

EQUALITY IN THE CLASSROOM : EQUALITY BODIES AND GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

The Equinet Report "Equality in the Classroom" aims to help equality bodies and other institutions to better understand the issues of gender-based discrimination in education.

FOREWORD

"School books and teaching material do not only have the power to determine a young girl's occupational path in the future. Gendered images and narratives diminishing the role of girls and women can fuel gender stereotypes at an early age, which can lead to gender-based violence, harassment and sexist language even in educational settings"

Věra Jourová, European Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality



LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The definitions and provisions of all relevant international treaties are unanimous on the right to education free of discrimination, including discrimination based on sex. At the European level, several documents (including the Istanbul Convention and the EU equal treatment Directives) focus on discrimination-free education. In some EU Member States, national legislation on education also includes gender equality provisions.



MANDATE OF EQUALITY BODIES

Many equality bodies have a mandate to handle cases of discrimination in the school setting. Some equality bodies have carried out investigations and issued studies and recommendations on discriminatory school materials. Complaints received on gender and education pertain to different situations, such as girls in school being offered stereotypical and discriminatory advice on careers.



BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

There is a need for clearer and more gender sensitive definitions in work on bullying in schools. Equality bodies can play an important role in tackling bullying and sexual harassment in their respective countries. This includes:

- cooperating with schools to train teachers & help develop effective reporting mechanisms;
- raising awareness, including data collection;
- and providing schools with guidelines and policies addressing sexual harassment.



PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

The wealth of good practices shared by equality bodies in promoting equality in this report cover a range of activities. This includes:

- supporting schools in making equality plans and gender mainstreaming;
- ensuring school curricula in general, and school books specifically, are gender sensitive; and
- working with and training teachers.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for equality bodies to address gender-based discrimination in schools and promote equality include:

- active monitoring of the content of school curricula;
- providing training, guidance materials and conducting awareness raising campaigns;
- taking an intersectional approach to gender equality;
- and close cooperation with Children's Ombuds.