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Scoping Review Report on Peer-Led Bullying Prevention Programmes differentiated for Children and Young People with SEN/D

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Project YAB-2021-1-ES01-KA220-SCH-000032457

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1. Glossary

CYP	Children and Young People
SEN/D	Special Education Needs and Disabilities
SLD	Specific Learning Difficulty
TD	Typical Development
WEA	Whole Education Approach
YAB	Young Ambassadors against Bullying

A note on terminology relating to bullying and roles in the bullying dynamic

The current narrative and research on bullying emphasises the importance of using language that does not contribute to the creation of an 'identity' relating to bullying behaviour e.g. bully. Recent resources also emphasise the importance of working with the by-stander role and ensuring that there are discussions and strategies for those, who find themselves in that role also. This report therefore uses the following language and includes the three categories of roles in the bullying dynamic:

- **Children and young people (CYP) engaged in bullying behaviour.** The term 'bully' and/or 'bullies' is not used.
- **Targets** of bullying behaviour. The term 'victim' is not used.
- **Bystanders**. Bystanders are students who witness bullying. They can be powerful influencers — how they react can either encourage or inhibit those who bully others. There are different types of bystanders a) followers (assistants) b) supporters (reinforcers) c) defenders - dislike the bullying d) outsiders - stay away, do not take sides with anyone or become actively involved, but allow the bullying to continue by their 'silent approval'.

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2. Executive Summary

This report is the result of the first phase of the Erasmus+ project YAB to develop bullying prevention resources for children and young people (CYP) with and without disabilities. The report firstly provides an overview of the YAB Erasmus+ Project and the context with regard to school based bullying and bullying with regard to CYP with disabilities. The approach to the scoping review process is then outlined; as are the main findings of the review. The report concludes with a set of recommendations and considerations for the development and design of the YAB project emerging from the scoping review.

Previous research has consistently shown that being involved in bullying as a target, as a child/young person displaying bullying behaviour or as a bystander at school can be associated with a number of youth mental health problems, including, psychosomatic complaints, anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation (Gibb, et al., 2011; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009). Issues of identity seem to continue to remain at the heart of much bullying behaviour. At-risk student populations for increased bullying and victimisation include students with disabilities.

There is currently little research in the area of bullying and CYP with disabilities and there are differing and various findings across those studies. There is even less literature available in the area of peer-led prevention programmes that are differentiated to meet the needs of those with disabilities. If this project is to meet its aim to provide innovative support to facilitate the agency and voices of young people with and without disabilities in the area of bullying prevention, differentiation that can be localised to different school contexts and different countries will need to be built into the design of this programme.

The roles of target, CYP involved in bullying behaviour and bystander should appear in the education material with the required differentiation cited above facilitated through the design.

Given that the prevalence rates are not hugely impacted by programmes at a prevention and/or intervention level (on average 10-15% across current research based programmes), YAB may be better placed to look at measuring self-efficacy of those that participate in the programme. This has had very positive results in the DCU FUSE programme.

Given the emphasis on CYP agency and voices it is imperative that schools and/or teachers are facilitated through the design of the programme to support consultation with CYP on the best communication mechanisms/methods in a way that YAB will be a meaningful co-created programme with the possibility for differentiation to include CYP with and without disabilities.

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3. Introduction

3.1 The YAB Erasmus+ Project

The YAB Project is an Erasmus+ funded project led by Spain with Italy, Croatia and Ireland as partners. The YAB Project aims to provide innovative support to facilitate the agency and voices of young people with and without disabilities in the area of bullying prevention. This is to be achieved through facilitating the development of anti-bullying campaign projects in schools. It is envisaged that an online platform will be developed to provide resources and support to educators working with young people. The online platform will tackle bullying/cyberbullying issues, contribute to the development of inclusive school cultures and social climate and aims to reduce marginalisation among the student population. In this project YAB will support young people with or without disabilities to become ambassadors against bullying in their schools and will provide specialist training for teachers working with them to promote equity, diversity and inclusion in schools.

There are two result areas in terms of outputs for this project. The first (R1) is the **YAB Resource Centre**. The YAB Resource Centre will be an interactive platform, which will be the main tool for the training of teachers and will facilitate the young people directly involved to work with their peers. It will also contain materials necessary for the development of the anti-bullying campaigns by the young people both with and without disabilities and be the tool for the parents and community engagement on the topics of bullying and cyberbullying. The second (R2) is the **Collection of Anti-Bullying Campaign Projects.** These projects will be developed by young ambassador teams for bullying prevention specifically in relation to young people with disabilities. These young ambassador teams will ensure that 20% of the team comprises young people with a disability. The projects will be part of a pilot action involving students in peer education activities and are a fundamental means to promoting awareness on the topics of bullying and cyber-bullying within the whole education community.

3.2 School based bullying – Phenomenon, definition and roles

In recent decades, there has been a significant development in the research investigating the phenomenon of bullying involving children and young people (CYP). Addressing issues which affect the well-being of CYP in school settings has become an increasing priority internationally, with a link being proposed between access safe and inclusive schooling and societal wellbeing and prosperity and by the United Nations in their recent report (O'Higgins-

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Norman et al., 2022). Indeed, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) mandates countries focusing on the management of issues such as bullying in school settings as a priority and ensure access to equitable and inclusive education. These principles are relevant to supporting access to safe settings for all CYP in the pupil populations with SDG 16 promoting the role of education in supporting the development of peaceful and inclusive societies. According to Olweus (2013 p. 770), "being bullied by peers represents a serious violation of the fundamental rights of the child or youth exposed" and management of this phenomenon is a priority for the provision of appropriate education.

Given the priority given to the study of bullying among CYP within both the research literature and international policy priorities, it is a concern that there remains disagreement regarding how bullying is defined and conceptualised (Cornu, Abduvahobov, Laoufi, Liu, & Séguy, 2022; O'Higgins-Norman et al, 2022). Traditionally, bullying has been heavily influenced by the definitions developed by Olweus (1993) whose definition comprised three criteria:

1) Intentionality (desire or goal of inflicting harm, intimidation, and/or humiliation),

2) Some repetitiveness, and most importantly,

3) A power imbalance between the individuals in a shared social environment (Olweus, 1993; 2013).

The particular form of the power differential is understood as being diverse and dependent on contextual factors, such as physical disparity in strength, social group status within a peer group, or economic factors, for example. Incidence of bullying can take place during direct (i.e., face-to-face) or indirect (i.e., not involving physical proximity or direct engagement in person) interactions. It can take a range of forms such as physical (e.g., punching, kicking), relational (i.e., actions meant to damage reputations or relationships), property damage (i.e., destruction or theft of personal property), and verbal (i.e., oral or written communication meant to harm). Incidences of bullying may also occur across a range of divergent contexts such as at school, in the community (but involving CYP who know each other from school), and online in the form of cyberbullying.

Recent literature has led to disagreement among researchers regarding aspects of this definition, however. For example, some have suggested interactions may be similar but may not meet the criteria to be categorised as bullying, with conflict between equally matched individuals across the salient factors of power being proposed as a "conflict between equals" (Elliot et al., 2010, p. 534) or interpersonal aggression rather than an episode of bullying. In addition, there has also been disagreement regarding the role repetition of incidences of interactions in order to meet the criteria of being considered bullying (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). These limitations in traditional definitions of bullying are amplified given the greater

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prevalence and focus on the phenomenon of cyberbullying which takes place via online platforms or media. The proliferation of video content and the ability to repeatedly share messages or video files among social groupings adds to the social complexity of the bullying phenomenon and how it is conceptualised.

