



# **Initial Consultations with Teenagers on Cyber Violence against Women and Girls**

**Analysis of Local Target Group Perspectives**



UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

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**WP2 – Analysis of local target group perspectives**

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**Tartu Women's Shelter**

Violence is not the way out.  
There is a way out of violence.



International Child  
Development Initiatives



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## Executive Summary

This report summarises the findings of the initial consultations on Cyber Violence against Women and Girls (Cyber VAWG). Initial consultations were carried out via 11 focus groups in the CYBERSAFE project with 80 teenagers from four partner countries. Initial consultations revealed that the majority of teenagers have already heard of or faced cyber violence, either directed towards them or towards their peers. Consultations identified a strong sense of victim-blaming attitude among teenagers. The consultations give valuable insight to the different underlying attitudes between male and female teenagers towards Cyber VAWG, behavioral causes, and triggers of violence. The results of initial consultations provide useful input for CYBERSAFE's educational prevention program.

## Key findings

- Teenagers trust people they meet online
- They are aware they should be careful when meeting new people online
- They agree it is important to talk to someone if cyber violence happens (friends, family)
- They are aware of cyber violence, although not all forms of cyber violence are recognized as violent
- Perpetrators are seen as weak, hiding behind the computer, because it gives them the anonymity
- Girls are more often victims of cyber violence than boys
- Girls are often victimized because of their looks
- Often cases of cyber violence against girls is sharing intimate photos without consent

- Partner violence on line is often mentioned among teenagers (male controlling female)
- Teenagers often see perpetrators as victims (they are weak and alone, they are victims of violent behavior)
- Teenagers agree cyber violence happens more often to girls
- There is a well-established pattern of victim-blaming behavior;
- There are many gender stereotypes among teenagers which seem to be very rooted (girls are weak, boys are strong)

The needs identified are:

- It is important to talk about stereotypes
- It is important to emphasize the victim should never be blamed for (cyber)violence
- It is important they learn to recognize cyber violence
- Teenagers suggested the following topics to be included in a serious game:
  - Sexting
  - Online harassment and stalking
  - Stereotypes about boys and girls
  - Pressures put on boys and girls
  - Body image and peer pressure.

## 1. Introduction

The CYBERSAFE project aims to create an evidence-based, attitude-changing educational prevention program for teenagers regarding Cyber Gender Violence Against Women and Girls (Cyber VAWG), applicable to all EU countries. Developing the comprehensive prevention model required an in-depth understanding of the state of Cyber VAWG among targeted teenagers. CYBERSAFE partners carried out initial consultations (IC) to identify the experiences, behavioral patterns, and causes that influence Cyber VAWG among teenagers. The consultations with the key target group were vital to defining the framework of Cyber VAWG applied in the project.

These ICs had three main goals:

- Identifying knowledge and needs of Cyber VAWG among teenagers;
- Identifying the behavioral issues that trigger Cyber VAWG among teenagers;
- Gaining feedback on serious games concepts.

The feedback collected at the ICs is vital to identifying the framework for VAWG and providing input for developing the educational prevention program.

The results of the ICs enable partners to set objectives for the serious online game and define the intervention to be applied within the project.

## 2. Methodology

In May 2019, CYBERSAFE partner organizations AziendaSpecialeRetesalute (Retesalute, IT), Women's Support and Information Centre (WSIC, EE), Northern Ireland Rape Crisis Association (NEXUS NI, UK), and the Union of Women Associations of Heraklion Prefecture (UWAH, GR) conducted 11 focus groups with 80 teenagers, respectively, in four partner countries - Italy, Estonia, UK Northern Ireland, and Greece.

The process of developing the methodology for the ICs started during CYBERSAFE project's kick-off meeting. It was decided that to implement the consultations, CYBERSAFE would use the focus group (FG) tool to implement the ICs and collect data. The University of Tartu (UT) led the task to guide the partners to implement the ICs with teenagers. The UT team developed the guidelines and questionnaire to be used while conducting the FGs and collecting the information. The instructions included:

- Guiding questions to carry out the ICs;
- A reporting template to convey the results of the respective consultations.

The guiding questionnaire addressed the critical elements of the Cyber VAWG framework with regards to providing sufficient input to the educational prevention program. It consisted of three parts addressing: teenagers' knowledge of Cyber VAWG; behavioral causes and triggers of Cyber VAWG; and potential online solutions to change the behavior of the leading target group. The case exercises were included in the guiding questions to encourage an interactive process. The second part was the report template, used to document the discussion.

To better support Moderators, the instructions included background materials collected by the University of Ljubljana. Moderators were asked to fully familiarise themselves with the issue before carrying out the discussions.

