

# 2.1 Focus Groups with Teachers and Parents - Summary report

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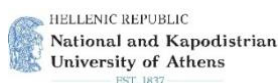
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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GA	Grant Agreement

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## 1 Introduction

This document compares and summarises the local reports from six focus groups conducted in Greece, Croatia and Spain, with two respondent groups per country - Teachers and Parents, in order to provide a cumulative reading of the main themes around bullying and cyberbullying in primary schools in the three Mediterranean countries and the way teachers and parents, together and individually, can help make school a safer environment.

In this document, the term *bullying* is used to define physical, verbal and psychological/relational dynamics occurring at school among pupils. The term *cyberbullying* is used to define the online manifestation - and consequent amplification in terms of exposure - of verbal and psychological/relational dynamics occurring through instant messaging groups (e.g., Whatsapp) and social media platforms.

Comparing Teachers' and Parents' perspectives on bullying and cyberbullying at school is essential to identify the areas where schools and families can collaborate and the measures that may be taken to reinforce a sense of trust and partnership and reduce misunderstandings between these two systems, with the shared objective of preventing bullying and cyberbullying.

The analysis is based on six local reports in the form of notes for six focus group sessions held, with a total number of 42 respondents. As a result, the findings presented in this document are not statistically generalisable.

The full local reports for each session are included as Annexes to this document for further reference and documentation.

## 2 Methodology and participants

All focus groups were conducted online. A Focus Group Methodology document (Annex I) was provided to the research team in April 2025, before the start of the works, along with a discussion outline, an informed consent module, an introduction script and ground rules for the discussion, and a Focus Group report template.

The tables below summarise the available information on the focus group logistics and participant composition.

Country	Group	Date	Setting	No. participants
GR	T (Teachers)	15/09/2025	Online	10
HR	T (Teachers)	15/10/2025 + 05/01/2026	Online	4
ES	T (Teachers)	24/09/2025	Online	7
GR	P (Parents)	22/09/2025	Online	9
HR	P (Parents)	27/09/2025	Online	5
ES	P (Parents)	25/09/2025	Online	7

Table 1. Focus group logistics for the two respondent groups.

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Country	Group	Composition	Notes on recruitment / selection
GR	T (Teachers)	<b>Gender:</b> 8 F 2 M <b>Profile:</b> primary school headteachers primary school teachers <b>Age range:</b> 35-50	<b>Selection criteria:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>interest in the topic</li> <li>interest in participating in Action Research and Life skills children's training in the classroom</li> <li>interest in being trained in Action Research and Life Skills</li> <li>class grade taught (5th or 6th year)</li> <li>years of work experience (5+)</li> <li>presence of other research interests and/or academic profile (e.g. MA/MSc, relevant research)</li> <li>professional status (teacher or headteacher)</li> <li>work in multicultural environment.</li> </ul>
HR	T (Teachers)	<b>Gender:</b> 4 F <b>Profile:</b> Primary school teachers <b>Age range:</b> 40-55	<b>Selection criteria:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>interest in the topic</li> <li>motivation to participate.</li> </ul>
ES	T (Teachers)	<b>Gender:</b> 2 F 5 M <b>Profile:</b> Primary school teachers <b>Age range:</b> 35-59	<b>Selection criteria:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>class grade taught (5th or 6th year)</li> <li>years of work experience (5+)</li> <li>professional status (teacher or headteacher)</li> <li>context (rural and urban)</li> <li>type of school (state school and private school)</li> <li>different geographical areas</li> </ul>

Table 2. Participant composition for the Teachers (T) respondent group.

Country	Group	Composition	Notes on recruitment / selection
GR	P (Parents)	<b>Gender:</b> 8 F 1 M <b>Age range:</b> 35-45	<b>Selection criterion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>at least one child attending primary school.</li> </ul>
HR	P (Parents)	<b>Gender:</b> 4 F 1 M <b>Age range:</b> 40-55	
ES	P (Parents)	<b>Gender:</b> 4 F 3 M <b>Age range:</b> 35-51	<b>Selection criteria:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>child(ren) in class grade 5th or 6th year</li> <li>context (rural and urban)</li> <li>type of school (state school and private school)</li> </ul>

Table 3. Participant composition for the Parents (P) respondent group.

