to promote non-traditional career choices, school psychologists, social workers and librarians can play an important support role.
- Approaches involving parents in working together on understanding and addressing gender stereotypes can improve gender equality in educational outcomes and choices.
- Making career/subject choices too early can lead to greater gender segregation in both education and work spheres.
- More policy attention and concrete initiatives are needed on how to attract women and men to pursue non-traditional education and work pathways.
- Research into why there continues to be a gap between men and women in STEM can lead to more effective programmes to reduce this gap.
- Gender-specific career events can help boys and girls to get to know sectors and occupations where they are under-represented, including gaining practical experience.

⁷⁵ EENEE Analytical Report (2021). *Gender Gaps in Education: Evidence and Policy Implications*. Available at: https://eenee.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/EENEE_AR46.pdf
Pearson (2020). *Pearson Gender Equality Guidelines*. Available at: <https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/one-dot-com/one-dot-com/uk/documents/news/2020/pearson-gender-equality-guidelines.pdf>

- There is a need to design specific policies and measures that can attract more men into the education field (for example, in early childhood education and care/primary education)⁷⁶ and women into STEM.
- Programmes that promote non-traditional career trajectories, and that have been demonstrated to be effective and sustainable, can be upscaled and made more visual, for instance through media attention and creating award schemes.
- Presenting all occupations with both the male and female version of words (in languages where they are differentiated) can help remove the gender-based stigma of some professions.

c) Textbooks and learning materials

- It is important that attention is paid to having images of both women and men in textbooks and other learning materials, including online materials. It should also be ensured that such images are non-stereotypical.
- There has been a vast increase in online learning materials, so it is essential to consider how these materials can most appropriately be reviewed/evaluated from a gender perspective.
- Teachers (and pre-service teachers) and educators need more insight into the impact of both blatant and subtle biases and stereotypes in learning materials on student attitudes and behaviours.
- Teachers (and pre-service teachers) and educators need training in how to recognise gender stereotyping in textbooks and how to discuss this topic with their students.
- Teachers and schools, and also students themselves, should be empowered to raise concerns regarding bias in learning materials.
- The language used in textbooks and learning materials, including gendered declinations of words and occupations, needs to be non-stereotypical.
- Reviewers of textbooks need guidance in terms of how to detect gender related biases. This can include examples and lists of stereotypes.
- Regular reviewing of learning materials is necessary to assess the gender balance of the curriculum, identify absences and gaps, and identify gender stereotypes.
- Addressing gender-related biases in textbooks and learning materials needs to consider issues such as: frequency of distribution of characters by gender; the roles that characters play/are entitled to; the activities that characters are engaged into; the tools that they are using; the physical appearance of characters; their personality traits; interactions with other actors; diversity of families, etc.
- Textbooks and learning materials that promote gender equality and avoid gender stereotypes need more visibility and recognition, for instance through guidelines and recommendations issued by education authorities.
- Establishing award schemes or labels for good practice from publishing houses can promote more gender-sensitive learning materials.

⁷⁶ 2019 Council recommendation on high quality early childhood education and care systems encourages Member States to reach a better gender balance amongst ECEC staff. In its final [report](#), the ECEC Working Group 2018-2020 explored all the challenges and possible good practices to include more men in this professional sector.

- Publishers of learning materials should be encouraged to use the expertise of gender equality experts in order to ensure that the materials they use are gender-sensitive.

d) Gender-based violence in education

- Gender-based violence should be specifically and explicitly addressed through educational institutions policy, including clear procedural guidelines and reporting mechanisms which are consistently enforced.
- Regular surveys among students and staff should inform policy setting, monitoring and evaluation of measures for combating and eliminating GBV in education.
- Campaigns on combatting toxic masculinities should be promoted.
- Bystander intervention mechanisms should be implemented in schools that makes those that witness something confident to speak up ('defend those that defend').
- It is crucial to support the peers (bystanders) and have in place strategies to counter the isolating gender violence (leaving the victim alone, isolating her, is the perfect state for the abuser to maintain the abuse that is why supporters are attacked, with the objective that they end their support and thus the victim gets isolated)⁷⁷.
- Staff capacity should be built, and it should be ensured that all staff is aware of what the school's or universities policies and procedures are regarding incidents of sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence.
- A whole-school approach should be adopted that involves parents as well as other key members of the school community to address underlying issues and ensure a consistent approach with long-term change.
- National education authorities can play a driving role by adopting, funding and monitoring gender equality action plans and surveys⁷⁸.

⁷⁷ Villarejo-Carballido, B., Pulido, C. M., de Botton, L., and Serradell, O. (2019). Dialogic model of prevention and resolution of conflicts: evidence of the success of cyberbullying prevention in a primary school in Catalonia. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 16:918. Available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/16/6/918#B10-ijerph-16-00918>

The Dialogic Model of Prevention and Resolution of Conflicts includes a dialogue and an intervention of the entire educational community (students, family members and teachers), promoting active positioning, solidarity and protective networks and creating safer space for students.

⁷⁸ Report on the National Survey of Student Experiences of Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions. Summary of Survey Findings (2021). Available at : <https://hea.ie/policy/gender/national-survey-of-the-experiences-of-students-in-relation-to-sexual-violence-and-harassment/>

Appendices

- A. Key research insights
- B. Examples of some EU Member States, European stakeholders' practices and EU co-funded project
- C. Relevant initiatives by some EU and international organisations
- D. References

Appendix A: Key research insights

a) Gender gaps in education

The OECD PISA insights have shown that performance gaps across genders still exist in all assessed countries.⁷⁹ **It is believed that these gaps result of gender stereotypes and gender roles learned through socialisation**, rather than girls' and boys' natural abilities⁸⁰. These disparities in performance can have negative long-term impacts on girls and boys professional and personal life.

Overcoming gender gaps requires tackling many complex individual, educational and societal factors.

As a literature review by Delaney and Devereaux⁸¹ shows, many factors such as motivation, the greater sensitivity of boys to home difficulties and childhood disadvantage, more time spent on video games, (less) time on homework and subcultural aspects such as seeing high achievers as 'uncool' or nerdy. They conclude that gender gaps persist due to "imperfect", biased information and the lack of policy interventions. A European Commission report from 2021 looks closely at the educational outcomes associated with gender behaviour, with a special focus on the performance of boys and young men.

The 'Girls' career aspirations in STEM' report⁸², focuses on reasons for a lack of young women in STEM areas. The findings suggest 'that policies aiming at reducing the gap in STEM aspirations and participation should not focus on (or not only on) improving science performance or motivation among girls. Policy initiatives should rather aim at building a stronger link between individual factors and the choice of a STEM or ICT career for girls'.⁸³ Suggestions for possible policy initiatives include introducing mandatory career counselling, making gender-sensitive training part of teachers' and career counsellors' training, fostering cooperation between schools and organisations in the public and private sectors, supporting exposure to female STEM role models and providing guidelines to schools on the use of textbooks and other resources that teach STEM and ICT subjects in a more gender-diverse way.⁸⁴

The 2020 UNESCO report concludes on a global level that the fact that some subjects are still male dominated affects equality in work and adult learning opportunities. UNESCO highlights that women in European countries are almost twice as likely as men not to participate in adult education for family-related reasons.⁸⁵

It has been found that teachers with stronger **stereotypes** favouring girls expected girls to have higher reading ability than boys⁸⁶. In general, it has been found that

⁷⁹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2019). 'Girls' and boys' performance in PISA | PISA 2018 Results (Volume II): Where All Students Can Succeed'. Available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/f56f8c26-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/f56f8c26-en>

⁸⁰ European Institute for Gender Equality (2017). 'Gender in education and training'. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-education-and-training>

⁸¹ Delaney, J.M. and Devereaux, P.J. (2021) Gender and Educational Achievement: Stylized Facts and Causal Evidence. Discussion Paper Series, IZA Institute of Labor Economics. Available at: <https://docs.iza.org/dp14074.pdf>

⁸² European Commission (2021). Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture and ICF. 'Girls' career aspirations in STEM'. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b2a7fea8-da13-11eb-895a-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

⁸³ Ibid, p. 4

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 5

⁸⁵ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2020). 'A new generation: 25 years of efforts for gender equality in education: 2020 Gender Report'. Available at: <https://gem-report-2020.unesco.org/gender-report/>

⁸⁶ Muntoni, F. and Retelsdorf, J. (2018). 'Gender-Specific Teacher Expectations in Reading—The Role of Teachers' Gender Stereotypes'. Contemporary Educational Psychology 54 Contemporary Educational Psychology, Volume 54, 2018, pp. 212-220. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0361476X18300791>

teacher biases are persistent. A study in Greece revealed only 15% of teachers to be gender neutral in their behaviour towards their students⁸⁷.