UNESCO's scientific committee have recently attempted to revise the definitions of school based bullying towards a perspective they have identified as a whole-education approach (Cornu et al., 2022). This approach situates the school within the wider social context in which it exists, inclusive of the wider education community, within society more broadly and considers the technologies that support relationships in this broader conceptualisation. This approach takes a broader perspective regarding bullying and is heavily influenced by a social-ecological framework perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Espelage & Swearer, 2004). The definition they developed defines school bullying as in-person and online behaviour between students within a social network that causes physical, emotional or social harm to targeted students. It is characterized by an imbalance of power that is enabled or inhibited by the social and institutional norms and context of schools and the education system. School bullying implies an absence of effective responses and care towards the target by peers and adults (Cornu et al, 2022).

Given the social and transactional nature of bullying as a phenomenon, researchers had explored the differing roles of CYP who participate in or experience incidences of bullying (Olweus, 2013). This had traditionally been divided into two categories or roles i.e. bully and victim, with an additional category of participant being added more recently (Gumpel, 2008; Olweus, 2013; Yen, Ko, Liu, & Hu, 2015). In terms of more recent work on bullying prevention programmes the terms and roles of 'target', 'CYP engaging in bullying behaviour' and 'by-standers' are being used.

Bullying Roles

In developing bullying prevention programmes it is important to consider the language, terms and roles within the bullying dynamic. Programme design, development and implementation should speak to the characteristics of these roles. The terms 'bully' and 'victim' tend to label individuals whereas the term 'target' and 'those engaging in bullying behaviour' emphasises the behavioural elements and the possibility for change. Recent programmes have incorporated the role of by-standers as part of the school bullying prevention strategy e.g. FUSE, DCU. Teaching bystanders to respond appropriately (by discouraging, intervening in or reporting bullying) can be an effective way to limit and prevent bullying.

CYP engaged in bullying behaviour

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Students who bully others often do so to gain status and recognition from their peers. Their bullying behaviour is reinforced when they intimidate their targets and when the peer group colludes by not challenging the initiator or reporting the bullying to staff.

Bullying can be rewarding, increasing the initiator's social status while lowering the social status of their target. The culture of a school will strongly influence the extent to which this occurs.

Targets

Students of all ages can be at risk of being bullied (that is, being targets) for a whole host of reasons, including:

- differing from the majority culture of a school in terms of ethnicity, cultural or religious background, sexual orientation, gender identity, or socio-economic status; having a disability, special education needs or mental health issues
- being unassertive or withdrawn (for example, isolated students with low self-esteem)
- academic achievement (being perceived as a high or low achiever)
- having recently transitioned into a school (through natural progression through schools, changing to a new school because of behavioural issues at a previous school, or moving to the area from another city or country).

Bystanders

Bystanders are students who witness bullying. They can be powerful influencers — how they react can either encourage or inhibit those who bully others. There are different types of bystanders:

- followers (assistants) - do not initiate, but take an active role in the bullying behaviour
- supporters (reinforcers) - do not actively attack the target, but give positive feedback to the initiator of the bullying behaviour, providing an audience by laughing and making other encouraging gestures
- defenders - dislike the bullying and try to help the target by intervening, getting teacher support (using safe telling) or providing direct support to the target
- outsiders - stay away, do not take sides with anyone or become actively involved, but allow the bullying to continue by their 'silent approval'.

Bystanders can play a number of different roles:

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- helping students who are engaged in bullying behaviour and actively joining in
- encouraging or showing approval to the students who are engaging in bullying behaviour
- doing nothing or being passive
- defending or supporting the target (the student who is being bullied) by intervening, getting help or comforting them.

Bystanders who take no action or behave in ways that give silent approval (watching, nodding, turning a blind eye) encourage the bullying behaviour to continue. Teaching bystanders to respond appropriately (by discouraging, intervening in or reporting bullying) can be an effective way to limit and prevent bullying.

3.3 Evidence of prevalence for school-based bullying

There is an extensive existing literature exploring the prevalence of school-based bullying internationally, with a range of large-scale studies since 2001 exploring student-reported data on bullying. The consistent finding is that bullying remains a significant concern in schools and a threat to well-being and attainment among CYP internationally (Hatzenbuehler, et al., 2015; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Olweus, 1993; 2013). Research from the US indicates that 20-29% of school-aged CYP have involvement with bullying at least once per year in any of the three categories/roles previously outlined (either as a bully, victim, or bully-victim) (Marsh, 2018). The U.S. Department of Education (2018) found that the majority (66%) of CYP experiencing bullying reported that it happened once or twice during the school year, 19.3% were bullied monthly, 9.6% weekly, and 4.2% reported being bullied daily. In addition, the US based research findings suggest that prevalence rates, while peaking in middle school years, are generally declining over recent years (Marsh, 2018).

International data reported in a recent UNESCO report found that globally one in three children experience bullying at school (UNESCO, 2019). Nationally, recent data from Ireland reports that 17% of 9–17-year-olds reported experiencing bullying, either online or offline, in the past year (National Online Safety Advisory Board, 2021). 22% of CYP between the ages of 13–14-year-old were reported as experiencing bullying in the past year. A similar pattern was reported for cyberbullying among CYP in Ireland with 11% reporting experiencing cyberbullying in the past 12 months and 18% of 13–14- year-olds again reporting the highest levels (National Advisory Council, 2021). Data from the UK reports that 29% of teenagers report being bullied (Wolke et al., 2013). A more detailed exploration found geographic differences in rates reported across the UK, with 32% of CYP in England, 34% in Scotland, and 41% of 9–10-year-olds in Northern Ireland reporting being targeted by bullying (UNESCO,

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2019). Wider findings from across European indicate a prevalence of bullying across countries of 25% (UNESCO, 2019). Overall, the international literature clearly indicates that school-based bullying remains a widespread issue for policy across countries and a challenge in supporting safe and inclusive provision of education to CYP (UNESCO, 2019).

3.4 Bullying and CYP with disabilities

It is estimated that in excess of 5% of CYP aged from birth to 14 have a disability by The World Health Organization in its World Report on Disability (WHO, 2020). There has been an ongoing policy emphasis on including CYP with disabilities within mainstream school settings and supporting inclusive and approach practice across school practices (Buchner et al, 2021; NCSE, 2016). In addition, there is a large literature indicating that CYP with disabilities are more vulnerable across a range of power imbalances or risk factors contributing increased experiences of bullying (Álvarez-García et al., 2015). Rose & Espelage (2012) suggest that CYP with disabilities are twice as likely to experience peer victimization relative to their non-disabled peers while other studies have estimated that they are 2 to 4 times more likely to be bullied (Hartleyet al., 2015). In the US Blake et al. (2012) reported 24.5% of elementary, 34.1% of middle school, and 26.6% of high school of CYP with disabilities met the profile of bully-victims. There is an increasing awareness among the public and within policy development of the phenomenon of bullying and/or cyberbullying involving school-age children or young people (CYP: Carrington et al., 2017; Cross, Epstein et al. 2011; Cross, Monks et al. 2011; Murray-Harvey and Slee 2010). An outcome of this has been a greater focus and pressure on government policy makers and schools to or developing guidelines in the management of incidents of bullying (Carrington, et al., 2017).

A key feature of literature exploring school-based bullying involving CYP with disabilities is the divergent and contradictory findings across differing studies (Napolitano et al., 2010). While some research indicates that CYP with disabilities experience elevated levels of bullying victimization relative to rates among nondisabled peers, other studies found CYP with disabilities displayed higher levels of bullying perpetration or aggression than their nondisabled peers (Marsh, 2018). This variability in the literature may relate to a key limitation in much of the literature which often include CYP with disabilities together within the one category (Falla et al., 2021). In other words, the variability in research findings may relate to widely divergent disability characteristics across the different categories of disability. One recent systematic review noted that the inclusion criteria used by many studies in the literature were so broad as to allow the inclusion of very diverse samples of individuals within disability participant groups, which included differing age profiles from child to adult, and a wide range of disabilities with widely diverse profiles and characteristics (Carrington et al., 2017).

