

Title and acronym: Interactive Infographics to Combat Bullying in School [Sticks'n'Stones]

Project type: Erasmus+ KA2 Project, Strategic Partnership for School Education

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Promoter /Coordinator: Rizika Internetu a Komunikacnich Technologii Z.S. - Czech Republic

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Total expenditure (grant) for the University of Pitești: 21.936 Euro

Local coordinator for the University of Pitești: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Eng. Dumitru CHIRLESAN

Summary:

“Sticks and Stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me”. We are all familiar with this phrase. It is a common retort that parents and guardians would teach to children to prepare them for the school yard, where they may experience verbal bullying. The

phrase means that while physical injury could have a lasting impact; insults, name-calling and saying

unpleasant things would not affect the child's emotions, confidence or sense of self-worth. Today, we know that this is no longer true. While children are still threatened and victimized by the 'sticks and stones' style of physical bullying; these 'names' that they are called do indeed cause hurt and have a lasting impact on their emotional and mental well-being and development. Name-calling is particularly damaging to young children, because it attempts to 'define' them, creating a negative self-image in their own minds, especially during these formative years of childhood when they are emotionally vulnerable. Repeatedly being called derogatory names can chip away at your self-esteem and sense of self-worth.

Anyone who has ever been bullied in school can recall the symptoms – the anxiety, the sick-feeling in your stomach, the desperate need to find a reason not to go to school today; the emotional strain of feeling confused and ashamed of being the one who was picked on; and the over-whelming sense of relief when the school day ended, or the summer holidays beckoned, and you got a reprieve. These days however, home is not the safe haven that it once was for victims of bullying. With the penetration of social media into every facet of our lives came the dawn of a new day for school bullies, and the invention of cyberbullying. Through instant messaging and social networking, cyberbullies now have 24-hour access to their victims; only cyberbullies can be anonymous and relentless.

Cyberbullying is no longer an emerging threat to school pupils; it is a reality for many school children across the world. The anonymity that the perpetrators of cyberbullying can enjoy online is what makes this a 'faceless evil', and difficult for children and parents to tackle without the support of the school community. While parents and teachers tell children not to talk to strangers online and make them aware of 'stranger-danger', the real threats posed to them by cyberbullies could be far closer to home. A study published by the American Sociological Association in 2016, found that youth cyberbullying is dramatically more likely to occur between current or former friends than between students who were never friends; and that girls are twice as likely as boys to victims of cyberbullying.

Bullying among children is a significant public health concern that affects school communities globally. According to the last Ipsos International Study, 44.7% of parents with children aged 6-10; and 56.4% of parents with children aged 11-13 reported that their children were victims of some form of bullying; 82.8% of these bullying events occurred in school; with 19.2% also occurring online through social media. This study found that one-fifth of all bullying occurs through social media; with a further 11% occurring through online game platforms. Research also shows that bullying can start among children as young as 3, when they begin to interact with other children their age in pre-school. Indirect bullying – where children pair off and exclude others – is common at this age, and most common in young girls; with boys engaging in more physical bullying activities from the age of 7 or 8 (Haber, 2015). However, most bullying interventions only occur when children enter primary school. It is therefore necessary to educate parents about bullying, so that they can intervene from an early age and support their children to overcome these behaviours. Parents also have a key role to play in developing the resilience of their children, to be able to cope with instances of bullying.

Today, most anti-bullying interventions are predominantly school-based, however research tells us that for an anti-bullying strategy to be effective, a 'whole-school approach' is required. It is for this reason that Sticks'n'Stones will develop a 'whole-school' programme for primary schools to empower pupils, teachers, school leaders and parents to tackle bullying and create healthy and safe school communities. This 'whole-school' model will include interactive pedagogic resources to be used in the classroom with children aged 8-12 years; CPD modules for primary teachers and leaders to complete and targeted digital resources and workshops for parents. With this approach, the project team believes that the Sticks'n'Stones project can have an impact on reducing the incidence of bullying in the primary schools where the project will be piloted.

Objectives:

The project aims to:

- Build a whole school programme that will engage primary school leaders and teachers, pupils and parents in detecting and combating bullying of various forms, through targeted educational materials;
- Train teachers so that they can learn more about what they can do to tackle instances of bullying in their schools;
- make parents aware of the dangers and threats that their children face from cyberbullies online;
- Educate parents about the platforms that young children are engaging on, and the controls and structures that are available through these platforms, which they can apply to protect their children when they are online;
- support the 'whole-school approach' to combatting bullying;
- Implement the programme in at least 2 schools per country;
- Disseminate the model widely, and ensure its flexibility and adaptability for different contexts, securing its long-term sustainability;
- Host a series of National Dissemination Workshops at the end of the academic year in all partner countries so that the Sticks'n'Stones resources can be reviewed by other school communities and integrated into their academic calendars for the subsequent year.

Outcomes:

- IO1 - Toolkit of Interactive Infographic Resources to Combat Bullying
- IO2 - Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Training Programme for Primary Teachers
- IO3 - Sticks'n'Stones Digital Resources for Parents
- IO4 - Sticks'n'Stones MOOC for Teachers and Parents

Partnership:

1. Rizika Internetu a Komunikacnich Technologii Z. S. – Czech Republic (Coordinator)
2. 1st Primary School of Rafina - Greece
3. Universitatea din Pitesti - Romania
4. Spectrum Research Centre CLG – Ireland
5. Centre for Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology LTD - CARDET - Cyprus
6. Academia Postal 3 Vigo S.L. - Spain
7. Hauptstadtfallee 239 V V Ug (Skills Elevation FHB) - Germany

Website of the project: <https://sticksnstones.eu/en/>

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