Trusz⁸⁸ has noted that the different educational and professional careers of females and males (given similar intellectual abilities) can be explained by two mechanisms: **self-fulfilling prophecy and gender stereotype threat**: "A *self-fulfilling prophecy* occurs when a parent or teacher creates false expectations concerning individual characteristics of a child.' *Stereotype threat* refers to the risk of validating negative typecasts about an individual's race, ethnicity, gender, or culture. Mesman et al.⁸⁹ points to evidence that, when for instance women are explicitly reminded of being female prior to a technology assignment, the stereotype that women are not good at technology is activated, causing their motivation and performance to deteriorate.

Research sources disclose the **importance of role model influence** (see Figure 6) **as a key predictor of career choice**⁹⁰. Introducing female students to STEM role models has been a popular tool for addressing gender inequality. Exposure to role models is relatively low-cost, flexible and therefore adaptable to a wide range of student ages and interests⁹¹. There is evidence that girls respond more strongly than boys to same-sex (teacher) role models, influencing their early career choices⁹². Gladstone and Cimpiani⁹³ stress that certain conditions must be met in order to make role models impact effective.

⁸⁷ National Bureau of Economic Research (2019). Lavy V. and Megalokonomou R. 'Persistence in Teachers' Grading Bias and Effects on Longer-Term Outcomes: University Admissions Exams and Choice of Field of Study'. Available at: <https://www.nber.org/papers/w26021>

⁸⁸ Trusz, S (2020). 'Why do females choose to study humanities or social sciences, while males prefer technology or science? Some intrapersonal and interpersonal predictors'. Soc Psychol Educ 23, pg. 615–639. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-020-09551-5>

⁸⁹ Mesman, J., et al. (2019). 'Representatie en Stereotypering van Vrouwen en Mannen in Schoolboeken voor de Brugklas'. Universiteit Leiden. Available at: <https://jimdo-storage.global.ssl.fastly.net/file/7f686795-c1b3-466d-8159-3a9fc6d13176/mesman%20-%20final%20rapport%20schoolboeken%20gender.pdf>

⁹⁰: Quimby, J. and Santis, A. (2006). 'The Influence of Role Models on Women's Career Choices'. The Career Development Quarterly. Available at : <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+influence+of+role+models+on+women%27s+career+choices.-a0147914527>

⁹¹ Lawner, E.K., Quinn, D.M., Camacho, G. et al (2019). *Ingroup role models and underrepresented students' performance and interest in STEM: A meta-analysis of lab and field studies*. Soc Psychol Educ 22, pg. 1169–1195. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s11218-019-09518-1.pdf?pdf=button%20sticky>

⁹² Institute of Labor Economics (2021). Discussion paper series 'Gender Role Models and Early Career Decisions'. Available at: <https://ftp.iza.org/dp14666.pdf>

These authors recommend matching girls with female role models (as maths teachers) early in their school career, if the aim is to have more females in STEM.

⁹³ Gladstone, J. and Cimpiani, A. (2021). 'Which role models are effective for which students? A systematic review and four recommendations for maximizing the effectiveness of role models in STEM'. *International Journal of STEM Education*, 2021. 8(1). Available at : <https://stemeducationjournal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40594-021-00315-x>

Figure 6: Recommendations for the effectiveness of STEM role models


Source: Gladstone and Cimpiani, 2021⁹⁴

In terms of schools addressing gender gap factors effecting careers choices, increasing evidence shows that sustained and structural **whole school approaches** are effective remedies. They can sustainably change people's attitudes, behaviours, school's culture⁹⁵ and learning materials.

⁹⁴ Gladstone, J. and Cimpiani, A. (2021). 'Which role models are effective for which students? A systematic review and four recommendations for maximizing the effectiveness of role models in STEM'. *International Journal of STEM Education*, 2021. 8(1). Available at : <https://stemeducationjournal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40594-021-00315-x>

⁹⁵ Tsouroufli, M., Rédei, D. (2021). 'Whole-School Approaches for Promoting Gender Equality in Secondary Schools in England, Hungary and Italy: Reflections and Conclusions'. In: Tsouroufli, M., Rédei, D. (eds) *Gender Equality and Stereotyping in Secondary Schools*. Palgrave Studies in Gender and Education. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. Available at : https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-64126-9_8

Griffin, H., Rédei, D., Guerrini, V. (2021). 'A Whole-School Approach to Gender Equality: Rationale and Country Contexts'. In: Tsouroufli, M., Rédei, D. (eds) *Gender Equality and Stereotyping in Secondary Schools*. Palgrave Studies in Gender and Education. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-64126-9_1

Our Watch 'A whole-of-school approach'. Respectful Relationships Education'. Available at: <https://education.ourwatch.org.au/a-whole-of-school-approach/>

Box 2: Whole School Approaches

According to the European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL), a whole school approach⁹⁶ can be defined as: a holistic educational approach that has been strategically constructed to improve student learning, behaviour and well-being, and provide supportive conditions. The approach involves all members of the school community, including school management, school staff, students, parents and the broader community – working together to promote a sense of belonging and cohesion. A ‘whole school approach’ implies cross-sectoral alliances and stronger cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders beyond the educational field (e.g., social services, youth services, psychologists, health workers, local authorities, NGOs, businesses, etc.).

The UN has described a whole school approach to school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) as: committing to actions that involve the participation of the entire school community. In a whole school approach, stakeholders at the school level including students, teachers, school support staff, heads and principals, in the local community, and government education authorities work together to undertake a range of different activities aimed at making schools safer, more child-friendly, and gender-sensitive, while fostering a positive learning environment for students and educators⁹⁷.

b) Textbooks and learning materials

Although the use of online resources has gradually increased or even replaced textbooks, as amplified by the Covid-19 crisis, textbooks still play a key role in the education process.

Young people are vulnerable to stereotypes, often found in learning materials, that tend to portray ‘the Other’ in negative terms, what can lead to intolerant, unaccepting attitudes⁹⁸. If students feel that their teachers are aware and engaged in dealing with biases in learning materials, their blatant and subtle prejudice tends to show signs of weakening⁹⁹.

Mesman et al.¹⁰⁰ investigated gender stereotypes in seven grade textbooks for maths and the Dutch language in the Netherlands. The study entitled ‘Representation and stereotyping of women and men in schoolbooks for the seventh grade’¹⁰¹ confirmed studies of other countries, proving women’s systematic underrepresentation in certain professions, both in texts and illustrations (individuals with paid jobs were more often men and they also had a larger variety of jobs; scientists and those with technical jobs were more often men; those in a parental role and domestic work role were more often women). The study also mentions that most stereotypical depictions were not blatant, but quite subtle.