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## 3 Teachers focus groups comparative summary

This section provides a comparative summary of the findings of the Teachers focus groups held in Greece, Croatia and Spain. Teachers' views were collected through a discussion on three main topics concerning bullying/cyberbullying:

- 1) Current Situation in school
- 2) Potential risks for the school
- 3) Actions that should be implemented.

For the purposes of brevity, the following abbreviations will be used throughout this section:

- ES\_T: Teachers Focus Group Report Spain
- GR\_T: Teachers Focus Group Report Greece
- HR\_T: Teachers Focus Group Report Croatia

### 3.1 Current situation in school

#### Perceptions of bullying

Across all three countries, teachers recognise bullying as a relevant issue in school, but they frame its drivers and visibility differently. In GR\_T, perceptions are strongly connected to contextual and risk factors, including early internet exposure, “chaotic parenting,” exposure to violent video games and lack of trust. Areas of concern are relevant to early start of bullying through “gateway behaviours” that may later develop into more recognisable bullying patterns in the final years of primary school. In HR\_T, bullying is described as less prevalent and less visible in lower grades (up to around age ten). Teachers associate this with limited access to mobile phones among younger pupils, which reduces the opportunity for digital dynamics. At the same time, HR\_T notes that bullying may be underestimated at early stages and suggest an increase of the phenomenon as pupils grow older and access to smartphones and online content becomes more common. In ES\_T, teachers describe bullying as a real and, in some contexts, growing problem in primary school, although its visibility varies across contexts. A recurring theme in the discussion is the difficulty of early detection - especially as regards psychological and relational forms of bullying, which become obvious only once the situation has escalated, which makes interventions more complicated to implement. Cyberbullying is framed as a major concern as it typically occurs outside school hours while affecting the classroom climate on the following day.

#### Forms of bullying

Teachers across the three countries emphasise psychological/relational bullying as the most frequent form of bullying occurring at school, while also noting context-specific patterns. ES\_T shows convergence around the prevalence of psychological and relational forms of bullying (ridicule, verbal aggression and social exclusion sometimes sustained through group dynamics - "subtle complicity-seeking gestures" - which seem to suggest an escalation to mobbing in some cases), though some describe physical or digital forms of bullying as particularly salient in their contexts. HR\_T highlights variation by age and gender: among boys, incidents more often take the form of brief physical conflicts following disputes, typically stopped quickly by teachers; among girls—especially in higher grades—bullying is described as more hidden and psychological. HR\_T also notes

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that many lower-grade incidents are often understood as conflicts rather than bullying. GR\_T lists verbal and physical violence, group exclusion and scapegoating, highlighting exclusion as particularly harmful. However, as noted in the report, the standard definitional elements of bullying, such as duration, repetition, power imbalance, intent to harm, were not explicitly referenced by the respondents, suggesting a potential need for conceptual clarification of the phenomenon.

### **Description of a bullying incident and how it was dealt with**

The three contexts differ in the degree of detail provided for this item. Only GR\_T provides a detailed example of a complex case managed through a behavioural/learning contract involving the classroom teacher, the headteacher and all the other teachers, the child and the parents, supported by systematic documentation (e.g., a diary of the child's behaviour kept by teachers) and a relationship-based, holistic approach, with reference to support roles such as a school psychologist and social worker, which achieved a behaviour modification by the child. In HR\_T, teachers report not having observed continuous or severe bullying cases; incidents are described in a general way as short-lived conflicts managed by the teacher within the classroom by separating the pupils involved, discussing the incident, and applying temporary consequences such as restricting participation in activities, typically without formal pedagogical measures. In ES\_T, teachers do not provide details on an actual case of bullying, but describe the escalation pathway followed for handling bullying incidents, with an initial level of observation and dialogue with the pupils involved, a next level reporting the incident to school management and families and activation of the anti-bullying protocol, and in severe cases, record-keeping, meetings with the victim's and the perpetrator's families and agreements on behavioural modifications signed and monitored. Contrasting views among respondents on when informal handling is appropriate against when formal protocol activation is necessary are reported.