### 2.1 Selected Setting and Participants

All of the FGs were conducted in high schools, with the logic that the targeted age groups were easily accessible in this particular setting.

The Cyber VAWG framework developers predefined the age categories, and participants were targeted based on the selected age group of 13-16 years old. As results showed, partner organisations managed to maintain the envisioned age balance as well as the gender representation (See section 3).

According to instructions, partners were advised to conduct three sets of FGs with the target audience separately: one set with only boys, another with only girls, and one mixed group of both boys and girls. The reason behind this was to gain a comparative perspective of different gender groups on the question of Cyber VAWG. The detected differences are discussed in section 5.

The Cyber VAWG framework developers predefined the time limitation, and the average duration of each FG was about 1 hour.

## 2.2 Moderators of Focus Groups

Moderators of the FGs were selected from experts of the respective partner organisations. In the later stages of the CYBERSAFE project, partner organisation experts will lead the educational interventions and pilot programs. Moderators were trained at the first mutual learning workshop under the CYBERSAFE project, and it was essential to maintain these same experts to conduct the ICs and pilots.

## 2.3 Consent

Informed-consent procedures were explained at the beginning of each FG. Procedures included explaining why the FGs were taking place, what was going to be done with the information/recordings, the process and the value of their participation, and that the participants were not there to be judged or evaluated. Participants were informed that the participation was voluntary and, when applicable, were informed in advance that moderators were making audio recordings.

## 2.4 Limitations of the Initial Consultations.

The FGs have several limitations. As mentioned above, the content of the case studies was decided upfront when developing the methodology. We assume that these case options





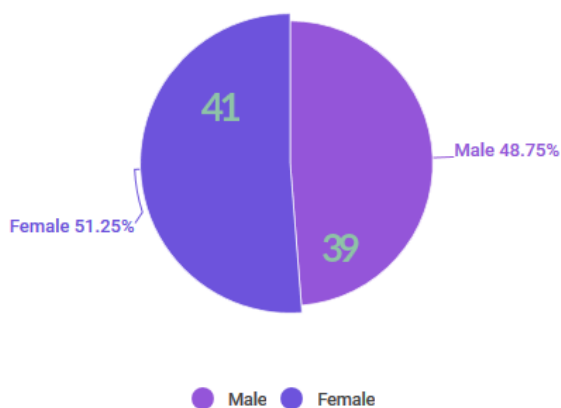
defined the content of the discussion at the FGs. However, at the same time, FGs identified additional aspects of VAWG other than those outlined in the cases. Another limitation we faced was the timeframe of the FGs. One hour was considered the most realistic duration for the FGs, but the FGs showed that additional time was taken in order to have more in-depth discussions.



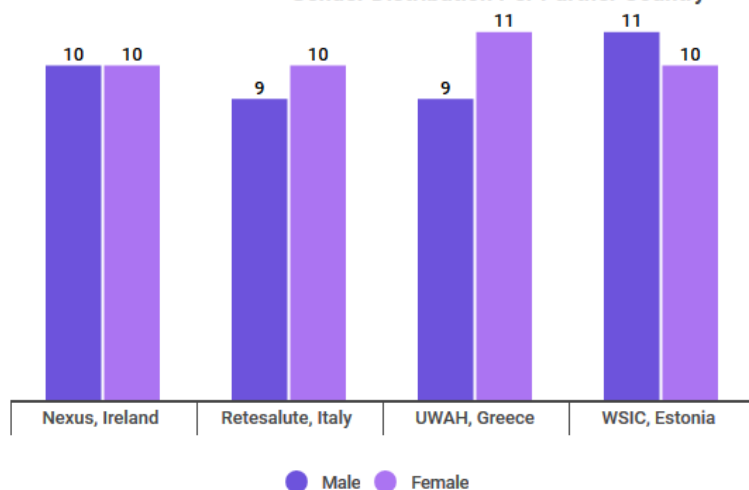
### 3. Participants Demographics

The following demographics reflect the -reported information for the 80 participants in the 11FGs<sup>1</sup>.