A study from 2019 in *Lithuania*¹⁰², commissioned by the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, analysed 32 educational materials for the sixth to seventh grades. The

⁹⁶ Intercultural Learning for Pupils and Teachers and Expanding Learning Mobility. ‘*Intercultural Learning & internationalisation for secondary schools*’. Available at: <http://intercultural-learning.eu>

⁹⁷ United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative. ‘*End School-Related Gender-Based Violence: Resources to help eliminate SRGBV*’. Available at: <https://www.ungei.org/knowledge-hub/school-related-gender-based-violence-srgbv>

⁹⁸ Sanchez-Mazas, M. and Fernandez-Iglesias, R. (2011). ‘L’interculturel à l’épreuve de l’action: comment équiper les enseignants face au public scolaire hétérogène?’ *Alterstice*, 1(1), pg. 35-46. Available at: <https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/alterstice/2011-v1-n1-alterstice06066/1077589ar.pdf>

⁹⁹ Bergamaschi, A, Blaya, C., Arcidiacono, F, and Steff, J. (2022). ‘*Blatant and subtle prejudice, and the role of teachers in conveying tolerance and respect for the Other*’. *Intercultural Education*, 2022, v33, n1, pg. 17-34. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2021.2017643>

¹⁰⁰ Mesman, J. et al. (2019). ‘*Representatie en Stereotypering van Vrouwen en Mannen in Schoolboeken voor de Brugklas*’. Available at: <https://jimdo-storage.global.ssl.fastly.net/file/7f686795-c1b3-466d-8159-3a9fc6d13176/mesman%20-%20final%20rapport%20schoolboeken%20gender.pdf>

¹⁰¹ Mesman, J., et al. (2019). ‘*Representatie en Stereotypering van Vrouwen en Mannen in Schoolboeken voor de Brugklas*’. Universiteit Leiden. Available at: <https://jimdo-storage.global.ssl.fastly.net/file/7f686795-c1b3-466d-8159-3a9fc6d13176/mesman%20-%20final%20rapport%20schoolboeken%20gender.pdf>

¹⁰² Lygių galimybių kontrolieriaus tarnyba (2019). ‘*School textbooks are stuffed with gender stereotypes, new study says*’. Available at: <https://www.lygybe.lt/data/public/uploads/2019/04/vaoveliu-ir-kitu-mokymosi-priemoniu-vertinimo-lyciu-aspektu-apzvalga.pdf>

study showed that gender stereotypes existed across all subject areas: (1) women and men are presented in different social contexts; (2) women are often presented as 'caregivers'; (3) women are always worrying about their appearance; (4) most stories in textbooks present the experiences of men, implying men's stories to be inherently more interesting than women's. In many textbooks, violent male behaviour was also presented as the norm, and women were rarely presented in positions of power¹⁰³.

A study by Mesman et al.¹⁰⁴ shows that exposure to the (subtle) underrepresentation of certain groups and related stereotypes can play a role in causing lower achievement. If a girl views another girl holding a doll before a math test, she will perform more poorly on the test than if she engages in a gender-neutral task. Conversely, young women understand chemistry texts better if images of women chemists accompany the texts.

The following distinction, made by Sadker¹⁰⁵, though not specifically focused on gender, is often cited in the literature on textbook bias^{106,107}.

Box 3: Seven forms of bias in instructional materials

Invisibility

This term describes actions which lead to the complete or relative exclusion of a group: E.g. In many of today's texts women remain unmentioned and underrepresented.

Stereotyping: Shortcuts to Bigotry

While stereotypes can be positive, they are more often negative. Some typical stereotypes include: Men portrayed as assertive and successful in their jobs, but rarely discussed as husbands or fathers; Women as caregivers.

Imbalance and Selectivity: A Tale Half Told

Curricula perpetuate bias by presenting issues, situation, or group of people one-sidedly. Complex issues are distorted by omitting different perspectives. This is for instance the case when literature is drawn primarily from western, male authors.

Fragmentation and Isolation: The Parts Are Less than the Whole.

Textual fragmentation emerges when a group becomes visually isolated. Group members are depicted as interacting only with persons like themselves.

Unreality: Rose Coloured Glasses

Many researchers have noted the tendency of instructional materials to gloss over unpleasant facts and events in history. By ignoring prejudice, racism, discrimination, exploitation, oppression, sexism, and inter-group conflict, students lack the information to recognize, understand, and conquer societal problems.

Linguistic Bias: Words Count

Language can be a powerful conveyor of bias, in blatant and subtle forms. Linguistic bias can impact race/ethnicity, gender, accents, age, (dis)ability and sexual orientation. E.g. in the English language: Words as forefathers, mankind, and businessman serve to deny female's contributions and existence.

Cosmetic Bias: 'Shiny' covers

This type of cosmetic bias creates an 'illusion of equity' by suggesting a text to be bias free. However, within the attractive covers, photos, or posters, bias persists: E.g. A science textbook that features a glossy pull-out of female scientists, while actually including no or little scientific contributions of women.

¹⁰³ The study also recommends: (1) increasing the visibility of women's experiences; (2) show the sensitive, emotional and caring side of boys and men; (3) provide diversity in role models (i.e. not only men); (4) challenge behaviour related to gender stereotypes; (5) present historical context of the oppression of women; and (6) ensure visibility of different forms of families, including LGBTI groups.

¹⁰⁴ Mesman, J., et al. (2019). 'Representatie en Stereotypering van Vrouwen en Mannen in Schoolboeken voor de Brugklas'. Universiteit Leiden. Available at: <https://ijmdo-storage.global.ssl.fastly.net/file/7f686795-c1b3-466d-8159-3a9fc6d13176/mesman%20-%20final%20rapport%20schoolboeken%20gender.pdf>

¹⁰⁵ Sadker, M. and Sadker D. (1982). *Sex Equity Handbook for Schools*. New York, N.Y.: Longman, Inc.

¹⁰⁶ Sadker, D. and The Myra Sadker Foundation. 'Seven Forms of Bias in Instructional Materials'. Available at: <https://www.sadker.org/curricularbias.html>

¹⁰⁷ Intercultural Development Research Associated (2016). 'Forms of Bias in Textbooks and Instructional Materials'. Available at: <https://www.idra.org/equity-assistance-center/forms-bias-textbooks-instructional-materials/>

c) Gender-based violence

The Council of Europe (see box below) emphasized that gender-based violence, particularly against women, is **one of the most pronounced expressions of unequal power relations between men and women.**

Box 4: Causes of gender-based violence (Council of Europe)¹⁰⁸

The Council of Europe identifies four dimensions underlying gender-based violence: cultural, legal, economic and political. Especially cultural and economic factors connect to incidences of gender-based violence and (insufficient) school education about gender-based violence.

Cultural: *Patriarchal and sexist views legitimise violence to ensure men's dominance and superiority. Other factors include gender stereotypes and prejudice, normative expectations of femininity and masculinity, the socialisation of gender, and public's acceptance of violence (as an acceptable means to solve conflict and assert oneself).*

Legal: *In many societies being a victim of gender-based violence is perceived as shameful and weak, while many women still being considered guilty of attracting violence against themselves through their behaviour. This partly accounts for enduring low levels of reporting and investigation.*

A US study by Gruber and Finrean¹⁰⁹ found that unchecked **bullying behaviours** often lead to sexual harassment. Such forms of bullying are commonly perpetrated by boys against girls, and girls against girls. The authors also found girls to be bullied or harassed as frequently as boys, but sexual minorities experienced higher levels of both. Also, sexual harassment had adverse effects on more health outcomes, which were especially notable among girls and sexual minorities.

A UN study reports that safe and welcoming schools are indispensable to prevent school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV). **Physical infrastructure**, is of particular importance since violent incidents can take place everywhere. In general, hotspots for violence include school toilets, empty classrooms, corridors and dormitories, as well as the perimeter of school grounds. SRGBV can be exacerbated in schools with dim lighting or broken locks, or due to inadequate supervision of facilities¹¹⁰.