### **Issues related to reporting bullying**

Reporting bullying is described as difficult in all three countries, though for different reasons. GR\_T reports a general lack of trust, and different factors that hold back children and teachers: while from the children side concern for peer reaction, fear of exclusion and a sort of discouragement about a possible lack of follow-up by the school appear as the main barriers to reporting bullying, teachers concerns appear to be related to school "defamation" and to reactions by "aggressive" parents, along with the lack of a clear framework setting out teachers' role and boundaries when bullying incidents occur. HR\_T identifies fear as a key barrier preventing children from reporting bullying, and notes that some school spaces can be harder to supervise. ES\_T reports multiple barriers to reporting bullying: late detection, challenges with family denial/minimisation, inconsistent attitudes by teachers (e.g., dismissal of incidents as "children's issues" or reluctance to address out-of-hours incidents), procedural burdens (deadlines and documentation). Cyberbullying is presented as especially difficult to handle and report because it occurs outside school and may require external escalation e.g. to law enforcement authorities.

### **Resources for bullying prevention**

All groups call for stronger prevention capacity, though from different baselines. GR\_T places emphasis on strengthening capacity inside the school and building a clearer framework and support mechanisms, such as hands-on training (workshops), empathy-building activities for children, early prevention (including pre-school), exchange of good practices, stable professional support (notably school psychologists and social

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workers) and peer supervision. HR\_T highlights reliance on procedures and the role of the school pedagogue, while identifying the absence of a school psychologist as a major gap (*“We really miss a school psychologist; without that support, everything is much harder”*) when having to handle complex bullying situations. ES\_T reports expanded resources in recent years (protocols, training, classroom coexistence tools and institutional/legal frameworks), including initiatives such as peer mediation and structured tutorial/mentoring spaces; however, teachers still describe early detection and cyberbullying as areas where current resources are insufficient, particularly when implementation is uneven or staff turnover disrupts continuity.

## 3.2 Potential risks for the school

### How bullying affects school life in general

All three countries describe bullying as damaging school climate, but with different focus points. GR\_T frames impact of bullying on school life as causing an unstable environment, with a point of concern related to pupils' feelings of isolation in the group. HR\_T places strong emphasis on stress and tension within the school environment, driven not only by pupil dynamics but also by parental reactions and expectations towards the school. ES\_T notes that bullying undermines classroom climate and learning and weakens group cohesion and emphasises that more vulnerable children - SEN pupils or pupils with difficulty in integration - are those more at risk of becoming victims of bullying.

### Examples of poor quality of school life caused by bullying

Across the three countries, teachers describe bullying and related behavioural difficulties as having clear spillover effects on the wider school environment. In GR\_T, respondents associate bullying with a negative school climate and pupils' isolation within the group of peers, which is seen by teachers as an area of concern. HR\_T reports situations where individual pupils' behavioural difficulties - even though not explicitly labelled as bullying - negatively affect the overall classroom atmosphere, creating discomfort, distraction and tension for others. In ES\_T examples are provided of victims becoming isolated, feeling unable to speak up, or being ridiculed during group work, with negative effects on their self-confidence and wellbeing and on the overall school atmosphere.

### How bullying incidents are handled at school

Across the three countries, teachers describe case handling as a process that typically starts at classroom level and may escalate to wider school structures depending on severity and persistence. While approaches share common elements (early observation, intervention and documentation), the degree of formalisation and the constraints reported differ across contexts. In GR\_T, case management is described as being led primarily by the classroom teacher, with a strong emphasis on detailed recording of incidents. HR\_T reports that incidents are usually addressed through prompt intervention and close supervision, with the involvement of specialist staff such as the school pedagogue - though episodes of resistance or disagreement by parents are reported as potentially limiting the effects of school interventions. Preventive teacher presence in classrooms and corridors is presented as an important deterrent, and smaller class size is seen as facilitating factor for earlier identification of emerging problems. ES\_T reports that case handling typically begins with observation, systematic record-keeping and communication with families. Where necessary, the formal anti-bullying protocol is activated with the involvement of the school management team, requiring consistent and rigorous

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documentation by teachers. Views regarding activating the official protocol differ among respondents, with some supporting this option in any suspicious circumstance and others supporting taking informal steps first to avoid exposing pupils and families.

### **How bullying may affect the school's reputation**

Perceived reputational risks differ significantly across the three countries: while GR\_T reports that state schools do not consider reputation an issue, HR\_T explicitly recognises a reputational risk linked to bullying, particularly in the case of bullying incidents becoming public or media/visible (*"There are cases where schools were completely destroyed in the media because of bullying"*), potentially prompting parents to withdraw children. Also ES\_T links unresolved bullying to reputational damage and pupil withdrawal (*"Almost always [...] it ends with one of the people involved leaving the school, usually the victim"*), though some teachers highlight stronger institutional oversight and support from educational inspection as a protective factor.