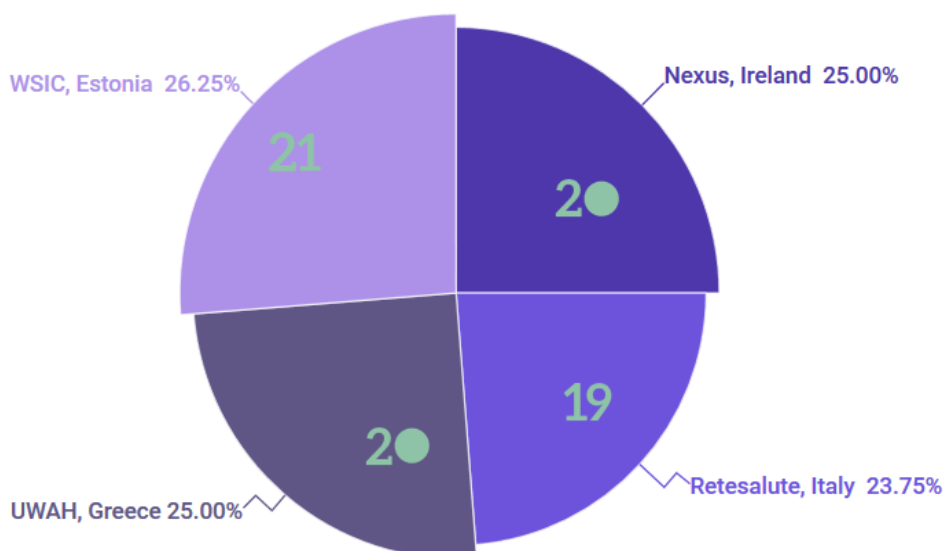
Gender Distribution



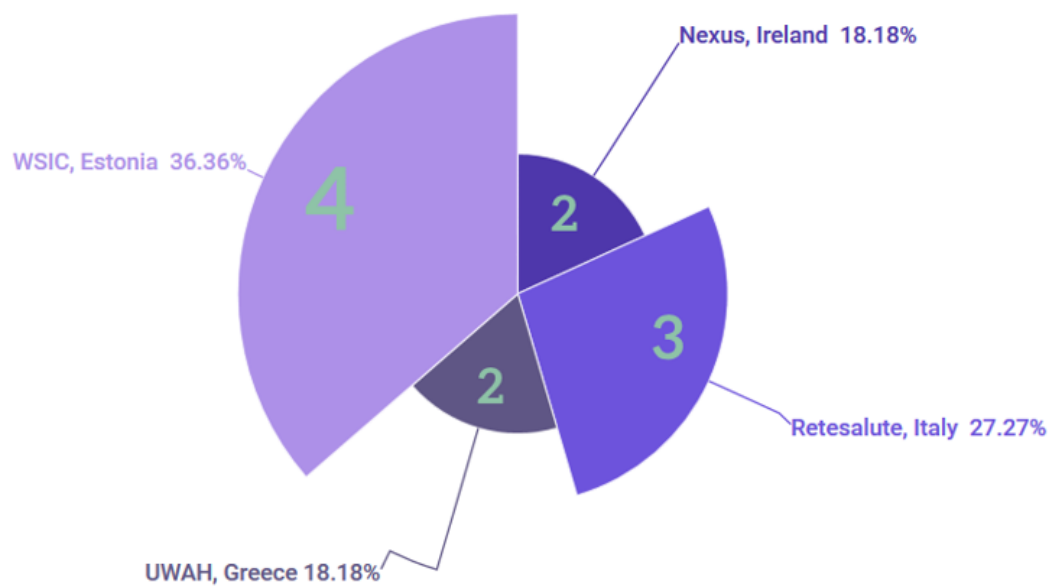
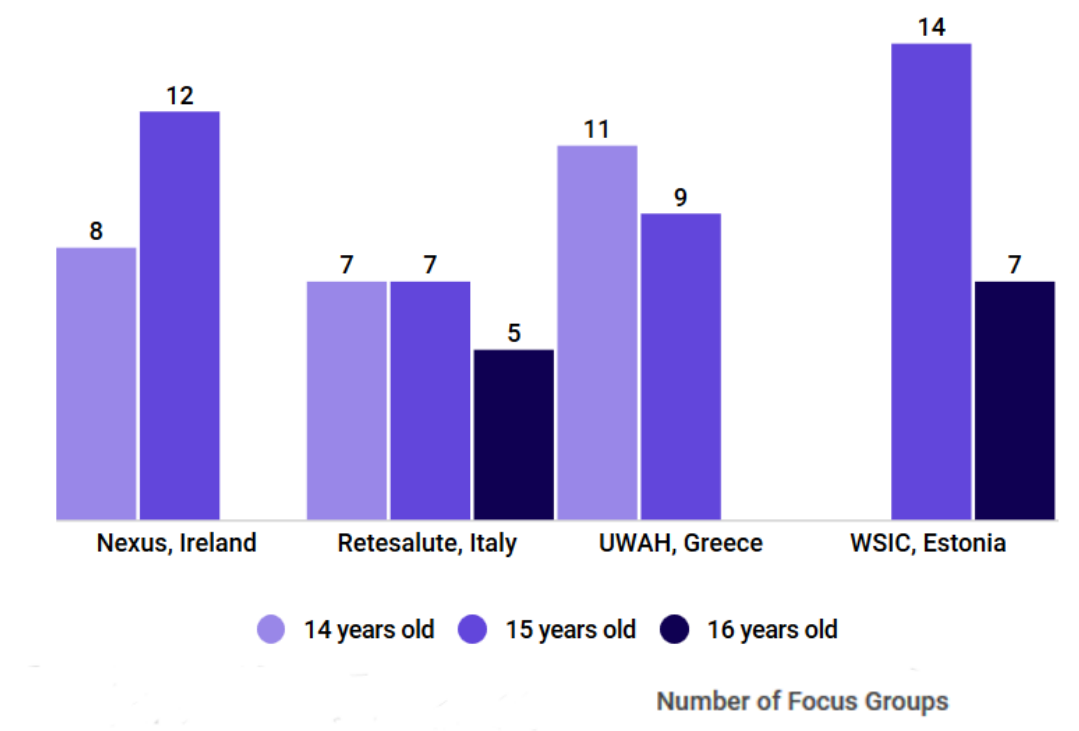
Gender Distribution Per Partner Country