Another study by Parkes et al.¹¹¹ examined the global research evidence on policy and practice against SRGBV. The report concluded that the following approaches could be possible solutions:

- Reflection and consciousness raising on gender identities, norms and inequalities that shape the risk and experience of sexual violence.
- Youth gang involvement can be deterred through 'holistic' community based programmes to develop critical reflection and interpersonal skills, alongside socioeconomic support/training.
- Teachers' confidence in addressing SRGBV can be strengthened by supporting reflection on their own values, beliefs and personal histories; curriculum

¹⁰⁸ Council of Europe. 'What causes gender-based violence?' Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/what-causes-gender-based-violence>

¹⁰⁹ Gruber, J. E. and Fineran, S. (2008). 'Comparing the impact of bullying and sexual harassment victimization on the mental and physical health of adolescents'. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 59(1-2), pg. 1-13. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-008-9431-5>

¹¹⁰ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2020). Global Education Monitoring Report Team. 'School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV): a human rights violation and a threat to inclusive and equitable quality education for all'. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374509>

¹¹¹ Parkes, J., Heslop, J., Johnson Ross, F., Westerveld, R., Unterhalter, E. (2016). 'A Rigorous Review of Global Research Evidence on Policy and Practice on School-Related Gender-Based Violence'. UNICEF: University College London, Institute of Education. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/media/66546/file/SRGBV-review.pdf>

materials and training in strategies to address discrimination and violence; and training in interactive, inclusive pedagogies.

- Collaborative engagement on tackling SRGBV with parents, and community and religious gatekeepers can be effective in addressing social norms that underpin violence.
- Comprehensive, intersectoral planning across government departments needs to combine with action plans and guidelines supported by resources and training at all levels of policy enactment.
- District education officials; medical, welfare and judicial services; policymakers; teaching unions; and teacher training institutions are key actors in policy enactment.

Appendix B: Examples of some EU Member States, European stakeholders' practices and EU co-funded projects

a) Gender gaps in education

The following practices against gender gaps, have been highlighted in the European Commission's study on gender behavior and its impact on education outcomes.¹¹² A special focus was given on "the performance of boys and young men in education"¹¹³.

Finland's National Agency of Education project, lasting from 2019-2025, focuses on boys' learning challenges and solutions. The project developed policy measures related to new types of future-oriented operating models, supporting boys in different life situations. The final report discussed and analysed perspectives on working life, leisure, well-being and health, family background, regional differences and gender roles¹¹⁴.

In collaboration with different secondary schools, the **Belgian Procrustes project** conducted research on the causes and potential strategies to reduce the gender gap in secondary education. The website was developed to offer a toolbox with **numerous resources for teachers** on how to develop school policies and practices, reducing the underperformance of boys and girls. Some of the resources included on the website are: a book on 'Gender at School'; video materials; work sheets on gender stereotypes; and self-assessment tests for teachers on themes such as 'how gendered do you think?'

The **SSaMs project**, co-funded by Erasmus+ and involving partners from around Europe, aims to improve boys and young men's educational attainment and prevent early school leaving gender-sensitive mentoring and sports. The six SSaMs partners involved in the project have collaborated to develop a **Higher Education Institute course for sports students**. This course is meant to provide future professionals with the necessary skills to work with boys and young men, to support their mental and emotional health, and to motivate them to remain in education.

b) Gender stereotypes

Flemish Ministry of Interior Affairs funded the development of the website '**genderklik.be**', which aims to change gender stereotypes at Flanders' societal level. The website provides answers to questions around gender mechanisms in daily life. It raises awareness across sectors to recognise male and female stereotypes by providing concrete examples, practical tips and tools. Through the concept of 'lifecycle' (*levensloop*), the website provides links to reading material, videos, and other resources to break with gender stereotypes.

In Sweden, the initiative **The Macho Fabriken** (Macho Factory in English) focuses on practical work for gender equality and against violence, by working together with young people. The focus is on norms for masculinity and their impact. To implement this approach, schools have been using educational materials developed by Macho Fabriken, which are disseminated by the civil society organisations MÄN and Unizon. The material is based on short films and exercises problematising masculinity norms and inequalities among staff and students, to prevent abusive and violent behaviour.

¹¹² European Commission (2021). Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Staring, F., Donlevy, V., Day, L., et al., *Study on gender behaviour and its impact on education outcomes (with a special focus on the performance of boys and young men in education) : final report*, Publications Office, 2021, Available at: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/509505>

¹¹³ Ibid

¹¹⁴ Opetushallitus Utbildningsstyrelsen (2019). 'Poikien oppimishaasteet ja -ratkaisut vuoteen 2025'. Available at: <https://www.oph.fi/fi/tilastot-ja-julkaisut/julkaisut/poikien-oppimishaasteet-ja-ratkaisut-vuoteen-2025>

As part of a wider awareness-raising campaign in **Luxembourg**, the organisation **RockMEGA** (funded by the Ministry for Equality between Women and Men (MEGA) of Luxembourg) has developed a wide range of flyers, videos and brochures. It also runs other promotional activities, tackling gender stereotyping for children aged 3-6 years old. The PIXI booklets cover a wide range of topics such as: "I Can Also Do This" (making children aware that their study and career choices are limitless, regardless of their gender), "Mummy the Mayor" (make children see that women can also take up leadership positions), or "The Unicorn and Robot are Moving" (on tackling gender stereotyping in toys).

The project **BREAK! – Overcoming gender stereotypes in Europe through cross-media learning** is an initiative of the **Euroguidance Network**. BREAK! Is a cross-media project, co-funded by the European Union, which includes TV series and study-materials for teachers and career counsellors in several languages. Participating countries in the Euroguidance Network include the Czech Republic, Estonia, Sweden, Portugal and France. The aim is to support young people in no longer restricting their career choices to gender stereotypes, but to base them on their free will and abilities. Representative countries from the Euroguidance Network coordinate the **Get Up** project, which targets career guidance professionals and teachers to provide them with skills designed to ensure equal opportunities between women and men.

Towards gender sensitive education project¹¹⁵ (2017-2020), implemented by five organisations from three EU countries (Czech Republic, Hungary and Austria) was set up with an objective to enhance gender sensitivity in teaching practices, by enabling lower secondary school teachers to recognize their own explicit and implicit biases and how these affect their classroom behaviours as well as how to recognise and confront children's biases.

The **ETUCE** Action Plan on Gender Equality¹¹⁶ is a policy framework by The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), which enhances the work of ETUCE member organisations on promoting gender equality. It provides concrete measures, ensuring the gender equality perspective in policymaking at national, regional and local level. The Action Plan includes chapters on gender stereotypes and gender roles, horizontal gender segregation in the education sector, and vertical gender segregation in the education sector. It was produced through a social dialogue project¹¹⁷ that produced a research report¹¹⁸ on gendered patterns in the education sector and an Online Database of Good Practices¹¹⁹. The database contains descriptions and links to practical initiatives on various topics implemented by the ETUCE member organisations. Also, the Action Plan notes the fact that a high percentage of women in the education sector work in part-time employment and on short-term contracts.

c) Non-traditional education and career pathways

New Paths for Boys and Boys' Day (*Neue Wege für Jungs und Boys' Day*) **Germany** has set up a national network and information platform called **Boys' Day** promoting male students' interest in professions that are traditionally dominated by women. The platform promotes jobs in which less than 40% of the workforce is male. Information is provided to education professionals, career advisors and parents. Exchange between

¹¹⁵ *Towards gender sensitive education*. Available at: <https://gendersensed.eu/about/>

¹¹⁶ European Trade Union Committee for Education (2020). 'ETUCE Action Plan on Gender Equality (2020)'. Available at: <https://www.csee-etuice.org/en/resources/policy-papers/3558-etuice-action-plan-on-gender-equality-2020>

¹¹⁷ European Trade Union Committee for Education project 'Social dialogue and gender equality: Empowering education trade unions to address gender equality in the teaching profession through social dialogue 2018-2019'. Available at: <https://www.csee-etuice.org/en/projects/addressing-gender-equality-in-social-dialogue/3396-introduction>

¹¹⁸ European Trade Union Committee for Education (2019). 'Education Trade Unions Addressing Gender Equality Through Social Dialogue'. Available at: <https://www.csee-etuice.org/en/resources/publications/3205-education-trade-unions-addressing-gender-equality-through-social-dialogue-2019>

¹¹⁹ European Trade Union Committee for Education. 'ETUCE Database of Good Practices'. Available at: <https://goodpractices.csee-etuice.org/en/>

researchers and practitioners is organised through conferences. An evaluation has shown that 61% of boys felt that their participation was useful for their career decisions and 89% of participating companies and institutions reported a high level of boys' interest and engagement. The analogue to Boys' Day is **Girls' Day**: On an annual basis, technical enterprises, enterprises with technical departments and technical training facilities, universities, and research centres are invited to organise an open day for girls.