The disability literature clearly indicates that the profiles of different categories of disability diverge greatly and show widely different areas of strength or of support needs. As is clear

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from the bullying literature, the phenomenon of bullying is both complex and transactional, with multiple causal influences which depend on the individuals profile of strength or vulnerability across a range of domains (Carrington et al., 2017). Some researchers have suggested that CYP with more externalising behaviours are more likely to be targets or to also engage in bullying behaviour while those whose disability involves a more obvious intellectual or physical disability are more vulnerable to being targeted by peers (Farmer et al., 2015; O'Brennan et al., 2015). However, generalisations such as this are likely to be limited in their usefulness and the merging of disability categories within the literature remains a key limitation (Falla et al., 2021).

The existing literature suggests one category of CYP who experience particularly high levels of bully victimisation are Autistic students (Horgan et al., 2022: Cook et al., 2018; Humphrey & Lewis, 2008a; Saggers, 2015). For example, Carrington et al., (2017) found 90% of Autistic participants reported experience of regular bullying, echoing existing findings from Bancroft (2012) that reported 75% of school aged students experienced bullying in the UK, rising to 82% of secondary aged students. Indeed, Klin et al., 2000, (p.6) described autistic young people as "perfect victims" for bullying. Research from the UK found autistic students are more rejected and less popular than their non-autistic peers (Jones & Frederickson, 2010) and also than students with other forms of disability (Symes & Humphrey, 2010). Autistic students also report significantly lower levels of social support from parents, classmates, and friends (but not teachers) than other students (Humphrey & Symes, 2010), report fewer friends (Cairns & Cairns, 1994) and more limited social networks (Chamberlain et al, 2007). They are also among the most likely to be excluded from school (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007) or placed on reduced timetables than their non-autistic peers (AsIAm, 2019). Recent studies exploring the perspectives or experiences of autistic students attending mainstream schools reported that they reported physical abuse occurred with 'alarming regularity' (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008a), with the young people recalled being pushed, squashed behind a door, tackled and punched. Worryingly, many studies found that, while they were regularly the victims of bullying or were excluded by their peers, autistic students regularly chose not to report episodes of bullying or verbal harassment 'as long as they don't do anything physically harmful to me, there's no point' (Saggers, 2015, p.39).

While there may be commonality from the existing literature relevant to bullying involving autistic CYP, the profile of autism differs significantly from that of other forms of disability. It would be inadvisable to make generalisations across the spectrum of CYP with disabilities given these well-documented differences in strengths and support needs. This has obvious implications for interventions to support CYP with disabilities who are experiencing bullying in school settings.

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3.5 School-based bullying interventions

There is an extensive and international literature exploring approaches to manage school-based bullying and support those CYP who experience it (Hensums et al., 2022). The most common objective across the range of Anti-bullying interventions is the prevention and reduction of bullying behaviour. Commonly such interventions comprise multifactorial packages of intervention components and many take a whole school perspective or scope (Hensums et al., 2022). For example, some may focus on developing cognitive-emotional skills among bystanders and bullies to support greater emotion regulation and foster empathy for victims (e.g., Trip et al., 2015). Another approach that is common across other interventions focus on CYP who are victims of bullying is the development of social skills as well as the development of resilience to support them in managing the negative feelings which are often a consequence of bullying situations (e.g., DeRosier, 2004). However, there are a wide spectrum of factors targeted across interventions, which differ in focus or approach, such as addressing group norms, supporting positive social expectations or relationships across the school, or a more traditional focus on individual behaviours (e.g., Paluck et al., 2016).

Concerningly, the emerging evidence regarding the efficacy of interventions to address bullying in school settings is mixed. While there is literature exploring the impacts of the schools based bullying interventions, there are limitations in both the available literature and the evidence for efficacy in reducing bullying. Early studies based on Olweus designed bullying interventions suggested some interventions were effective in reducing bullying perpetration by approximately 20–23% and in reducing bullying victimization by approximately 17–20% (Farrington and Ttofi, 2009). However, the impact of such programmes has been found to differ across countries, with research in Norway reporting more positive outcomes relative to reported outcomes in other locations (Farrington and Ttofi 2009). More recent research from the US reported much lower evaluations of impact for school based programmes, with assessed outcomes ranging from a 0%-23% effectiveness rate (Marsh, 2018). A range of recent international meta-analyses also indicate anti-bullying interventions are moderately effective but show a diversity of findings across populations and settings (E.g. De Mooij et al. 2020; Gaffney et al. 2019). It is likely that the challenges defining bullying as a concept and differences in education systems, funding structures, and support systems may also impact assessing efficacy of bullying interventions in schools.

Overall, the contemporary research literature finds the evidence for the effectiveness of school-based anti-bullying interventions is strongest for cohorts of younger CYP who are most heavily victimized (Hensums et al., 2022). However, concern is also expressed regarding the quality of the evidence for such programmes for CYP with complex profiles (Falla et al., 2021) and emphasises the need for further research exploring how interventions could be adapted to meet the needs and strengths of specific subgroups of CYP (Hensums et al., 2022). A recent systematic review of research focused school-based bullying involving CYP with disabilities

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(Falla et al., 2021) found a worrying lack of research exploring the issue, which is of concern given the internationally increasing focus on mainstream education provision for such CYP (Black-Hawkins et al., 2016). Of the studies found, there were also significant methodological weaknesses reported within the studies found. For example, the sample sizes in the majority of studies were small and characterised by large variation across participants included within groups of CYP with disabilities (Falla et al., 2021). For example, participants varied widely in ages within the disabled CYP groups and widely different profiles of disability were grouped together, thus limiting the utility of the findings in effectively tailoring bullying interventions (Falla et al., 2021). The profile of strengths or areas of need related to bullying are likely to differ greatly across diagnostic categories of disability (Carrington et al., 2017; Farmer et al., 2015; O'Brennan et al., 2015; Symes & Humphrey, 2010).

Given the level of diversity in profiles and areas of strength or need among groups of CYP with disability, it is a priority to develop approaches to tailoring anti-bullying interventions to make them appropriate for such students. However, there is a lack of evidence regarding how anti-bullying interventions can be adapted or differentiated to support access or participation for such cohorts (Falla et al., 2021). Improving outcomes for this cohort of CYP has been shown to be often a complex or challenging process influenced by the local factors with a school or social setting (Parsons et al., 2009). As is the case in supporting educational inclusion and participation for CYP with disabilities within schools, any approach will rely on the individual characteristics and social dynamics with each group, class or school setting. This perspective foregrounds the importance of developing peer engagement, participation and support as well as facilitating agency on the part of CYP with disabilities themselves (Horgan et al., 2022; Flynn, 2017; Lundy 2007). The umbrella term of peer support describes a variety of approaches which can be defined as '..school programmes which train and use students themselves to help others learn and develop emotionally, socially or academically' (Houlston et al., 2009, p.328). This broad term has been used to include interventions comprising approaches such as mentoring, peer mediation programmes and "buddy systems/ friendship programmes. Mentoring in particular has led to improved outcomes such as enhanced social and communication skills and raising awareness of issues that affect emotional health, such as exam pressure and bullying (Cowie et al., 2002; Philip & Spratt, 2007). While there is evidence of such approaches being used within research exploring social inclusion for some populations of CYP with disabilities, such as autism (Bradley, 2016), there is a lack of such approaches being used specifically to address bullying or cyberbullying.