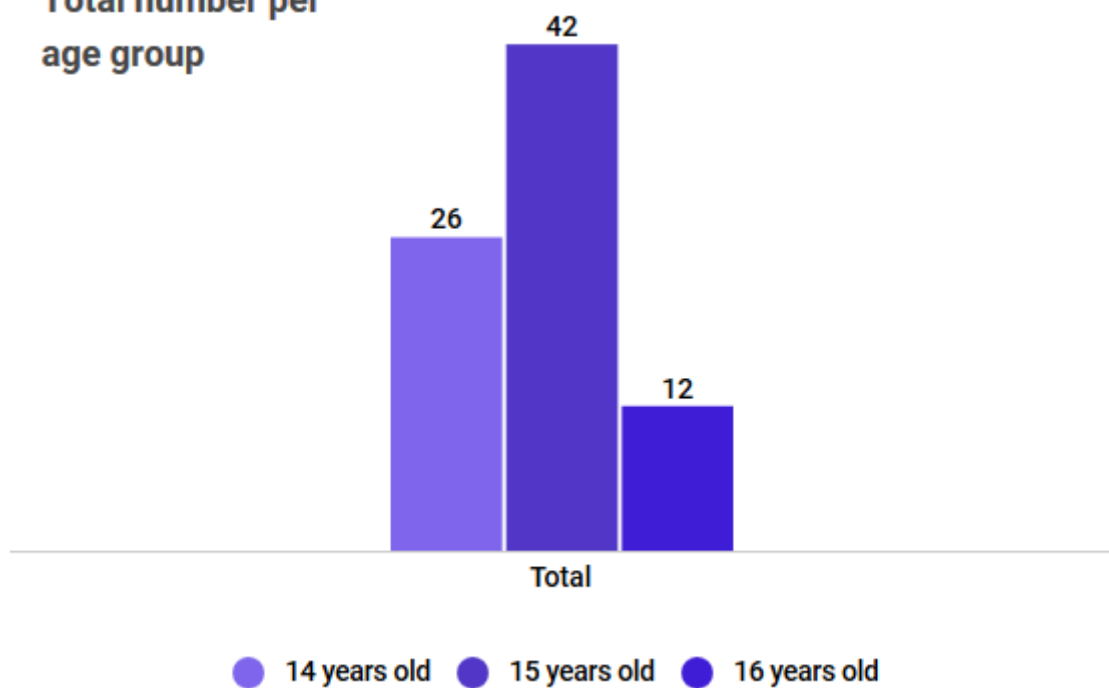
Number of Participants



<sup>1</sup>To see the interactive figures, please visit the following link  
<https://infogram.com/1pr9dr35gw17j2ig7pg3qjymzqamzrkny0e?live>



**Total number per  
age group**



#### 4. Dynamics of Initial Consultations

The interaction and dynamics in the FGs showed that students were initially quiet and hesitant to speak and it was challenging to get some of them to engage in the conversation. However, in the end, everyone ended up contributing to the discussion. The dynamic was respectful, students took the FGs seriously, and they were thoughtful in their responses.

Overall, the students were able to share their thoughts in a comfortable, respectful way, and there were no disagreements.

Some of the moderators asked participants to write down any thoughts they had about the FG. Feedback showed that the FG discussions helped participants to better understand violence both online and offline, and to clarify the consensus on what is acceptable in online space and talk to someone. Participants suggested that it would be more effective to conduct FGs with more teenagers.

The comparative perspectives of female and male participants were identified, and these details are discussed in section 5.