The **Cliché-Free Initiative** (*Initiative Klisheefrei*) supports young (male) people, by promoting career and study choices in **Germany**. The initiative involves 250 organisations and aims to improve gender-equitable career choices by showcasing non-traditional careers for boys and men, such as **the care sector**. The initiative connects to educators, policymakers, employers and employer representatives influencing peoples professional choices.

MADAK (*Méi Männer an der ausserschoulescher Kannerbetreuung*) or 'More Men in Non-Formal Education and Care', seeks to **increase the number of male pre-school teachers** as part of **Luxembourg's approach** to tackling gender stereotypes in society. This initiative is part of promoting diversity in educational structures. The initiative is fully funded by the Ministry of Equality between Women and Men (MEGA), was set up in 2016, and is run by the Catholic University of Applied Sciences of Berlin (Katholische Hochschule für Sozialwesen Berlin) – KHSB. Currently, six pilot projects are taking place, in collaboration with Caritas Jeunes et Famille¹²⁰, the Luxembourg Red Cross¹²¹, the Technical High School for Educational and Social Professions¹²² and the University of Luxembourg.

An **Education toolkit**¹²³ focusing on the transport sector, has been developed for the European Commission to enable learners in primary and secondary schools challenge gender stereotypes, discover career opportunities, and develop transferable skills, critical for the 21st century. The Commission notes that in 2021, only 22 % of the people working in the transport sector were women, due to gender stereotypes leading them in a different professional directions.

Box 5: National strategies that aim for gender equality in educational choices in EU Member States, an example¹²⁴

In Slovenia, the Resolution implementation on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2015–2020 aimed to increase the share of girls and boys in educational programmes where they are under-represented.' In Lithuania, the action plan to implement the National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2015–2021 aimed to encourage girls and boys to choose "non-traditional female and male" study fields and professions.

In Sweden, the *Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner* (The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions),¹²⁵ advocates for more men to work in health and social care professions. It further has promoted gender-conscious studies and career guidance,

¹²⁰ Caritas Jeunes et Familles a.s.b.l. Accueil de jour & aide à l'enfance et à la famille. Available at: <https://www.cif.lu/>

¹²¹ Croix-rouge luxembourgeoise. Available at: <https://www.croix-rouge.lu/fr/>

¹²² Lycée technique pour professions éducatives et sociales. Available at: <https://www.ltpes.lu/>

¹²³ European Commission (2021). Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport. 'Educational toolkits to help fight gender stereotypes'. Available at: https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/social-issues/women-transport/attractiveness-transport-sector/educational-toolkits-help-fight-gender-stereotypes_en

¹²⁴ European Commission (2021). Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Staring, F., Donlevy, V., Day, L., et al., *Study on gender behaviour and its impact on education outcomes (with a special focus on the performance of boys and young men in education) : final report*, Publications Office, 2021, Available at: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/509505>

¹²⁵ Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner (2021). 'Gender-aware study and career guidance'. Available at: https://skr.se/skolakulturfritid/forskolagrundochgymnasieskola/studieochyrkesvagledning/genusmedvetensyv.1468_9.html

encouraging men to apply for female-dominated professions, for example in preschool education sector¹²⁶.

Girls Go Circular is a project, funded by the European Union, supports Action 13 – Encourage women’s participation in STEM - of the European Commission’s Digital Education Action Plan. The objective is to empower schoolgirls in European countries defined as modest and moderate innovators (according to the European Innovation Scoreboard) to become future leaders and entrepreneurs by developing their digital and entrepreneurial competencies while acquiring knowledge on the circular economy. An expected result is to boost girls’ chances to obtain IT jobs in Europe and reduce the gender gap that exists in this sector of activity. Girls Go Circular is hosted on a platform with different modules. The digital tools chosen for the modules can be used in different sectors of activity such as e-waste, climate change, food, or robotics.

The **Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) in Austria** has developed a strategy paper entitled ‘[Gender Segregation in STEM Subjects](#)’ (original: *Fachzirkel ‘Geschlechtersegregation MINT’*). The Ministry has concluded that it is necessary to not only further develop already existing measures, but to coordinate them in the form of a strategy. With the strategy paper, the BMBWF intends to give new impulse to the (Austrian) STEM field, making it also more attractive for women and girls.

The International **ECAROM** project is an EU funded project, implemented between February 2021 and January 2023. It brings together partners from Germany, Austria, Italy, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovenia. ECAROM promotes the concept of *caring masculinities*: at a young age, children and especially boys are taught about the importance of caring for themselves, others, and the environment. The project teaches how to address care professions in early childhood education, care services and primary schools, and how gender stereotypes impact further educational/professional choices.

In 2018, the **Czech government** published a policy paper focused on men in the education sector¹²⁷. The report contained recommendations on organising cooperation with the public and private sector, and special days to introduce professions dominated by the other gender. The recommendations include good practices of schools and feedback to policymakers¹²⁸. The Czech Gender Equality Strategy from 2021–2030¹²⁹ notes that Czech society has taken important steps to achieve gender balance in the area of education. However, the degree of awareness of gender stereotypes in Czech society is relatively low. The Gender Equality Strategy addresses the observation that only 1% of fifteen-year-old girls express interest in information and communication fields, compared to 8-18% of boys. It has three key objectives: (1) ensuring both genders maximum development potential; (2) expand the content of education, science and research by a gender perspective; and (3) applying the gender aspect in all education fields and research institutions.

d) Gender bias in learning materials

The **Center Hubertine Auclert in France** organises studies and actions relating to the fight against sexist stereotypes in educational tools, in particular textbooks. They

¹²⁶Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner (2021). ‘More men in preschool’. Available at: <https://skr.se/skr/tjanster/rapporterochskrifter/publikationer/flermaniforskolan.64842.html>

¹²⁷ Smídová, I., et al. (2018), *Policy paper ‘Muži v systému vzdělávání’* (Men in the education system). Available at: <https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/pracovni-skupina-muzi-a-rovnosti-zen-a-muzu/Policy-paper-muzi-v-systemu-vzdelavani.pdf>

¹²⁸ European Commission (2021). Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Staring, F., Donlevy, V., Day, L., et al., *Study on gender behaviour and its impact on education outcomes (with a special focus on the performance of boys and young men in education) : final report*, Publications Office, 2021, Available at: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/509505>

¹²⁹ Office of the Government of the Czech Republic (2021). ‘Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-2030’. Available at: <https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/qcfaq/Gender-Equality-Strategy-2021-2030.pdf>

developed and updated a [practical guide](#)¹³⁰ for turning school textbooks into tools for gender equality in 2020. This guide is intended for authors and users of school textbooks, including publishing houses, public authorities, and teachers.

The **Spanish Library and Gender** (*biblioteca i genere*) project organised by the *Associació Espai i Lleure* in Spain helps people reflect on stories and editorial publication contents for the early childhood age. The project offers tools to educators, teachers, families, and children, to identify often hidden sexist content. This project functions as a door to co-education in early childhood education and care and primary schools. It is further seen as a vehicle to introduce co-education in homes.