4. Scoping Review Process and Methods

4.1 Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

This review was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) (Tricco et al., 2018).

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Both quantitative and qualitative peer reviewed empirical articles and grey literature that met the following inclusion criteria were included in this review: (a) papers published in English; (b) published between 1996-2022; (c) assessed peer-led bullying interventions; (d) sampled school aged children between 11-19; (e) who had either a physical, sensory or mild intellectual disability or were neurodivergent. We excluded texts that did not use the term "bullying" but used terms such as "abuse" or "violence". Articles that examined bullying within sporting environments and/or community based clubs and environments were excluded. Reviews of the literature were also excluded from this review.

4.2 Search Strategy

The databases searched were Academic Search Complete; Education Research Complete; Educational Resources Information Complete (ERIC); PsycInfo; PubMed; SCOPUS and Web of Science. The search terms used were consistent across all databases and included terms describing bullying, children, adolescence, disability and intervention. Please see Table 1 for a breakdown of the search terms used.

Table 1

Search terms used across all databases

Topic	Variable of Interest		Age		Population of Interest		Variable of Interest
	Bully*	AND	Child* OR young people OR adolescent	AND	Disab*	AND	Interven*

Note. Asterisks were used to broaden the search with wildcards

4.3 Study Selection

The initial database search identified a total of 678 articles, from which 329 duplicates were removed. The titles and abstracts of the remaining 349 papers were then screened for eligibility using the systematic review software Covidence. Of which, 326 did not meet eligibility. The 23 remaining papers were included for full-text review when 16 of the papers were excluded for a range of reasons which are documented in the flow diagram; leaving seven papers for extraction. The results of the search and screening process have been presented below in a PRISMA-ScR flow diagram in Figure 1.

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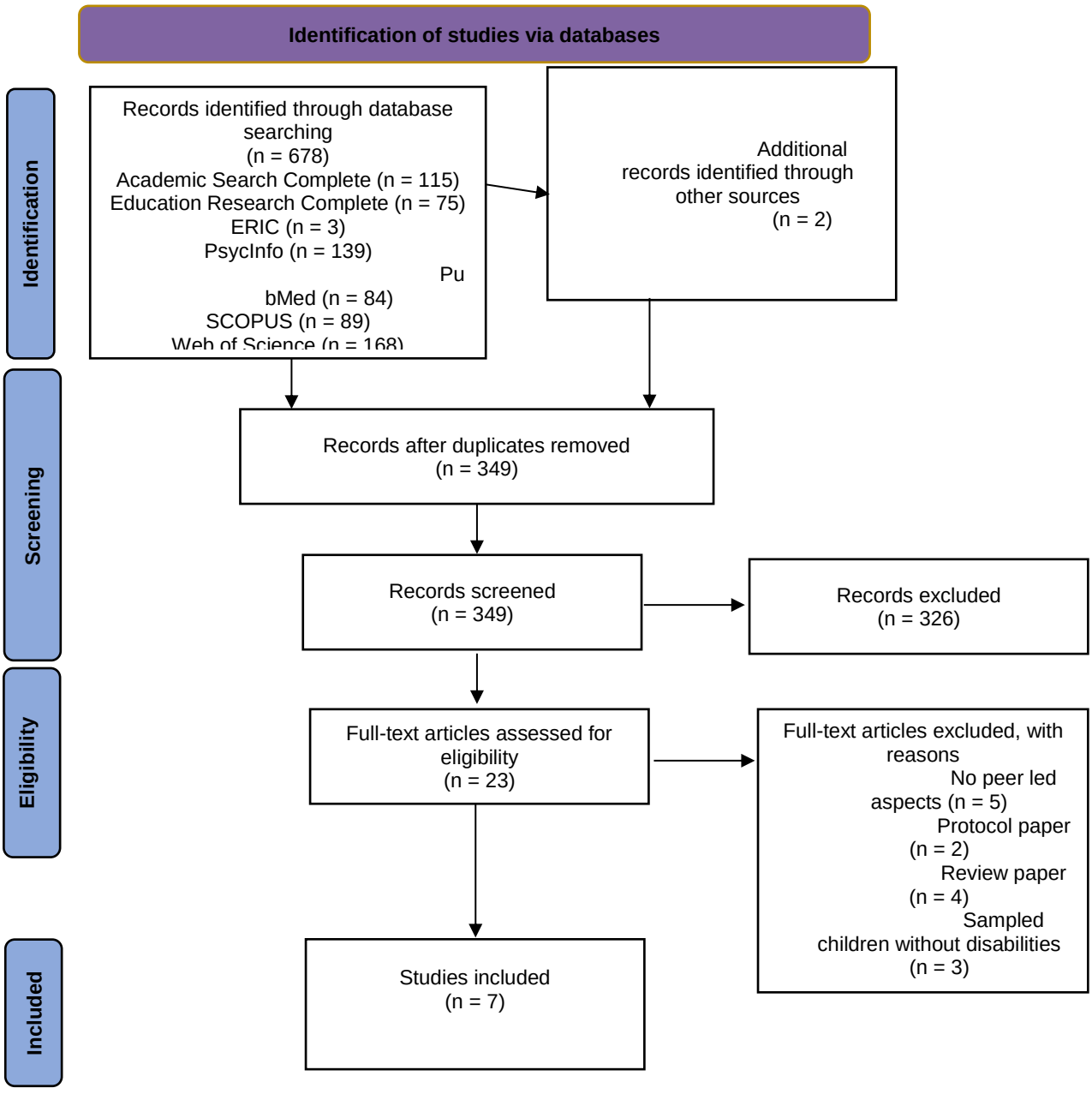

Figure 1. *PRISMA-ScR chart for the identification of article identification and selection*

4.4 Data Extraction and Synthesis

Data relating to: the object of the study; the sample size; the age of participants; the country of the study; the design of the study; the method of intervention implemented; the

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adaptation or differentiation for the disabled population; the peer-led aspects of the study and the main findings were extracted from the identified papers by authors N and É. The data extracted was confirmed for accuracy by author S, who synthesised the findings.

5. Scoping Review Findings

This scoping review was to review literature related to peer-led anti-bullying prevention and/intervention programmes with children and young people diagnosed with a disability. The categories of disability to be included were:

1. Physical Disabilities (without co-occurring ID diagnosis)
2. Sensory Disabilities
3. Neurodivergent (Autism, ADHD, Specific Learning Disability e.g. Dyslexia, Dispraxia, etc) https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/images/Neurodiversity.jpg
4. Mild Intellectual Disability

5.1 General Findings

The review returned no results when the specific nature of a disability was included and the scoping review team were required to broaden the search terms in order to access literature that related to bullying and disability as a first step. The scoping review process has outlined the numbers of studies initially accessed and how they were analysed to be included or excluded in the review. From the initial scoping exercise the following general findings can be identified:

Finding 5.1.1

The majority of the available literature does not include studies where disabilities are specifically categorised and bullying prevention is tailored/differentiated to the specific needs/requirements of those children and young people.

Finding 5.1.2

There is a resounding confirmation in the literature that children and young people with a SEN/D and/or specific diagnosis are at much increased risk of experiencing bullying than their TD peers.

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Finding 5.1.3

The focus of the literature is mainly on prevalence with a range of surveys being implemented across various jurisdictions to establish rates.

Finding 5.1.4

There is no consistent definition of bullying albeit that Olweus is sometimes referenced in relation to conceptualising bullying and the behaviours attached to its dynamic.

With regard to the literature that was included in the final stage of the review the following findings emerge:

5.2 Specific Findings for YAB Project Design

5.2.1 Absence of literature on peer-led bullying prevention programmes

- A significant finding for the purpose of this scoping review was that there was no study found addressing a peer-led anti-bullying programme specifically differentiated for young people with SEN/D.