### **How bullying may affect the relationship between the school and the pupils' families**

Across the three countries, teachers describe school-family relationships as a key pressure point in bullying cases. While everyday communication is seen as essential for prevention and trust-building, incidents can quickly generate tensions that undermine cooperation and make resolution more difficult. GR\_T reports provocative attitudes by parents and demonstrations of mistrust towards teachers. In HR\_T bullying incidents are seen as potential triggers of conflict between schools and families, particularly in the cases when parents of the victim expect outcomes that the school is not legally or institutionally able to deliver and feel dissatisfied with the school's response. Strained communication with families is also reported in ES\_T as a consequence of bullying incidents, with families doubting the school's capacity to resolve the situation.

## **3.3 Actions that should be implemented**

### **Practices or interventions implemented by school to prevent or counteract bullying**

Across the three countries, teachers describe prevention and response as shaped by the resources and structures available within each school system. While all contexts report some preventive efforts, they differ markedly in terms of formalisation, consistency and reliance on individual initiative. GR\_T describes bullying prevention and response as scarce or depending on headteacher interest, and not very specific. HR\_T reports reliance on preventive supervision, immediate intervention and teacher presence. ES\_T reports a wider set of measures (protocols supported by inspection, observation tools, inclusion initiatives, peer support mechanisms and sanctions), while still identifying challenges in early detection and consistent implementation.

### **Quality of school communication when bullying incidents occur**

Communication patterns differ across contexts. GR\_T describes communication as depending on the quality of teacher relations and school leadership, with parental attitudes sometimes hindering collaboration. HR\_T distinguishes between generally supportive internal communication, with teachers free to consult with the headteacher or the school pedagogue, and more complex and sometimes conflictual communication with families. ES\_T reports structured communication practices (regular meetings, incident logs, transparency and

acknowledgement of mistakes), but still notes challenges linked to family denial, low engagement and uneven participation.

### **Initiatives to be taken to build a culture of respect at school**

Regarding initiatives to be taken, all groups stress the importance of prevention beyond sanctions, though they prioritise different levers. GR\_T focuses on empathy-building and trustful relationships. Equally, ES\_T mentions empathy and inclusion activities along with group work, peaceful conflict resolution strategies, peer mediation, cooperative learning, and inclusive playgrounds. HR\_T emphasises practical, experience-based approaches such as workshops, role play, real examples.

### **Involvement of pupils, families, teachers and school staff in bullying prevention**

Across the three countries, involvement of pupils, families and school staff is recognised as a key condition for effective bullying prevention; nevertheless, engagement is described as uneven and often difficult to coordinate. While some contexts report structured mechanisms to involve pupils, families and staff, others highlight gaps in coordination and persistent challenges - particularly linked to trust and parental collaboration. GR\_T describes collaboration and networking as mainly depending on teachers, with parents described as not collaborative and an overall lack of coordination and lack of trust between systems. HR\_T emphasise that effective prevention requires the involvement of all stakeholders, report challenges due to differing parental attitudes toward discipline and responsibility: although cooperation with families is considered essential, disagreements with parents may limit joint action. It is also noted that responsibility is sometimes shifted entirely on the school, thus reducing opportunities for shared prevention efforts. ES\_T describes a more structured involvement model where pupils are engaged through peer mediation, pupil helpers and reporting mechanisms; families through parent schools, talks and workshops; teachers through training and consistent enforcement of rules; and staff through supervision in playgrounds and transition spaces. At the same time, respondents report challenges to family engagement, including denial of problems, overprotection and limited parental control over children's use of phones.

### **Feasibility/usefulness of adopting a bullying prevention policy**

Across the three countries, teachers view school policies as potentially important tools for prevention and response. Nevertheless, the conditions suggested for these policies to be feasible differ, highlighting how the perceived value of written policies depends not only on the document itself, but also on the wider legal, institutional and organisational context in which schools operate. In particular, GR\_T links the usefulness of school policies to the set-up of a broader framework that supports teacher interventions, while HR\_T underlines that the subordination of school authority to parental consent further restricts the feasibility of school policies, which is already limited by legal/institutional boundaries. ES\_T supports formal regulations and protocols validated by authorities, but records divergences among respondents, some of whom see protocols as overly bureaucratic, while others stress that staff stability and continuity may matter more than a policy document when it comes to preventing bullying.