GirlsInScience (Building an Evidence-Base for Reducing Gender Bias in Educational Pathways) is an EU-funded study led by **Leiden University** that has conducted longitudinal research on gender representation and stereotypes in textbooks in the *Netherlands*. It has looked at the impact of student gender on marking, how teacher-student gender influenced student achievements, and the role gender played in report card evaluations. The research team produced a practical resource for educational publishers to increase the inclusivity of textbooks¹³¹. As the project finishes, more awareness-raising materials are expected to be published for specific professional groups and the general public.

The **Austrian** Federal Ministry in charge of education provided several guidelines for schools concerning gender equality, including on teaching materials, for example, *the Guideline on the representation of Women and Men in Teaching Materials* (Leitfaden zur Darstellung von Frauen und Männern in Unterrichtsmitteln) (2012 update)¹³² and *the Recommendations for non-discriminatory textbooks focusing on gender and sexual orientation*¹³³ (Empfehlungen für nicht-diskriminierende Schulbücher, Fokus Gender und sexuelle Orientierung) from 2016.

Publishers of educational materials have on occasion taken the initiative to combat gender stereotypes. After the Flemish Minister for Equal Opportunities in **Belgium** commissioned a study to research school textbooks in terms of gender and heteronormativity, multiple educational publishers signed an intention statement¹³⁴ in 2011. In this statement they committed to steer away from traditional gender expectations in educational materials.

The EU-funded project **BEYOND** invests in early childhood education and care. It contributes to the development of professional competences needed to properly design activities for children and raise public awareness on barriers to gender equity in early education. Their outputs include the creation of a gender competency framework for early years' education personnel¹³⁵, and reports on governance, curriculum, and gender mainstreaming efforts.

¹³⁰ Centre Hubertine Auclert. 'Éducation - pour des manuels scolaires et des supports éducatifs non-sexistes'. Available at: <https://www.centre-hubertine-auclert.fr/education-pour-des-manuels-scolaires-et-des-supports-educatifs-non-sexistes>

¹³¹ Van Veen, Daudi, Tessa van de Rozenberg, and Mesman, J. 'Tool for More Inclusive Textbooks'. Available at: <https://ijmido-storage.global.ssl.fastly.net/file/85246758-6cee-442e-a232-15ae6208488b/220704%20Tool%20inclusive%20textbooks.pdf>

¹³² Leitfaden zur Darstellung von Frauen und Männern in Unterrichtsmitteln. (2012). Available at: https://pubshop.bmbwf.gv.at/index.php?article_id=9&sort=title&search%5Bcat%5D=9&pub=187

¹³³ Von Patricia Hladschik (2016). Empfehlungen für nicht-diskriminierende Schulbücher. Fokus gender und sexuelle orientierung. Available at: https://politik-lernen.at/dl/MpuIJMJJKomlJq4KJK/edpol_2016_Nicht_diskriminierende_Schulbuecher_web.pdf

¹³⁴ Vlaamse Uitgevers Vereniging and Vlaams Gelijkekansenbeleid (2011). 'Charter Open Boek: Intentieverklaring om gender- en heteronormen te doorbreken in leermiddelen'. Available at: https://www.mijpublishing.be/sites/default/files/pdf/charter_genderdiversiteit.pdf

¹³⁵ Liuti, S., Palazzetti, C. and Campanella T. (2022). 'Gender Competences Framework: For Education Personnel in Early Years' and Primary Education Settings'. Available at: https://beyond-equality.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/GENDER-COMPETENCES-FRAMEWORK_web.pdf

KINDER is another EU-funded project¹³⁶ that will create gender-responsive pedagogy for early childhood education in Spain, Portugal and Croatia. The project will create training materials and tools for teachers, educators and other staff that enables them to tailor learning processes to the specific needs of boys and girls. The project includes a participatory process with families to promote comprehensive changes. The outputs of the project include reports on relevant policies and pedagogical practices currently active in mentioned countries, as well as educational guidelines for incorporating gender-related topics.

The **Gender Awareness, Tackling stereotypes in Education (GATE)**, a EU funded project, aims to prevent gender-based behaviour by raising awareness of tools addressing gender stereotypes in primary education. The project team has created a database¹³⁷ of activities and a toolbox of sixteen different activities that can be implemented in a range of school contexts, which schools across Europe have used to address gender stereotypes¹³⁸. During the project the team will develop trainings for professionals on tackling gender stereotypes in education. They will further conduct an impact study, evaluating how effective these tools have been in schools in Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France and Spain.

e) Gender-based violence (GBV)

In Ireland, new classroom materials and training modules¹³⁹, which tackle gender stereotyping, gender-based bullying and gender-based violence in primary and post-primary schools, were developed as part of the **Gender Equality Matters** project launched by **Dublin City University** in 2020. The free-of-charge classroom materials have been made available in English, Spanish, Greek, Italian and Dutch. As part of the lessons, children can learn about: rights and equality; gender stereotyping; gender-based bullying and violence; and how they can make a difference.

In 2019 the Department of Education in **Ireland** published its national policy framework 'Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive: Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions'¹⁴⁰ followed by the Implementation plan (2022-2024) published in 2020¹⁴¹.

The **European Forum for Restorative Justice** has produced a Thematic Brief¹⁴² focusing on 'sexual violence'. According to the European Forum for Restorative Justice, the benefits of restorative justice in 'sexual violence' cases is to allow the possibility of expressing one's experience, being heard, and helped to plan a reparation for the harm caused or suffered. Restorative justice is an approach of addressing harm or the risk of harm through engaging all affected, by coming to a common agreement on how the harm can be repaired and justice achieved.

Lights4Violence project carried out during the 2017–2019 period, involving experts from six European universities (from Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the

¹³⁶ KINDER is an innovative Gender-Responsive Pedagogy in Children Education. Available at: <https://kinder.ces.uc.pt/>

¹³⁷ GATE Project. 'Database – Gate Project'. Available at: <https://gateproject.eu/database/>

¹³⁸ GATE Project. 'The toolbox – Gate Project'. Available at: <https://gateproject.eu/the-toolbox/>

¹³⁹ Dublin City University (2020). 'Gender Equality Matters: New educational resources to promote gender equality in schools'. Available at: <https://www.dcu.ie/commsteam/news/2020/dec/gender-equality-matters-new-educational-resources-promote-gender-equality>

¹⁴⁰ Government of Ireland (2019). Department of education and skills. Framework for Consent in Higher Education Institutions: *Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive – Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions*. Available at: <https://assets.gov.ie/24925/57c394e5439149d087ab589d0ff39c92.pdf>

¹⁴¹ Irish Higher education authority (2020). *Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education Institutions. Implementation plan 2022-2024*. Available at : https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2021/04/HEA_ESVH_Implementation_Plan_FINAL.pdf

¹⁴² European Forum for Restorative Justice (2020). 'Restorative Justice and Sexual Violence'. Available at: <https://www.euforumrj.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Thematic%20Brief%20on%20Restorative%20Justice%20and%20Sexual%20Violence.pdf>

United Kingdom) with the objective to prevent GBV, especially dating violence, among adolescents aged 12-19.

The **Frejaskolan** (The Freja School) has adopted a norm-critical approach¹⁴³ to gender equality and gender-based violence, within a holistic, inclusive framework. The staff at a school **in Sweden**, *Frejaskolan* in Gnesta and later *Järvenskolan Tallås* school in the Swedish municipality of Katrineholm, implemented their approach to overcome patterns of gendered bullying in the classroom. Lead teachers in gender-aware classroom management were appointed with the task to initiate discussions about norms and gender equality in educational staff meetings. Thus, teachers were encouraged to think about whether they treated boys and girls differently. Both schools integrated compulsory sex and relationship education into all school subjects, and bought the necessary teaching material to support the teachers in this work. In Katrineholm (Sweden) there is a **municipality-wide network** in which teachers from preschool to upper-secondary level can share ideas and experiences related to the gender equality work. Every autumn, the pupils complete a survey where they can indicate where they feel safe and unsafe in the school environment. The results are then analysed together with the student council as part of their equal treatment work. Parents and the student council are also involved in the development of the initiatives preventing gender violence in the classroom.