5.2.2 Importance of differentiation for bullying prevention programmes for those with disabilities and the role of the teachers in co-creating resources that are context specific

- In order to benefit from any bullying prevention program or intervention for students with disabilities, accommodations or modifications to the programs are required. In designing bullying prevention programmes it may prove beneficial to analyse some of the key components of bullying prevention programs and the characteristics and special needs of students with disabilities to ensure that the programme is 'fit for purpose'. In many instances, there will be a need for accommodations or modifications, much like what is sometimes necessary for academic content and classroom instruction (Sipal, 2013).
- The need to adapt an anti-bullying programme with reference to the individual profile of particular children or young people with disabilities, school setting, or pupil population characteristic will mean planning for a diversity of approaches across schools and education systems. Teachers will be important factors in

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understanding their students, classes and schools, with a partnership approach that emphasises empowerment being advisable. The emphasis within the teacher's resources will be on developing capacity among participating teachers to work collaboratively with pupils in the development of engaging and appropriate anti-bullying programmes within their shared school settings.

- In the current range of policies, procedures and programmes available there is little evidence of programmes that meet the needs of children and young people with disabilities.
- A study in Australia (Guckert, 2014) has found that websites, blogs, chats and print media were perceived by young people to be the least effective means of educating students about bullying. This may suggest using such resources as a primary resource for these cohorts may be ineffective.
- All programmes related to bullying prevention are most effective when they are located as part of a wider Whole Education Approach (WEA) that is communicated effectively at student, school staff and parent level. What constitutes effective communication will differ according to the profiles of students involved and will need to be identified in collaboration with students and teachers on a school-by-school basis.

5.2.3 A focus in the available literature on Autistic children/young people

- Through this scoping review studies that did categorise specific diagnoses focused mainly on Autism with SLD used at times as part of control groups.

5.2.4 Experience of Autistic children and young people

- With regard to Autistic children and young people there are studies that identified they are able to understand bullying equally as well as TD peers. This understanding may not reflect the level of complexity required for Autistic students to understand bullying situations in real life contexts or to know how to effectively manage such situations.
- Given the differentiation in knowledge about Autism in different age cohorts in one study i.e. age 11 Vs age 16 there may be a necessity to create different programme materials as part of any programme development. Working collaboratively with teachers and young people will be advisable in this regard.

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- In a study examining the level of social support received and the frequency of bullying experienced by Autistic adolescents (n=40 Autistic pupils, n=40 pupils with dyslexia, and n=40 control group of pupils with no identified special educational needs) the analyses indicated that Autistic pupils experienced higher frequency of bullying. These pupils also had lower levels of social support from parents, classmates and friends compared to either pupils with dyslexia or those without SEN.
- Supportive social networks are a key protective factor for all students. Bullying prevention programmes would be most effective if they were part of a suite of programmes that included the development of social competence, friendship development in a way that promotes autistic and non-autistic connection e.g. Peer Network Intervention model in Sreckovic study (Sreckovic, Hume & Able, 2017)
- Young people felt able to intervene if they observed bullying, and the children and young people were in favour of educational supports, where needed. These findings bode well for the use of peer-mediated interventions that involve typically developing peers as 'facilitators' in the classroom (Zhang & Wheeler 2011). There is also evidence of Autistic young people gaining positive social support and reduced victimisation when acting as both peer mentors and mentees as part of peer-mediated initiatives in schools (Bradley, 2016).
- The development of peer support networks and peer mentoring relationships involving Autistic and non-autistic students has been shown to support social inclusion, build networks of support across the pupil cohort, and decrease incidence of reported bullying in schools. Results also showed increased disclosure of episodes of bullying by autistic CYP targets and reduced overall incidences of targeting of autistic pupils across the intervention. Levels of reported self-esteem were also increased across the duration of the intervention programme (Bradley, 2016).

Definition and Roles

- In cognisance of the ongoing work in agreeing a bullying definition, this iteration of the YAB project should clearly outline which definition of bullying the programme is being designed under.
- That this iteration of the YAB programme design should take account of the different roles inherent in the bullying dynamic i.e. those CYP that engage in bullying behaviour, the target(s) and the by-stander(s). The importance of including education materials on the role of 'bystanders' in line with current programme and resource development. There are examples of training materials on this through

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the DCU ABC FUSE programme. However, given the specific social competence attached to by-stander behaviour, differentiation would be required for some young people.

- The role of adults in the peer led programme development and implementation needs to be clear. Children and young people cited teachers as protective factors. Developing capacity within the programme work collaboratively with participating teachers and support flexibility of approach will be very important.

Cyberbullying

- Those with disabilities are significantly more likely to be victimised online (Guckert, 2014) with outcomes including poorer academic performance, lack of confidence, reduced self-esteem, low mood, anxiety and distress (Dellasega and Nixon, 2003; Hinduja and Patchin, 2013).
- The same limitations noted in the overall bullying literature regarding children and young people are also an issue in research exploring interventions for cyberbullying. Disability groups are broad, uncategorised, and show wider diversity of profiles and ages among children. Interventions are also not adapted to meet this diversity of profile across disability.
- Literature reflects the notion that both students and parents feel that there is a lack of communication between schools, parents and teachers when it comes to cyberbullying (Carrington et al., 2017).
- Parents and students do not feel they are taken seriously by schools and law enforcement when cyberbullying incidences are reported (Guckert, 2014).
- Students with disabilities report more awareness of the prevalence of cyberbullying than teachers and suggest strategies such as avoiding social media, deleting social media and talking to those involved in the bullying behaviour to mitigate the prevalence and effects of cyberbullying (Guckert, 2014)

Communication mechanisms

- The development of flexible and appropriate communication mechanisms across the education community will be of utmost importance in supporting access for students with disabilities, particularly given the Australian studies finding about media and its role in education about bullying.

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6. Recommendations and Considerations emerging from Scoping Review

- In cognisance of the ongoing work in the area of agreeing a bullying definition, DCU are proposing that the following definition be adopted by YAB in line with UNESCO's work and as a reflection of the social and dynamic elements of bullying as a phenomena:

Bullying is defined as face to face and/or online negative behaviour, by an individual or group against another person (or persons), which causes physical, emotional or social harm and which is repeated or could be repeated, over time.

- Discussion and agreement among YAB partners with regard to the terms to be used and that content will be developed in relation to each role. DCU recommends that the terms/roles Target, CYP engaged in bullying behaviour and By-stander(s) are used.
- This iteration of the YAB project will require differentiation for CYP as peer mentors and also potentially in terms of the programme being delivered to the wider school population including studentsd with SEN/D. The questions asked in the Sipal study (see Appendix 1) could be helpful here but would need to be considered within each country's context to establish contextual relevance and what level of supports schools/teachers would need to apply that. As part of the planning and developing of this iteration, the role of incentives both for those acting as peer mentors and those participating in the programme and the campaigns will be discussed and explored.

- A set of guidelines could be developed as to how schools in the different countries could adapt/differentiate peer mentor training and YAB content to ensure it can be effective with all of the school population including those with and without disabilities.

- Propose caution with regard to the effectiveness of media use in bullying prevention education considering the Australian study. Consultation with the children and young people with regard to their preferred method of communication and/or education materials is recommended. Further to this scoping review it is

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proposed that teacher support is built into the programme design so they can facilitate peer/group discussions of communication 'preferences/protocols' with CYP and support localised co-development of these with CYP.

- The importance of communication with regard to bullying prevention measures across the school community including parents to ensure that awareness is raised at all levels.