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## 4 Parents focus groups comparative summary

This section provides a comparative summary of the findings of the Parents focus groups held in Greece, Croatia and Spain. Parents' views were collected through a discussion on three main topics concerning bullying/cyberbullying:

- 1) Current Situation in school
- 2) Potential risks for the school
- 3) Actions that should be implemented.

For the purposes of brevity, the following abbreviations will be used throughout this section:

- ES\_P: Parents Focus Group Report Spain
- GR\_P: Parents Focus Group Report Greece
- HR\_P: Parents Focus Group Report Croatia

### 4.1 Current situation in school

#### Perceptions of bullying

Bullying is discussed unevenly across the three countries' parent groups, with differences both in what is reported and in how the problem is framed. While no parents' perceptions of bullying are reported in GR\_P, in HR\_P parents strongly associate bullying with early and widespread access to mobile phones and identify social networks and group chats (WhatsApp, Viber, Instagram) as the primary risk settings. An interesting point is that some manifestations of bullying such as "minor" mockery and verbal insults appear to be normalised as part of everyday communication, though there appears to be disagreement on how bullied children should react, with positions ranging between the two extremes of physical self-defense (a "slap") and avoidance. In ES\_P, bullying is perceived as an issue that educational institutions find difficult to tackle due to insufficient training and limited tools.

#### Forms of bullying

Patterns reported by parents differ across countries, both in the forms most commonly mentioned and in how these vary by age or setting. In GR\_P, psychological and verbal bullying are reported as the more frequent forms. In HR\_P, parents report that verbal insults and mockery in digital group chats are the most common, and also psychological bullying through isolation and manipulation of friendships is reported, along with less frequent physical bullying. In ES\_P, parents emphasise that frequency varies by age and educational stage, with verbal and psychosocial bullying more frequent in primary schools - though some downplayed it by describing incidents as exceptional, minor conflicts, or "kids' jokes" - and cyberbullying more prominent from secondary school onwards.

#### Description of a bullying incident and how it was dealt with

Across the three countries, only HR\_P reports actual bullying incidents - some of which involving also teachers as victims: a WhatsApp group mocking a teacher and children, that was reported and then disappeared without clear consequences; a "hate group" created by girls targeting a teacher, which prompted responses from both school and parents; a pupil's clothes being removed and the recording shared online, after which

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the school banned mobile phones; and cases where teachers reacted awkwardly. GR\_P does not report specific incidents, but describes typical bullying behaviours such as bodyshaming of children with different physical appearance and group exclusion dynamics. Bullying performed by teachers is also reported, described as ironic comments and behavioural punishment from some teachers to specific children or the whole class, and on the other hand, a feeling that teachers do not respond to bullying incidents and that the headteacher rarely intervenes when bullying incidents are reported. ES\_P mentions parents reporting serious and prolonged cases, including one that escalated to court, with no detailed description of the incidents but emphasis on inconsistent school response or even silencing. On the other hand, accounts reporting "minor" incidents usually handled quickly within the class or by families seem to suggest that some parents may perceive the issue of bullying as less severe.

### Issues related to reporting bullying

Reporting-related issues are described differently across the three parent groups. GR\_P describes issues related to shame or fear by children on one side, and to children's perception of teachers being indifferent or not easily approachable on the other. Parents reports also their own concern that schools don't respond fast enough and/or underestimate the impact of incidents. In HR\_P, deletion of bullying messages in digital groups is mentioned as one of the main barriers to reporting since it prevents children from producing supporting evidence. One more barrier is the fear of retaliation by the perpetrator, or the fear of losing "*status within the group [...] particularly in small communities where it quickly becomes known who reported*". A worrying note regards vulnerable children not realising they are being bullied and consequently not reporting incidents ("*Children often don't even know they are victims, especially those who have difficulties*"). In ES\_P, parents note that children often do not report bullying. Issues appear to be related to lack of trust in teachers by victims - who often do not feel recognized as such - or discouragement after repeated lack of follow-up, besides fear of stigma. There are divergent views as to whether reporting failures are due to schools concealing cases or families not engaging. In this respect, an interesting note regards the importance of creating a climate of trust at home on the one hand, to encourage children who are victims or witnesses of bullying to open up, and of improving dialogue between families and teachers on the other ("*The important thing is to create a climate of trust with our children so they will tell us everything*"; "*From a very early age, they need to know how to name what is happening so they can explain it*"). One significant statement - "*It is important to recognize that your own children may also become aggressors*" - extends the scope of the discussion from victims of bullying to perpetrators.