The Spanish project, **Brave's Club: Zero Violence from age zero**¹⁴⁴, which is based on the 'dialogic model of prevention and resolution of conflicts', brings together effective evidence-informed practices on preventing general and gender related violence in classrooms. It focuses on preventing the normalisation of violence in primary and secondary school classrooms, setting and respecting personal boundaries and creating solidarity among students. This is a joint effort of the whole community, involving families, students and teachers.

The Erasmus+ project **Sex Education as the Best Weapon against Gender Violence** (2021-23) supports access to comprehensive and scientifically accurate sexuality education for primary and secondary school students, with a particular focus on Greece, Croatia and Spain, as a way to prevent behaviours related to gender violence. Among other objectives, the project is developing an identification plan that recognises all the sexist/"machismo" attitudes related to gender violence. It aims to establish a prevention and action manual explaining what to do when such attitudes are identified in the classroom. The project further aims to train formal and non-formal teaching professionals in gender equality and runs an information program for families in the area of sexual education, that facilitates intervention in the family context.

The Roland Garros high school in Toulouse (France) and its 'girl-boy equality brigade' has implemented several large-scale actions to fight violence against women. Students were able to take part in a debate on harassment and meet various organisations and associations.

The publication 'Sexist behaviour and sexual violence - Reinforce education for mutual respect and equality'¹⁴⁵, published by the **Canopé** network (national network for pedagogical work and support), has been updated within the framework of the French 2013-2018 inter-ministerial agreement for equality between girls and boys, women and men in the education system. This national guide offers legal reminders, and ways to help better prevent, identify and act in schools regarding SRGBV.

¹⁴³ Skolverket (2019). *Främja, förebygga, upptäcka och åtgärda*. Available at :

<https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.7f0610616b709c26f72aad/1569395992720/pdf4665.pdf>

¹⁴⁴ Sancho Longas, E. and Pulido Rodríguez, C. (2016). 'El club de valientes de la comunidad de aprendizaje CPI Sansomendi PI'. *Padres Y Maestros / Journal of Parents and Teachers*, (367), pg. 38-41. Available at : <https://doi.org/10.14422/pym.i367.y2016.007>

¹⁴⁵ 'Comportements sexistes et violences sexuelles: Renforcer l'éducation au respect mutuel et à l'égalité'. *Guide ressources pour les équipes éducatives des collèges et des lycées*. (In English: Sexist behavior and sexual violence: Reinforce education for mutual respect and equality). Available at: <https://www.reseau-canope.fr/notice/comportements-sexistes-et-violences-sexuelles.html>

The main aim of the project EU co-funded project **Safer**, launched in several EU countries, provides resources to teachers which are necessary to implement activities in the classroom, which raise awareness about GBV (gender-based violence). The project focuses on students, parents and other relevant stakeholders. One aim is to improve children's knowledge and skills to prevent and properly react to GBV.

The **Gender ABC project**, with partners in Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal, wants to change children's attitudes towards gender stereotypes and norms, reinforcing gender-based violence. It further raises awareness of schools, families and communities to develop a supportive, safe learning-environment for children. The project has developed 18 educational modules and three supporting documents. The 18 modules are tools for educators, teachers and other professionals working with children and teenagers that wish to raise awareness about gender equality and gender-based violence.

The EU co-funded project **Up and Up project**, which started in 2019, is an international upscaling project with partners in multiple EU countries. It aims to upscale trainers' and teacher's competencies regarding gender stereotypes and young people awareness about GBV. The project includes gender-based violence training for educators and an evaluation toolkit.

Equinet, the European Network of Equality Bodies¹⁴⁶, published a report¹⁴⁷ in 2018 that presented efforts of equality bodies across Europe to address sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination based on gender in education. The report looks at the role equality bodies can play in promoting gender equality, also in cases where their mandates do not cover this ground in the education field. It provides examples of complaints, research studies on the prevalence of gender-based bullying and sexual harassment and highlights good practices in harassment prevention and promotion of gender equality in schools, teacher training institutions and educational materials.

¹⁴⁶ *Equality bodies all around Europe were set up on the basis of EU Equal Treatment Directives. They are independent national public institutions aiming at assisting victims of discrimination and promoting equality.*

¹⁴⁷ European Network of Equality Bodies, Gender Equality Working Group (2018). 'Equality in the classroom: Equality Bodies and Gender Equality in Education'. Available at: https://equineteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/equality_in_the_classroom_-_web-1.pdf

Appendix C: Some examples of International Organisations' related work and other international initiatives

a) Education and gender equality

UNESCO's work on education and gender equality is guided by the UNESCO Strategy for gender equality in and through education (2019-2025)¹⁴⁸ and the Gender Equality Action Plan (2014-2021, 2019 revision)¹⁴⁹, which support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Gender Equality Action Plan focuses on system-wide transformation to benefit all learners equally and support targeted action for girls' and women's empowerment across three priority areas: better data, better policies and better practices. The Education 2030 agenda focuses on an approach, ensuring that 'girls and boys, women and men not only gain access to and complete education cycles, but are empowered equally in and through education'. On International Women's Day 2022, UNESCO launched a new publication entitled: UNESCO In Action for Gender Equality: 2020-2021¹⁵⁰. The report showcases UNESCO's key data, best practices lessons learned and actions, advancing gender equality. It further emphasises the organisation's accomplishments during the global health pandemic.

The **Council of Europe** has developed a framework to address gender mainstreaming. Combating gender stereotypes in education¹⁵¹ is one of the priorities of the Council of Europe Strategy on Gender Equality 2018-2023¹⁵². The ultimate objective is to integrate a gender equality perspective into all Council of Europe activities in the education field: from higher education to teacher training, education for democratic citizenship and human rights, history teaching or language policy.

The **OECD** has multiple initiatives focusing on gender equality. The OECD [Gender Initiative](#)¹⁵³ looks at barriers to gender equality in education, employment, and entrepreneurship. They monitor the progress made by governments to promote gender equality in both OECD and non-OECD countries and provide good practices based on analytical tools and reliable data. The [OECD Gender Data Portal](#)¹⁵⁴ includes selected indicators on gender inequalities in different sectors, including education, signalling where actions are most needed. Lastly, while not exclusively focused on gender, the OECD's Strength Through Diversity initiative¹⁵⁵ aims to identify ways in which education systems can be equitable and inclusive in increasingly diverse societies. It also

¹⁴⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2019). 'From access to empowerment: UNESCO strategy for gender equality in and through education 2019-2025'. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000369000>

¹⁴⁹ United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2019). 'UNESCO Priority Gender Equality Action Plan: 2014-2021, 2019 revision'. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370905>

¹⁵⁰ United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2022). 'UNESCO in action for gender equality, 2020-2021'. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380680>

¹⁵¹ Council of Europe. 'Combating Gender Stereotypes and Sexism in and through Education'. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/education>

¹⁵² Council of Europe (2018). 'Gender Equality Strategy 2018 – 2023'. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/prems-093618-qbr-gender-equality-strategy-2023-web-a5/16808b47e1>

Council of Europe (2007). 'Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender mainstreaming in education'. Available at: https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d5287

¹⁵³ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. *Gender Equality*. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/gender/>

¹⁵⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. *OECD gender data portal*. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/gender/data/>

¹⁵⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 'Strength through Diversity – OECD'. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/education/strength-through-diversity>

introduces intersectionality approach across different diversity dimensions to support inclusive educational policy making.

b) Gender gaps in education

Several rounds of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (**PISA**)¹⁵⁶ have found that girls score higher than boys in reading, while, to a lesser extent, boys score higher than girls in mathematics¹⁵⁷. Naturally, there is large variation across different countries. Nevertheless, multiple international organisations have been engaged in assessing and studying the underachievement of boys (e.g. UNESCO¹⁵⁸, World Bank¹⁵⁹).

c) Non-traditional education and career pathways

A recent paper was published by the **OECD** on the gender imbalance of teachers, analysing why women are overrepresented in teaching, and why the share of female teachers decreases with each additional education level¹⁶⁰.