- With regard to measuring the effectiveness of this iteration of the YAB programme, the following needs to be considered:

    - The value in measuring prevalence pre and post programme delivery. Given that school population composition changes over time and both student and teacher efficacy will also change, it may not be the most effective focus for measurement and/or evaluation.
    - The use of pre and post school climate type surveys to identify changes at that level
    - The use of a self-efficacy instrument like the one recently developed by DCU ABC in relation to the FUSE programme
    - Whether specific inclusion indicators are to be set in the measurement or whether levels of awareness in this regard are to be included
    - Where will the focus of the measurement be? The literature would indicate that improved communication across the school community is required. This suggests that the programme should contain features for all of the school community and also build in mechanisms to identify if/how that is happening well and where it needs to be improved.
- Propose caution with regard to the effectiveness of media use in bullying prevention education considering the Australian study. Consultation with the children and young people with regard to their preferred method of communication and/or education materials is recommended. Further to this scoping review it is proposed that teacher support is built into the programme design so they can facilitate peer/group discussions of communication 'preferences/protocols' with CYP and support localised co-development of these with CYP.

- The importance of communication with regard to bullying prevention measures across the school community including parents to ensure that awareness is raised at all levels

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7. Conclusion

This scoping review has clearly identified the need for this iteration of the YAB project in terms of a differentiated bullying prevention and intervention programme that can effectively engage CYP with SEN/D and those without. There were seven key themes that emerged, which will be considered in the design of this iteration of the YAB project:

1. **Accommodations or modifications** will be necessary within bullying prevention and intervention strategies to support participation much like for educational inclusion.
2. The **significance of the Teacher role** even in a peer-led programme. The development of capacity for teachers to facilitate and support access and modify the YAB programme to promote CYP agency and inclusion in their particular school context is very important.
3. **Effective collaboration with CYP.** Developing capacity for working collaboratively with CYP within schools will be key to supporting access and engagement.
4. **A Whole Education Approach.** Development of awareness and understanding across all stakeholders and effective flexible communication across the school community.
5. Focus on **peer led or peer mediated** aspects to the YAB programme will be important. Supporting engagement and agency for CYP with disabilities will be key.
6. Clarity regarding **roles within the bullying dynamic** is important, particularly bystanders.
7. An **agreed definition of bullying** for the project is an important aspect of planning.

It is hoped that by ensuring that each of these thematic areas are effectively incorporated into the programme design of this iteration of the YAB project, that the school climate of those schools participating will be safe places for all those impacted by bullying dynamics and especially those children and young people with special education needs and/or disabilities.

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9. Appendix

Sample questions to support schools differentiate bullying prevention/intervention programmes for those with CYP with disabilities.

The practices listed below are representative of school-based bully prevention programs that have been addressed in the literature (Beale & Scott, 2001; Garrity, et al., 1997; Olweus, et al., 1999). The concerns related to each one raise serious questions about the credibility of utilizing these practices in school settings that include students with a wide range of disabilities (Sipal, 2013).

School-level components

1. Questionnaires are utilized to assess the nature and extent of bullying and raise awareness.
    - Does the questionnaire given to students match the reading comprehension level of students with disabilities participating in the survey?
    - Does the student with disabilities understand the definitions of terms such as bully, victim, bystander, and the meaning of various forms of bullying?
    - Does the lowering functioning student with disabilities understand that he/she is actually being bullied?
2. The principal shows good leadership skills in implementing the program.
    - Is the principal a strong advocate for students with disabilities or does he/she treat them as a "surplus population"?
3. Anonymous reporting procedures are established in schools.
    - Do lower functioning students with disabilities understand the concept or the mechanism of telling faculty or staff about bullying incidents?
4. All areas of the school territory are well supervised.
    - This implies that some areas of the school are better supervised than others. Students with disabilities may lack awareness of problem areas or "hot spots" that should be avoided.

Classroom-level components

1. Regular classroom meetings are held to discuss bullying.
    - Students with disabilities may not be capable of full participation in this type of meeting. Some form of prompting may be required to enhance student participation and enable them to benefit from the classroom meetings.
2. Students are involved in developing rules about bullying.

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- Students with disabilities may not be capable of full or meaningful participation in this type of activity. Some form of prompting may be required to enhance their partial participation.

3. The concept of bullying is integrated into the curriculum.

- Accommodations may be needed in order for higher functioning students with disabilities to master content related to bullying.
- Modifications may be needed in order for lower functioning students with disabilities to grasp developmentally appropriate curriculum content.

4. All school staff model positive interpersonal skills and cooperative learning and do not set a bad example by exhibiting dominating or authoritarian behavior with students.

- Students with disabilities may be particularly sensitive to negative interpersonal interactions with adult school personnel.

5. Adults respond swiftly and consistently and are sympathetic to students who need support.

- Some students with disabilities infrequently display teacher-pleasing behavior and find that they are not well received by teachers and other adult school personnel. This may lead some adults to be less sympathetic to the student that is a victim of bullying.

6. Adults encourage students to include all students in play and activities.

- Students with disabilities may be excluded from play and activities because of characteristics or behaviors related to their disability and the fact that they are primary targets of bullies.

7. Adults send clear messages that bullying is not tolerated.

- Does the student with disabilities get the message?
- Is it clear to students with limited comprehension and reasoning skills?

8. Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they suspect their child is involved in bullying.

- Do parents of students with disabilities see school administrators as allies?
- Is there a history of positive interaction or hostility between the parents and school officials?
- Is the child capable of, or likely to, communicate bullying concerns to his/her parents?

<u>Student-level components</u>

1. Victims are taught social skills (i.e., assertiveness skills) and problem-solving skills.

- Is the curriculum appropriate for the functioning level of students with disabilities?
- Will accommodations or modifications be made?

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2. A support system is established for students who are the targets of bullies.

- Is the student with disabilities capable of receiving the full benefit of the support system?
- Will school staff recognize unique needs that may influence the dynamics of staff/student interactions?

10. APPENDIX 2 – Bullying across Partner Countries:

A. Spain:

In 2011, the Spanish government passed the Law on the Rights and Freedoms of Students, which introduced a number of measures to combat bullying in schools. These measures include the creation of a special commission to supervise and monitor the implementation of measures to prevent and combat bullying and cyberbullying, the establishment of an ombudsman to receive complaints about bullying, and the creation of a national anti-bullying plan. In addition, the government has developed a number of educational campaigns and initiatives to raise awareness of the issue. For example, the Ministry of Education has launched a campaign called "No Bullying," which includes a website, a Facebook page, and an informational video. The website provides information on the issue of bullying, and offers advice to students and parents on how to address it. Finally, the government is also encouraging schools and families to work together to tackle the issue of bullying. Schools are encouraged to create school-wide policies to prevent and address bullying, and to involve parents in the process. School administrators are expected to take measures to prevent, detect, and respond to bullying and other forms of violence in the school environment.They are required to implement bullying prevention and intervention plans in order to create a safe, respectful school environment. Additionally, Spanish schools must provide adequate and specialized psychological and social support services to victims of bullying and their families. Furthermore, educational programs and activities aimed at raising awareness about the negative effects of bullying are regularly conducted in schools.

Schools are also encouraged to create anti-bullying programs, such as:

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1. ***Escuelas sin bullying (Schools Without Bullying***): This campaign, created by the Spanish Ministry of Education, encourages students to recognize, report, and stop bullying.

2. ***Escuelas sin violencia (Schools Without Violence):*** This campaign seeks to raise awareness of the effects of violence in schools and to promote a culture of respect and coexistence.

3. ***Proyecto Escuela Segura (Safe School Project***): This project works to promote respect, safety, and well-being in Spanish schools. It encourages students to report any bullying or violence they witness or experience

4. ***Programa de Escuela Segura (Safe School Program***): This program works to foster a culture of respect in Spanish schools. It provides resources and activities to help students learn about the effects of bullying and how to best respond to it.