### Resources for bullying prevention

Parents across the three countries point to different resources and measures they see as useful for bullying prevention. GR\_P reports suggestions of smaller classes and developing a notion of school as a community as regards children; immediate response to incidents and communication with parents as regards the school; and parent counselling as regards children's families. In HR\_P the ban on mobile phone use in schools is mentioned as a positive measure for bullying prevention along with the use of the Family Link app by parents. A need is reported for more education and tools for early detection of psychological bullying and improved communication with teachers to align responses at home and at school. In ES\_P, parents suggest awareness-raising and training in schools and with families, to highlight the fundamental role of families and home environments in transmitting values and reinforcing positive behaviours. Other measures suggested are the

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inclusion of civic values in the curriculum, workshops and/or small-group talks with families about bullying, and peer mediation in schools.

## 4.2 Potential risks for the school

### How bullying affects school life in general

In GR\_P, parents appear to be mainly focussed on how their children feel about bullying. Equally, in HR\_P tension, fear and mistrust by children are reported, with the consequences of an environment where children feel generally unsafe and reluctant to attend school, with some notes on bullying being somewhat inevitable in school contexts. In ES\_P, bullying is framed as a problem that schools often do not know how to address, affecting the overall climate, with victims' isolation and ridicule and an overall critical view of scarce action by school which might lead to loss of trust and escalation of conflicts between families. Parents report a need for trust and to create opportunities for communication between families and the school, so that in any situation involving risk or bullying, the family or children can feel confident in talking to their teachers. However, the general feeling is that schools are failing to act despite being aware of specific cases of bullying.

### Examples of poor quality of school life caused by bullying

Poor quality of school life because of bullying incidents reported by parents across the three countries. In GR\_P, parents describe children losing trust in the school, and express concern about possible group exclusion and child isolation from peers affecting the quality of school life for their children. In HR\_P, children's feeling of isolation and exclusion are reported, in addition to a sense of fear of participating, with accounts of reluctance to attend school, psychosomatic symptoms, anxiety and depression. Concern is expressed about insufficient monitoring by teachers and, in general, the use of short-term measures that do not lead to lasting changes. In ES\_P, examples include, isolation during breaks, loss of motivation, and a drop in academic performance. Victims leaving school as a consequence is reported. A sense of abandonment of the victims of bullying by the school is expressed, while families report not being involved in events and initiatives related to bullying.

### How bullying incidents are handled at school

Across the three countries, a general feeling of ineffectiveness of school measures against bullying is reported. In GR\_P, parents express fear that incidents are not really handled by the school and report delayed handling of bullying incidents. In HR\_P, mixed perceptions are reported, with some incidents being handled quickly and effectively and others being minimised or dealt with belatedly. In ES\_P, parents state that schools often do not take action and sometimes may minimise or conceal cases to protect their reputation, leaving victims unsupported. A critical note regards anti-bullying protocols, which do exist but are seen as scarcely effective. There appears to be contrasting views also regarding disciplinary sanctions for perpetrators, where some parents see them as necessary for victims to feel protected, where others doubt their educational value.

### How bullying may affect the school's reputation

Reputational damage for schools is considered a real risk by parents across the three countries. In GR\_P, parents describe reputational risk in terms of loss of trust toward the school also from the point of view of the perception of school as a safe environment (*"There is lack of trust especially when the kid is feeling unsafe..."*). In HR\_P, reputational damage is connected to cases generating negative publicity for the school, and this

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causes a concern by parents that schools may conceal cases to protect their reputation. In ES\_P, parents emphasise distrust in the school institution and in its capacity to respond to an issue such as bullying. There is doubt as to the perceived seriousness of incidents by schools and as to whether schools act to protect the victims of bullying or their own reputation. As one parent notes, "*Schools sometimes prioritize reputation over transparency*", which may undermine the relationship of trust between the school and the children's families.