The **Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe** has a long list of good practices¹⁶¹, published in 2015. This Compilation of good practices promotes an education free from gender stereotypes. Ways to implement appropriate measures, are included in the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation on gender mainstreaming in education. The selected initiatives inter alia include campaigns motivating girls and women to choose non stereotypical careers, gender equality training programmes for teachers and financial assistance for families supporting girls' school attendance.

d) Textbooks and learning materials

UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report from 2020 asks the key question 'How can students learn if the system reminds them of their exclusion?'¹⁶². Concluding that women are underrepresented in textbooks, UNESCO recommends, that textbooks need to be revised as soon as curricula reforms take place to meet the needs of the new sustainable development agenda. Guidelines explicitly related to environmental issues, peace and global citizenship, sustainable development, human rights and gender equality need to be integrated within textbook review processes.

The **Council of Europe's Pestalozzi Programme**, inter alia led to the development of a training unit for teachers. The unit focused on gender and sexuality stereotypes in textbook images¹⁶³. Presented activities, alongside guidance questions, are intended to

¹⁵⁶ PISA is the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment. PISA measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges.

¹⁵⁷ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2018). 'Data – PISA'. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/data>

¹⁵⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2022). 'Leave no child behind: global report on boys' disengagement from education'. Available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/what-you-need-know-about-unescos-global-report-boys-disengagement-education>

¹⁵⁹ World Bank (2021). 'Educational underachievement among boys and men'. Available at: <https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/library/educational-underachievement-among-boys-and-men>

¹⁶⁰ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2022). 'Why is the gender ratio of teachers imbalanced?' Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/publications/why-is-the-gender-ratio-of-teachers-imbalanced-8fea2729-en.htm>

¹⁶¹ Council of Europe (2015). Gender Equality Commission. 'Compilation of good practices to promote an education free from gender stereotypes and identifying ways to implement the measures which are included in the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation on gender mainstreaming in education'. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680590fe0>

¹⁶² United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2020). 'A new generation: 25 years of efforts for gender equality in education: 2020 Gender Report'. Available at: <https://gem-report-2020.unesco.org/gender-report/>

¹⁶³ Trasberg, K. (2015). *Gender and sexuality stereotypes in textbook images*. In Council of Europe Pestalozzi Programme Training Units. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/learning-resources/-/gender-and-sexuality-stereotypes-in-textbook-images>

help learners to recognise prejudice, stereotypes and bias in textbook illustrations and identify their meaning and purpose.

In 2020, **Pearson**, one of the largest publishers of educational materials globally, launched guidelines to tackle gender bias¹⁶⁴ in its exams and textbooks, by promoting women and girls in traditionally masculine roles and vice versa.

Box 6: Pearson Publishing House Guidelines¹⁶⁵

The Pearson Publishing House, in 2020, recognised that: 'The evidence of how gender stereotyping impacts children and young people is unequivocal in showing how experiences of early gender bias can have long-term negative effects. This is seen in relation to achievement and progression by restricting their career aspirations; influencing school subject choice, which subsequently impacts career pathways; or contributes to disparities in educational achievement. It further effects people's self-esteem, particularly of those who are not conform to traditional gender roles. Polling by The Fawcett Society supports this evidence, with 51% of respondents noting that gender stereotyping constrained their career choices; 45% saying that when they felt expected to behave in a certain (gendered) way as children; and 44% saying it harmed their personal relationships'¹⁶⁶.

500 Women Scientists is a grassroots organisation founded in the United States. More than 20,000 women of STEM, and supporters from more than 100 countries, including many Europeans, have signed up to support 500 Women Scientists. Less than 20% of all biographies on Wikipedia are about women, while the platform is an often-used resource for student research¹⁶⁷. Woman Scientists organise regular Edit-a-thons, in which participants try to rectify this imbalance by writing entries to Wikipedia. They run more in-depth six-week trainings for people to become experts in creating biographies for women in STEM.

The general aims of **International Women's Day** are to: (1) celebrate women's achievements; (2) raise awareness about women's equality; (3) lobby for accelerated gender parity (3) fundraise for female-focused charities. The campaign theme in 2022 was: #BreakTheBias¹⁶⁸. The 2022 campaign included an initiative entitled: 'How to check a textbook for stereotypes. In addition to information on how to detect gender bias, the campaign also asks 'what are the implications of the activities in which people are involved in terms of hierarchy, perceived societal importance and gender relations'.

e) Gender-based violence

The **Council of Europe** has pointed out that gender-based violence, particularly against women, is one of the most pronounced expressions of the unequal power relations between women and men¹⁶⁹. Issues related to gender, gender equality and gender-based violence have always been a part of the Council of Europe youth sector's strategy and activities. The work on gender-based violence has been particularly visible in human rights education programmes run by the Council of Europe youth sector¹⁷⁰. One of the many initiatives undertaken by the Council of Europe Convention to combat violence against women and domestic violence is – the 'Istanbul Convention', setting

¹⁶⁴ Pearson (2020). 'Pearson Gender Equality Guidelines'. Available at: <https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/one-dot-com/one-dot-com/uk/documents/news/2020/pearson-gender-equality-guidelines.pdf>

¹⁶⁵ Pearson (2020). 'Pearson Gender Equality Guidelines'. Available at: <https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/one-dot-com/one-dot-com/uk/documents/news/2020/pearson-gender-equality-guidelines.pdf>

¹⁶⁶ Pearson English podcast 'Diversity and Inclusion : Gender Equality'. Available at: <https://soundcloud.com/pearson-english-podcast/diversity-and-inclusion-gender-equality>

¹⁶⁷ Tripodi, F. (2021). *Ms. Categorized: Gender, notability, and inequality on Wikipedia*. New Media & Society, Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/14614448211023772>

¹⁶⁸ International Women's Day. 'IWD 2022 campaign theme: #BreakTheBias'. Available at: <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/2022Theme>

¹⁶⁹ Council of Europe. 'What causes gender-based violence?' Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/what-causes-gender-based-violence>

¹⁷⁰ Council of Europe. 'Youth work and youth policy responses'. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/youth-work-and-youth-policy-responses>

international standards: The EU and all its Member States signed the Convention, 21 Member States have ratified it so far.

UNESCO's Global guidance document on addressing school-related gender-based violence¹⁷¹ was developed by a dedicated Global Working Group. The document was commissioned to help ministerial and other education stakeholders understand more about School Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV), identify ways to prevent it and respond effectively when it happens. The Global Guidance document is a comprehensive, one-stop resource, providing key principles, practical strategies, case studies and recommended tools for education sectors and their partners working to eliminate gender-based violence in educational settings. The Guidance exemplifies an approach, that includes leadership, legislative reform, national policies and plans, and schools being safe and supportive environments.

UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report Team published a report in 2020 entitled: School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV): a human rights violation and a threat to inclusive and equitable quality education for all¹⁷². This study explores the prevalence of SRGBV, how it is experienced by female and male learners and those with different gender identities and sexual orientations, identifying who are the most affected. An analysis of promising programmes addressing SRGBV is provided, identifying the catalysing factors that contribute to their success. This research concludes that although there has been significant progress towards recognising and addressing SRGBV globally, the prevalence is still high, and governments should act urgently.

¹⁷¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2016). 'Global guidance on addressing school-related gender-based violence'. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000246651>

¹⁷² United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2020). Global Education Monitoring Report Team. 'School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV): a human rights violation and a threat to inclusive and equitable quality education for all'. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374509>

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