In General, FG's male participants, the students tended to be more eager to participate and happy to share their ideas and opinions. In the first FG with male participants, everybody took the floor in turn, and the other participants were ready to listen and reinforce what others said. There appeared to be no critical attitude at all. In some FGs, boys had difficulty expressing their opinions and making suggestions for the exercise. For this reason, the moderators suggested various phrases on the subject, encouraging participants to think about them and discuss them collectively. After the first few minutes, the boys started expressing their own opinions and sharing their personal experiences. The exercise was reason to approach the theoretical context of gender violence and relationships developed on the Internet. During the male-only FG, moderators also initiated discussions on the reaction they would have if someone were bullying them or abusing them (psychologically, verbally, emotionally) through the Internet.



In the all-female FG, we noticed that it was harder to generate discussion -not all participants spoke equally, even though there seemed to be a general attitude of openness and listening. Participants expressed that they would like to understand more about possible steps to take action against online violence, what to do, and how to respond to someone who shares private messages in the public online space. They were more interested in knowing more about the ways to protect oneself from people and profiles that contact them on social networks, especially through Instagram. Participants shared some of their experiences in the end and discussed with the group how they addressed or would address incidents. The group was very protective of each other, and they were ready to stand up for their friends when having a discussion. As a general note, female participants wanted to receive more information about partner organizations' work in general.

In the mixed group, two of the females did not speak at all. The general attitude of the group was to listen, but often a subgroup of females commented, criticising what the others had just said, and often there were comments, jokes, laughter, and teasing. That might have affected the atmosphere in the FG.



## 5. The Results of Focus Groups

### a. Awareness of CYBER VAWG Among Teenagers

To initiate group discussion, moderators used icebreakers. The icebreakers aimed to better understand participants' general awareness of cyber violence among teenagers. The icebreaker exercise was used to initiate the discussion.

In some of the FGs, the exercise showed that teenagers generally trust online information and people they meet online. Some of them mentioned that they usually follow online persons on social media accounts who they do not know in real life. Participants came up with some conclusions regarding online behaviors, such as one should not trust someone they meet online before they share intimate content. They expressed that it is prevalent for a person to behave differently online than in real life, as it is easier to "hide behind a screen." If this online acquaintance is their boyfriend/girlfriend, they should know them very well and trust them.

Participants agreed that there is barely any separation between online and real life in today's world and they understand how online violence should be seen as seriously as physical violence. Girls firmly expressed that they would never hurt someone online to make her/him feel bad or scared. In their opinion, discussing something that happened online with a friend or family member is very important, and victims of cyber violence should never have to go through the experience alone. Participants felt that it always helps to talk to someone and ask for their help. In the Greek FGs, the majority of girls said that they feel comfortable discussing such problems with their mothers, fathers, or friends.

FGs also covered the use of social media among teenagers.

There was a slightly different behavioral pattern identified between the male and female groups. The female group explained how they use social media -in particular, they look for funny photos and videos and feeds with some "do-it-yourself lessons." Female participants were more likely to publish stories and, like the males, look for school friends or mutual acquaintances to gather information. Girls discussed the privacy issue when online and/or using social media. Some of them have a public profile, while others have their profiles set to

private to protect themselves from "false profiles", and they often select their target audience when they publish stories. However, males generally use social networks like Instagram to share photos, YouTube for videos, and WhatsApp to chat with friends. Instagram is often used to kill time by the males. Some of the boys never publish pictures, but they generally watch friends' feeds and stories or look for profiles of unknown people or mutual acquaintances. They rarely chat on Instagram, but they sometimes use Instagram as a tool to meet new people.

The majority of students in all of the FGs expressed that they have heard of cyber violence. However, their understanding of cyber violence lacked the gendered aspect that can pertain to online violence.

In FGs lead by NEXUS, participants described cyber violence as including online harassment, threats, blackmail, catfishing, identity fraud, bullying, sharing naked images without permission, abusive comments while online gaming and using racial slurs or hate speech, online stalking, threats of violence, and doxing.

**Participants mentioned that sharing sexual or suggestive images was common among teenagers, but they did not always see this as a form of cyber violence. Students in both groups expressed that Cyber Violence is not only a direct threat to a potential victim, but also, doing things without another person's consent is a form of cyber violence.**

There were some differences identified in terms of awareness of cyber violence in the male, female, and mixed groups. The male participants associated cyber violence with repeated actions against someone who is attacked with harmful consequences, to the extent of a suicide attempt. The males were aware of the issue of online violence, and they knew that in the event of any trouble online, they could report the other user and communicate with the Electronic Crime Prosecution and the Police.

In Italian female groups, participants referred to a project on cyber-bullying they participated in at school, during which the class had to gather information on what cyber-bullying is, the ways it can occur, the dangers, the Italian law on cyber-bullying (2017), and the fact that it mainly happens at school during the school hours. Female group participants





were aware of what online violence is, as well as online violence against women and girls. They could identify that there was a problem with intimate partners controlling the messages or social media profiles of their partners, but they did not understand that this is connected to cyber violence and intimate partner violence. Also, they agreed that cyber violence is a topic of direct interest and impacts their lives.