### **How bullying may affect the relationship between the school and the pupils' families**

Across the three countries, the feelings about the impact of bullying on school-families relationship are unanimously oriented towards loss of trust by families in the school as a safe environment for their children. In GR\_P, parents openly report lack of trust, somehow exacerbated by concerns - reported also elsewhere in this section - that also some teachers may perform bullying behaviours in terms of psychological abuse toward children or by create a negative atmosphere in the classroom. In HR\_P, bullying is also described as undermining trust - potentially leading to conflicts with families or even withdrawal of the child from school. In ES\_P, reported lack of transparency (concealment of incidents), lack of support to victims, and a general feeling that schools are failing to act despite being aware of specific cases of bullying are recognised as factors generating mistrust.

## **4.3 Actions that should be implemented**

### **Practices or interventions implemented by school to prevent or counteract bullying**

Across the three countries, described measures for preventing or contrasting bullying converge on training families and children through dedicated programmes, awareness-raising campaigns, or face-to-face initiatives. Equally, some doubts about teachers' capacity/willingness of getting involved is a common area of concern. In GR\_P, parents mention application of restorative justice measures, with the perpetrator apologising and rejoining the group, and training provided by the Ministry of Culture. Concern is expressed towards teacher's involvement in the issue, which appears to be seen as insufficient and scarcely effective. In HR\_P, more concrete preventive measures are cited, such as banning mobile phones at school, besides bilateral meetings between the school and the families, the involvement of Parent Councils, and offer of informative campaigns on bullying addressing children. However, lack of long-term strategies and systematic support by schools is emphasised. In ES\_P, parents cite the action of peer mediators, awareness campaigns, classroom interventions, and specific projects developed at local level, while also reporting lack of action to prevent bullying in schools from an early age and a feeling of lack of support by the educational community in dealing with this issue.

### **Quality of school communication when bullying incidents occur**

Perceptions on quality of school communication vary across the three countries. In GR\_P, parents report dissatisfaction with the quality of communication by teachers and headteachers, commenting that . On the contrary, in HR\_P most parents state they are satisfied with the current quality of school communication and note that that teacher-parent contacts have become more frequent. Parents in ES\_P note that issues with school communication are not related to communication itself, but rather to lack of action by the school to

address reported cases and achieve a solution, though some express satisfaction with the commitment of tutors in handling cases.

### **Initiatives to be taken to build a culture of respect at school**

Across the three countries, parents describe a mix of school-led actions and family-based foundations, with different examples in each context. In GR\_P, parents suggest that communication with families should be made more open and involve school-family common actions: "*Open days, discussion on bullying, dialogues, theater plays are all important in this direction*". In this respect, respondents agree on the importance of teacher training and supervision, and emphasise the role of the school psychologists in promoting a culture of respect. In HR\_P, ongoing initiatives are reported, such as educational workshops and initiatives for fostering empathy and teaching children about boundaries, emphasising that "*what matters more is how the person who hears something feels*." In ES\_P, there is agreement among parents on the importance of the family environment: "*It all starts in the family, creating an atmosphere of trust at home that allows for sincere open communication where problems can be shared*". The importance of early education in civic values, empathy, and respect, with curricular integration and workshops is also underlined, with emphasis on the need for civic education as a formal subject. Some parents express interest in innovative external projects conducted at local level.

### **Involvement of pupils, families, teachers and school staff in bullying prevention**

Across the three countries there is a common awareness of the importance of involvement of all the parties involved - school, families and children - in the prevention of bullying. In GR\_P, parents would welcome the involvement of pupils, families and teachers as "*a whole school approach*" to bullying prevention, though poor coordination and lack of trust between systems are pointed out as areas of concern. In HR\_P, parents express a desire to get involved through parent groups and preventive activities - though some views seem to differ and emphasise that children should be encouraged to "stand up for themselves" while also recognising the boundaries of others. In ES\_P, parents underline the need of fluid and continuous communication with families, with spaces and timeslots dedicated to this purpose, and emphasise that responsibility for bullying prevention should be shared among all actors: families must be aware, teachers must be trained, and children must be empowered to speak up.