5. "***No al Acoso Escolar" (No to School Bullying):*** This campaign was created by the Spanish Ministry of Education to raise awareness of the problem of bullying in Spanish schools.

6. "***Yo Te Escucho" (I Listen to You***): This campaign was created by the Spanish Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Youth to encourage students to talk about bullying and to provide support for those affected.

7. ***"Hazlo por los Niños" (Do It for the Kids):*** This campaign was launched by the Spanish Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Youth to promote a safe and respectful school environment.

8. ***"Ser Respetuoso" (Be Respectful)***: This campaign was created by the Spanish Ministry of Education to promote respect in the classroom and to reduce incidents of bullying.

9. "***Aprender a Respetar" (Learn to Respect):*** This campaign was launched by the Spanish Ministry of Education to educate children and young people on the importance of respect and to reduce bullying in schools.

Prevalence of Bullying in Spain:

According to a 2017 study, one in five Spanish students have experienced some form of bullying during their education. Similarly, 17% of students had been victims of teasing, insults or bullying in the last month. On the other hand, 15% of students had been excluded or marginalized by other students. Bullying also affects students differently depending on their age. For example, 25% of high school students had been victims of bullying in the last month,

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while 16% of elementary school students had also been victims. These data show that bullying is a reality in Spain's schools and must be addressed immediately.

As for cyberbullying, a 2018 study showed that 8.4% of Spanish students had been victims of cyberbullying in the last month. Similarly, 9.5% of students had received online threats and 5.5% had received offensive comments or insults through the network. These data show that cyberbullying is a growing problem in Spanish schools and that teachers and school principals should take measures to prevent and address these situations. Spain has achieved to have the cyberbullying rate of 16% percent, which is higher that the European rate. This percentage is being sustained by the fact that young children have acces to technology much more than in the last decade.

In 2019, a study conducted by the Spanish Association of Pediatrics revealed that 43% of Spanish adolescents have suffered some type of bullying, both in person and online. Of the total number of students surveyed, 15% claimed to have been a victim of online bullying at least once during the school year. In addition, the study found that 54% of Spanish students claimed to have witnessed some form of bullying in the past year, while 19% acknowledged having witnessed it online. Finally, 10% of respondents indicated having witnessed both types of bullying. The results of this study also showed that students aged 14 to 17 were more likely to be victims of online bullying (20.4%), followed by those aged 12 to 13 (17.9%) and those aged 18 to 19 (15.4%). The study also revealed that online bullying decreased in the last three years, but the researchers stressed that the problem is still serious.

The further statistics are demonstrating that 48% of Spanish schoolchildren between the ages of nine and 14 have suffered or suffer violence from a classmate. For more than half, harassment is psychological and 18% is also suffered by physical, with stab wounds (2%) and sexual assault (2.5%) included.

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B. Italy

In Italy, a new law dealing with the phenomenon of cyberbullying came into force on June 18, 2017. We are talking about Law No. 71 of May 29, 2017, Provisions for the protection of minors for the prevention and countering of the phenomenon of cyberbullying.

The law defines the role of different actors in the Italian school world (Ministry of Education, Regional School Office, School, Teaching staff) in promoting preventive, educational and re-educational activities. The set of these actions of attention, protection and education is aimed at all minors involved in episodes of cyberbullying, whether they are in the position of victims or perpetrators, and without distinction of age within educational institutions.

Specifically:

a. Each school must identify among the teachers a contact person with the task of coordinating initiatives to prevent and combat cyberbullying, also making use of the collaboration of the Police Forces and associations and youth centers in the area. The role of such a teacher is therefore central.

b. According to when already provided by Law 107, for the three-year period 2017-2019 it was promoted training of school personnel on the subject.

c. An active role of students and former students in peer education activities, in preventing and combating cyberbullying in schools will be promoted.

d. As part of an educational community, the School Headmaster who becomes aware of acts of cyberbullying will promptly inform the parents of the minors involved. School regulations and the educational co-responsibility pact (intended for all families) should be supplemented with references to cyberbullying conduct.

e. School institutions must promote, within the framework of their autonomy,

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education in the conscious use of the Internet and the rights and duties related to it. Regional school offices are called upon to promote projects developed in schools, as well as integrated actions on the territory to combat cyberbullying and education to legality.

Any child over the age of 14 (or his or her parents or those exercising responsibility for the child) who has been a victim of cyberbullying may submit a request to the data controller or manager of the website or social media for the obscuring, removal or blocking of content disseminated on the network. If the operator has not acted within 24, the data subject can make a similar request to the Data Protection Authority, which will remove the content within 48 hours.

What does the administrative measure consist of?

The warning procedure provided for stalking (Article 612-bis of the Criminal Code) has been extended to cyberbullying. In the case of conduct of insult (Art. 594 of the Criminal Code), defamation (Art. 595 of the Criminal Code), threatening (Art. 612 of the Criminal Code) and unlawful processing of personal data (Art. 167 of the Privacy Code) committed through the Internet by minors over the age of 14 against another minor, if there has been no complaint or complaint has not been filed, the procedure of admonition by the police commissioner is applicable (the police commissioner summons the minor, together with at least one parent or person exercising parental responsibility). The effects of the warning cease when the child reaches the age of majority. It would have been desirable to avoid the application of the cautioning procedure to minors and instead promote the empowerment of perpetrators of bullying and cyberbullying through the use of procedures that provide for their listening and participation.

What is the role of territorial services?

Territorial services, with the help of associations and other entities that pursue the purposes of the law, promote personalized projects to support victims of cyberbullying and to re-educate, including through the exercise of restorative or socially useful activities, juvenile

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perpetrators of cyberbullying.

Prevalence data of Bullying and Cyberbullying in Italy:

In Italy, the data on the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying for the 2020/2021 school year, appear to be on the rise compared to previous years: according to Ministry of Education note no. 2673 dated 11/17/21 (Data monitoring the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying in Italian schools), 22.3 percent of male and female students in secondary schools have been bullied by peers (19.4 percent occasionally and 2.9 percent systematically); 18.2 percent have actively taken part in bullying a classmate or companion ; 8.4 percent have experienced cyberbullying; 7 percent have actively taken part in cyberbullying. Bullying and cyberbullying cannot be underestimated: the violence suffered (online or offline) has debilitating repercussions on the victim, which can lead to dropping out of school, identified as a place of discomfort, and carries very serious consequences such as leading to self-harm or even suicide.

According to data collected in 2020 by Terre des Hommes together with ScuolaZoo as part of the InDifesa Observatory, 6 out of 10 adolescents say they do not feel safe online. It is girls who are most afraid, especially on social media and dating apps, 61.36 percent of them confirm this. Among the biggest risks both boys and girls place cyberbullying in first place (66.34%), followed by the most frightening for boys is the loss of their privacy (49.32%) Revenge porn (41.63%) the risk of solicitation by malicious people (39.20%) stalking (36.56%) and online harassment (33.78%).

Not only that, these phenomena are coupled with a low level of control by parental figures resulting in greater exposure to risks that are often not perceived and avoided. Sixty-three percent of respondents ("La dieta Cyber dei nostri figli" reserach by the European University of Rome), explore the web alone, in their room or around the house with a laptop. The perception of an unstable relationship with parents, is an important risk factor for bullying and **cyberbullying** phenomena: adolescents who perceive their parents as distant, tend to be more involved in episodes of violence.