Female participants outlined that cyber violence online is when someone:

- Threatens or says/shares something of a sexual nature that a person wants to hear/see;
- Shares intimate content without permission;
- Controls a boyfriend's/girlfriend's messenger, social media posts, etc;
- Hacks the account of someone else and posts or shares something of sexual nature.

In the mixed group, participants referred to the belief that perpetrators of cyber-violence are mostly insecure people, feeling secure behind the screen. In all groups, students defined cyber-violence as sharing photos or sensitive material without the consent of the other person. They also linked cyber-violence to the use of false profiles, used mainly to insult people. Both female and mixed groups mentioned that bullies target the perceived weakest individuals, and usually use the Internet because they are "cowards." The mixed group, in particular, described the online perpetrator as someone who is only capable of superficial insult and the potentially damaging impacts of cyber-bullying, perpetrated via the web, as more psychological than physical.

They all knew of such cases having happened, although most of them stated that nothing severe has happened to themselves.

#### b. Cyber VAWG experiences

In the FGs, students discussed overhearing racial slurs and another types of abusive language while gaming online. They talked about abuse they had seen against celebrities based on their physical appearances, or pressure put on girls to look a certain way, through aggressive



or belittling comments on Instagram. One student mentioned a friend who had intimate pictures of herself shared without her permission. We discussed possible consequences of this, such as the impact on a person's mental health, including the possibility of inflicting self-harm or turning to suicide, and possibility of being listed as a sex offender. Students talked about friends who had been targeted by strangers on online gaming platforms such as Fortnite and encouraged to share personal information such as their real names, ages, and locations. One student had a friend who was asked for sexual pictures on Snapchat but refused to send them. Students talked about the social pressure to be always present online and to act as though life is perfect even if they are struggling.

One of the participants referred to an episode in which he experienced cyber violence. At the beginning of the school year, he (an FG participant) had a video call with a friend who took a screenshot of him and used it to make "funny" memes, which made the individual very angry. He felt betrayed, stupid, and angry because the other person was supposed to be a friend. He did not want to report this occurrence to adults because "they exaggerate," but he told a teacher without saying who the friend was, yet in the end, nothing happened. Some of the boy's other friends knew about this but tried to minimise the severity of this issue during the discussion.

Participants shared a case of a boy who had left the camera turned on when a girl was in the bathroom without her knowing. However, he did not share the video. After listening to the episodes, everybody seemed to be willing to talk about other experiences. They told another story about a boy who sent a photo of his genitals to a girl, who in turn sent the photo to the whole town to make fun of him.

One of the participants received intimate photos of a girl, who then shared them with her boyfriend, who consequently shared them with his friends. At first, he thought that this girl was a fool but then having made friends with her, he realised how badly hurt she was.

The majority of FG participants mentioned that they heard lots of stories at school, i.e. episodes in which intimate photos were shared with the whole school. Another case was of a girl who sent intimate photos of herself to a boy. The photos were spread throughout the

school, and the girl was ostracised by her friends. However, she would always appear smiling and carried on without worrying about the voices turning on her.

Female participants knew of cases of online partner violence - mainly instances of individuals controlling what their intimate partner shares or posts on social media. They were also familiar with and have experienced cases of different forms of violence through online sources (even from the phone, i.e., receiving sexual phone calls from persons they did not know).

In the male group, no one had an apparent experience of cyber violence -they only responded hypothetically to questions that were raised in the discussion. They claimed that if something similar happened to them, they would block the person who disturbs them online; would delete the discussion and ignore the person; report him/her and talk to their parents, a friend, or the police. One of the participants told us that someone had used his photos to create a fake profile. He and his friends reported the incident, and as a result, the profile was closed down and there was no further issue.

Participants mentioned the phrase "what happens in school, stays in school" – meaning that the violence in school among teenagers usually stays in the school and students typically find it difficult to talk about it outside of this environment. During the discussion, they did not say that they have sought help themselves, but suggested different coping and reporting options for hypothetical scenarios.

### c. Behavioural Causes and Triggers for Cyber VAWG

Participants discussed the characteristics of perpetrators' behavior and tried to come up with possible causes of cyber violence.

Students think that often saying things online is more easier, and it makes people feel better about themselves to bring others down. In their opinion, most perpetrators have the feeling of being far enough from the victim not to be responsible for any potential consequences. This attitude was backed up by the discussion carried out by NEXUS and UWAH.