### **Feasibility/usefulness of adopting a bullying prevention policy**

Across the three countries there appear to be mixed feelings about adopting a bullying prevention policy at school. While in GR\_P parents express a wish to intervene in developing a bullying prevention policy together with the school, emphasise that a general strategy for all is important, and that a policy reflecting the school's culture should be implemented at the school micro-level, In HR\_P, while not denying the usefulness of adopting a specific bullying prevention policy at school parents point out several obstacles that could undermine the effectiveness of such a policy - among these: inconsistent implementation, lack of resources, and resistance from some parents. In ES\_P, a more skeptical attitude is recorded among parents, who underline that there are many existing school policies that have little impact on school life, and express a concern that a bullying prevention policy might encounter feasibility issues unless bullying prevention becomes an actual priority for both schools and families.

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#### **2.1 Focus Groups with Teachers and Parents - Summary report**

## 5 Comparison between Parents' and Teachers' perceptions

### 5.1 Key convergences

Across all three countries, both P and T reports describe psychological and relational forms of bullying such as exclusion, ridicule and manipulation as central, and stress the negative consequences that these dynamics may have on classroom climate. Respondents also highlight the growing relevance of digital/cyberbullying and ascribe this to early and/or unsupervised access to devices and social media. Both groups point out the need for going beyond mere incident management and taking proactive measures to prevent bullying behaviours, and emphasise the importance of empathy, trust-building, mentoring/tutoring and a broader “culture of coexistence” within schools. Finally, there is alignment on the fact that effective prevention and response require resources and skills, including continuous training and professional support (for example, access to a school psychologist).

### 5.2 Main divergences

The reports show recurring differences in the emphasis placed on certain issues between the two groups:

- While T reports show a stronger focus on operational procedures, documentation and protocols, P reports place greater importance on the quality of the school’s response to bullying incidents.
- T reports emphasise organisational constraints and the pressure associated with family reactions, while P reports invoke a whole-school approach, and spaces for family participation.

### 5.3 Comparison by main dimension - summary table

The following synoptic table presents comparison between the T and P reports regarding the following main dimensions:

- Incidence / visibility
- Most frequent forms
- Reporting & early detection
- Cyberbullying
- Case handling / protocols
- School-family communication
- Prevention / culture
- Resources / supports
- School policy for bullying prevention

Dimension	Teachers (T) - summary	Parents (P) - summary
Incidence / visibility	Less present in lower grades (HR_T) Real issue (variable visibility) (ES_T)	Heterogeneous experiences and perceptions of minimisation (ES_P) Digital channel is central (HR_P) Incidents also involving some teachers (GR_P)
Most frequent forms	Psychological/relational (all) Differences by age/gender (HR_T)	Verbal/psycho-social and online (all)
Reporting & early detection	Fear and early detection challenges (all)	Evidence disappears (deleted messages), stigma, need for trust (HR_P, ES_P)
Cyberbullying	Outside school hours but impacts class climate (ES_T) Linked to early access to devices/internet (GR_T, HR_T)	Digital groups as channels; concern about restricting use potentially causing peer exclusion (HR_P, GR_P)
Case handling / protocols	Observation + documentation + protocol (ES_T) immediate intervention (HR_T) depends on leadership interest (GR_T)	Expectation of action/transparency, request for clearer policy (all)
School-family communication	Variable collaboration, conflict/pressure (all).	Request for dialogue and co-training, perceptions of insufficient action (GR_P, ES_P)
Prevention / culture of respect	Tutoring/mentoring, peer mediation, emotional education, inclusion (ES_T, GR_T)	Civics/coexistence curriculum, projects and community initiatives (ES_P, GR_P)
Resources / supports	Practical training, supervision, school psychologist (GR_T, HR_T) Need for school psychologist (HR_T) In GR also social workers (GR_T)	School psychologist, teacher training, institutional support; family as leverage (GR_P, ES_P)
School policy for bullying prevention	Broader framework that supports teacher interventions (GR_T) Legal/institutional boundaries and subordination to parents' consent (HR_T) OK but sometimes overly bureaucratic (ES_T)	Wish to intervene in developing a bullying prevention policy together with the school (GR_P) Useful but there are obstacles that may undermine effectiveness (HR_P) Little impact on school life unless prevention becomes an actual priority for school and family (ES_P)

Table 4. Comparison by main dimension - Summary table.

## 2.1 Focus Groups with Teachers and Parents - Summary report

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## 6 Annexes - Local Focus Group Reports

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### 2.1 Focus Groups with Teachers and Parents - Summary report

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## Bullying



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