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Dati Osservatorio InDifesa 2020 https://networkindifesa.terredeshommes.it/osservatorio-indifesa/
"La dieta cyber dei nostri figli" Università Europea di Roma

https://www.savethechildren.it/blog-notizie/la-legge-contro-il-fenomeno-del-cyberbullismo-5-punti

C. Croatia:

Current definition of bullying in Croatia: *"Bullying among children means one or more children continually and deliberately harassing, attacking or harming another child unable to defend itself".*

Pursuant to the *Protocol on the Procedure in Case of Bullying among Children and Youth*, bullying among children and youth represents any deliberate physically or emotionally abusive behavior aimed towards children and youth by their peers in order to cause harm, irrelevant of where it happens. It can vary in type, severity, intensity and time period, involves repetition of the same pattern and reflects an imbalance in power (stronger person bullying a weaker one or a group bullying an individual).

Types of bullying among children

Deliberate physical attack of any kind (for example, hitting someone, pushing them, throwing things at them, slapping them, pulling their hair, locking them somewhere, attacking them with various objects, spitting on them, etc., irrespective of whether the attacked child was injured)

Psychological and emotional abuse caused by repeated or continual negative actions of one child or several children. These negative actions include: gossiping about someone, calling them names, ridiculing them, intimidating them, mocking them, deliberately neglecting them

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and excluding them from the group, spreading rumours about them, taking their possessions or money, destroying or damaging their possessions, treating them in a degrading manner, ordering them or requiring obedience or otherwise putting the child in a submissive position, as well as any other behaviour towards a child or young person (which include sexual harassment and abuse) which is deliberately causing the child physical or emotional pain or humiliating them, whether in direct communication or on social media and via electronic communication.

School's role in preventing bullying

The school is responsible for the bullying occurring in the school and in its vicinity. The principal, teachers and expert associates are obliged to prevent and stop any form of violence in school and, if necessary, cooperate with a social welfare center and the police.

It is important that the school ensures there is a "safe" place where those who feel as victims can take shelter, that it leads by example (i.e. with the behavior of school employees) and provides a model of non-violent and positive behavior and respect for students, and that it adequately supervises those places for which students claim could be used to attack or intimidate someone.

Pursuant to Art. 132 of the Family Act (OG No 103/15, 98/19), everyone is obliged to report infringement of a child's personal and property rights to a social welfare center. In particular, infringement of personal rights means: physical or psychological abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or negligence, abuse or exploitation of a child.

Parents and other adults can report bullying at a police station, social welfare center or education institution, which are all required to act on the received report of bullying and cooperate with each other.

In case of bullying among children, professional help or counseling is provided both to the victim and the bully, and can be provided by expert associates in the school or expert employees of a social welfare center. Social welfare centers are required to investigate the family circumstances of the bully and impose or propose imposition of family legal measures

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prescribed by the Family Act. Moreover, children and parents may be granted the right to the service of counseling and assistance provided by a social welfare center or other social service providers.

Action plan for parents

Parents often make the mistake of going into denial because they do not wish to believe that their child could be an outcast and they feel ashamed. They are unaware of how to deal with their children when they find that they have been the objects of bullying. Read on further to know some of the steps we have to take when we find out if a child is a victim:

- **Identify the indicators of bullying**

Figuring out that there is a problem can be difficult unless your child comes home with bruises or a black eye. The child's personality will send up red flags when bullying occurs. A lack of interest in favorite activities, changes in eating and sleeping patterns, depression and deviance from usual routine are all signs of bullying. If you suspect that your child is being bullied, it is best to talk to them first and explain that there is no harm in admitting it.

- **Contacting the school**

Contact the school administrators and address the situation with them. Involvement of teachers and principals is necessary. If a bully is victimizing your child, there is a possibility that there are other victims as well. Become your child's advocate and empower them to stand on their own. Before long, they will stop being bullied. Bullying is a very grave and serious business and more and more schools have established a policy of a zero tolerance approach to this act. However, this does not mean that it has stopped happening.

Data regarding prevalence of Bullying and Cyberbullying in Croatia?

In addition, 14% children belonging to high school think of suicide and approximately 7% actually attempt it every year. The number of student deaths by suicide is rising day by day as the bullying epidemic continues to spread. Gays and lesbians are more likely to be the

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target of bullying and the number of bullying episodes and the consequences are absolutely staggering. It is gradually impacting the youth.

Previously, episodes of bullying were not as widespread and were reported to the right authorities by the audience watching it. However, conditions are deteriorating rapidly because not only the victims themselves but also the onlookers are unwilling to speak up against the act as they are fearful of being the next target. Child bullying is considerably more damaging although adult bullying also has its effects.

It has been estimated by research that the bullying epidemic has worsened even more over time due to the increased diversity of beliefs and cultures. The fear of being bullied has pushed around 160,000 students into staying at home instead of attending school. As a matter of fact, bullying has also paved the way for the concept of homeschooling.

D. Ireland

The Department of Education in Ireland has commissioned a range of initiates and research informed policies to address bullying in schools in recent decades. A national anti-bullying forum was held in 2012 with an Action Plan on Bullying being commissioned and published in 2013. The laid out a range of Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools in Ireland. The 2013 Action Plan on Bullying set out twelve key actions to support schools in preventing and addressing bullying among pupils. The twelve key actions contained in the Action Plan aimed to support schools and teachers, provide a framework for teacher education regarding bullying, fund research and raise awareness regarding bullying in schools The initiative aimed to ensure that the differing range or forms of bullying in schools were also addressed coherently across the country. Unfortunately, a number of the actions specified in the 2013 action plan have yet to be implemented.

In 2022 the *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* published by the Irish Government in order to update the national approach to addressing bullying in Ireland. This action plan aligns with the four key areas of the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2019). It

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also adopts the UNESCO's Whole Education Approach perspective regarding school-based bullying (UNESCO, 2020). The approach is grounded in national and international research and was also informed with reference to a broad national consultation and engagement with the education community and wider stakeholder groups in Irish society. The perspective adopted highlights the complex and intricate nature of bullying and its impacts.

The *Cineáltas Action Plan on Bullying* is rooted in the following four key principles:

- **Prevention**: Through the generation of empathy and the provision of training which provides a foundation for knowledge, respect, equality and inclusion
- **Support**: Tangible and targeted supports based on a continuum of needs which provide a framework for school communities to work together
- **Oversight**: Visible leadership creates positive environments for children and young people and all members of our school community
- **Community**: Building inclusive school communities that are connected to society, and that support and nurture positive relationships and partnerships

Prevalence rates:

A recent review of all Irish studies exploring prevalence and forms of Bullying found that 22.4% of primary students and 11.8% of post-primary students have experienced some form of school bullying (Foody, Samara & O'Higgins Norman, 2017). Another government study reported that 17% of 9-17 year old Irish pupils reported had experienced either online or in-person Bullying in the past year. This increased to 22% for 13-14 year old pupils reporting experiencing bulling in the past year, with age group also reporting the highest rates of Cyberbullying. The same study report 11% of pupils indicated they had had experienced cyberbullying in the past 12 months (National Advisory Council for Online Safety (NACOS), 2021).

Data from across a range of studies also show differences in experiences and differences in forms of bullying across different cohorts of young people. The NACOS study (2021) suggests that girls are more likely to be bullied and to experience online safety issues. Other studies

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suggest girls are also more likely than boys to experience sexual victimisation online, with perpetrator also likely to be someone their own age (Foody et al.,2020). Data shows that also that gifted students (Laffan et al.,2019), students with special educational needs (Feijóo et al., 2020) and LJBTQ+ students (Earnshaw et al., 2017) are more likely to be targets of school bullying (Laffan et al., 2019). Both Irish and international research shows that physical appearance is the most common reason for being bullied, with race, nationality and skin colour as the second most common reason.

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