There is a high degree of perpetrator victimisation - seeing the abuser as weak and isolated. Students mentioned that those perpetrating offensive behaviors may be going through a different type of violence themselves, and want to make other people feel bad so they are not alone. In their opinion, bullies are just scared and need to be treated with sympathy because they are looking for attention. Others disagreed, saying that bullies should not be sympathised with, because their behavior is wrong and can hurt others. In some FGs, perpetrators are seen as very selfish and having feelings they cannot control. FG participants addressed the idea of perpetrators wanting to control someone (intimate partner mainly) and the desire to attract attention as a motive of cyber violence.

Cyber violence takes place to make fun of someone, out of anger or sadness, to exact revenge, and it was expressed that whomever shares content with or helps the bully is not a true friend to the person targeted by this type of violence.

There was an idea that there are some different motives for committing cyber violence among female and male perpetrators — a difference related to gender. According to the discussions, female perpetrators mostly commit cyber violence due to envy, while males commit it for revenge or due to a disagreement, and that because boys are less mature than the girls, they do things without thinking.

Students expressed that they believed cyber-violence happens to both girls and boys, but the stories they hear are mainly about girls, and that is likely because girls experience online abuse more often than boys. There was an idea expressed at the FGs that the media pushes news stories about female victims, so they are seen as more victimised than boys. In the majority of discussions, however, students agreed that females tend to be victims of cyber violence more frequently. Some of the male participants believe that it is difficult to be offended/ insulted online, and if one does so, **they can handle it quickly because they are boys. However, they think that anyone who offends other people is weak and trying to appear stronger to others.**

**The discussion showed that there was a high degree of victim-blaming.** All of the discussions showed that the students emphasised that girls are more frequent victims. FG

participants hypothesized that female minors usually send more photos to get noticed, girls are more emotionally fragile, and they may resort to this type of behavior if they do not feel loved enough. Additionally, girls tend to show off more, and girls are more sensitive than boys, so they take abuse more seriously. Although one male participant stated that girls are theoretically weaker, the female participants in the group did not agree and criticised the idea. For the girls, envy among girls is part of the problem, because they tend to show their bodies to attract the attention of the most popular boys in the school.

Males, instead, tend not to post photos out of fear of receiving criticism. One of the prevailing narratives in the FGs was that the **boys experience the same levels of violence but can brush it off more easily.**

*"...the girls are weaker and more sentimental; this is why they risk more."*

Another established perception of cyber violence against male minors is that they feel like they must project toughness and masculinity, and should not talk about their feelings or the negative experiences they have had online because it does not fit stereotypes of what is masculine. For example, in terms of uploading online photos, the case will be different with boys than with girls. Students discussed that it is not the same for a boy and a girl to have their pictures uploaded online because everyone will misunderstand a girl and blame her for being responsible for sending a provocative photo, but for a boy, it is an achievement, and he is considered more acceptable of doing so.

They also said that there is pressure on boys to behave in specific ways – such as making sexist jokes or slut-shaming girls who have had multiple partners or dress revealingly. In the FGs held by NEXUS, students agreed that, while both boys and girls experience online abuse, girls are more likely to receive comments insulting their looks, as well as threats of sexual violence.

According to the discussion, we can assume that there is a general tendency, even shared by girls, to blame the female gender for experiencing cyber violence, as they are considered the "weaker sex."

It is very clear that even with young generation gender stereotypes are very strong. Gender stereotypes can be very dangerous, as they represent generalized and simplistic characteristics, abilities, and interests defined solely on the basis of gender. They create an unrealistic and unjust idea of men and women (e.g. women are gentle, emotional, kind, sensitive, caring, etc., while men are strong, courageous, dominant, influential, reasonable, etc.).

#### d. Discussions of Cyber VAWG Cases

FG moderators used case studies to better understand the attitudes and perceptions of participants. The following conclusions are a summary of the discussions for each example.

Moderators presented two cases, which were then discussed with the participants.

First case:

A girl and boy (both 14 years old) who know each other from school fall in love and start a relationship. After a while, the girl shares an intimate picture of herself with the boy because she likes and trusts him. However, after a few months, the girl decides to end the relationship because she has fallen in love with someone else. The boy is angry with her, and as a form of revenge meant to shame her, he shares the images with some friends. They laugh and make fun of the girl, and one of the friends posts the image on social media, where it is spread, and the entire school knows about it.

Second case:

A girl (14) gets a nice message from a boy (16) on social media. They start chatting, and over the next few weeks, they start to get to know each other better. The girl likes him - he is good looking in the pictures on his social media account, and he says nice things to her and takes the time to show interest in her. She starts sharing details about her life and problems at home with him. After a while, the conversations become more intimate, and the boy asks for a nude photo. The girl likes him and decides to send him one. However, after that, he starts asking for more images. The girl tells him she does not want to do this, but he

threatens to post the first photo she sent him on social media. He reveals that he is not the 16-year-old boy from the photos he sent her but is in fact an older man. The girl is scared - she does not want her friends or family to see the image, so she agrees to send more intimate images.

In the first case, moderators observed a specific victim-blaming pattern.

The absolute majority of discussions showed that participants believed the girl was naive to send the pictures without considering the potential consequences, and should not have done it. The case study character is only 14, so participants thought that she probably was not familiar with the laws about sexting, or the consequences the action could hold. The majority of the participants claimed that the girl should not have shared the photo because it is irresponsible. Some girls in the FGs said that if they had been friends with the victim, they would have slapped her to make her understand that she was wrong and would then go to the boy and criticise him.

*"She is stupid; she should not have shared such photos with the boy ..."*

There was a slightly different opinion expressed in some of the other FGs. Several female participants felt that it was the boy's fault and that he behaved in an immature and irresponsible way. They also believed that his friend should not have intervened or should have talked to him to dissuade him from showing them the content. Some of the female participants expressed that girls should be more cautious about what they share and with whom. However, all agreed that the girl had every right to share something intimate with her boyfriend - it is her choice, and it is also her choice to break up with him; and they found it problematic that the boy shared her pictures without her permission. This attitude was similar to that expressed in the male focus groups carried out by UWAH.

The majority of all discussions showed that the boy's behavior was framed as childish, and he was deemed as being "not a good guy." He should not have shared the images of his girlfriend – he probably thought it was a bit of a laugh. Some of the students were more sympathetic to the boy but nonetheless agreed that he was wrong to have shared the images.

*"He can be reported, the boy's action can be justified by the fact that he was angry; he did something wrong, but he didn't want to do it, he was impulsive, he didn't do it on purpose, he was upset because maybe she hadn't told him she was going out with another one".*

Friends and other students were viewed as having a negative role in the given situation. They probably found it funny, but all participants expressed that it was none of their business and they should not have shared the pictures. Some thought that the friends had nothing to do with it and that the blame must fall solely on the boy.

Female participants also mentioned possible solutions to the case. Some girls said they would confront the boy and his friends; others said they would talk to their parents and friends; and two other girls said they would like to go to the police. Last but not least, they were very sure that they would defend their friend if something like that happened and they would confront the boy and his friends.

The solutions were slightly different in one male group. UWAH's FG with all-male participants showed that if this happened to a relative or girlfriend, most of them (boys) would talk to the boy himself, or even threaten him (verbally), and these actions were not effective, they would bring the problem to the police's attention.

Also, participants said that if the photo were of a boy, no one would have been likely to laugh and make fun of him. However, since the picture was of a girl, it attracted more attention and therefore become the subject of cyber violence.

When discussing the first case, participants also responded to the question, "what would you do?"

Some FG participants would be angry with the boy and the friends, mad at themselves for sending the pictures, upset, afraid to go to school, and confused. The discussions showed them to be more cautious with the new relationship, and not send pictures again in the future. They would not ask parents for help because it would be embarrassing, and they did not want to get into trouble. **Some students said they would talk to the school because**



**they believed it could be dealt with privately.** Some students said they would call a helpline, such as Childline or Lifeline.

There were some solutions to the cases identified in the FGs carried out by NEXUS. Students in both groups gave a range of answers as to what they would do in each scenario.

If they were the girl in the first scenario:

1. They would talk to the boy and ask him why he had sent the pictures;
2. When breaking up with him, they would be sure to do it in a friendly way. Some students mentioned they did not know how the breakup was handled but agreed that, even if she was nasty to him, he had no right to share the pictures;
3. Speak to parents or teachers and ask for help.

If they were the boy in this scenario, they would:

1. Delete the pictures.
2. Talk to friends about how they were feeling and ask for help if they were very upset about the breakup.

If they were the boy's friends in this first case study, they would:

1. Delete the photos, and tell the others to do the same;
2. Tell the girl the pictures had been sent to them, and ask if she was ok.

The second case was only used in the FG run by UWAH, organised with female minors. Female participants said that "we should never trust someone we meet online, and it would be good to meet them in person and then start trusting them." They were very negative regarding sharing pictures online with someone they do not know very well, and they found that the girl's decision in the case study was not very mature. However, some girls justified the behavior of the girl, saying that she fell in love and therefore she was manipulated. Regarding what to do in that case, they were not sure as most of them expressed that they would be embarrassed to admit to their parents that something like that had happened;

however, they would talk to an adult. All of them said they would talk to their friends about it and would try to find a solution to stop the interaction.

#### e. Online education: Possible Options and Solutions

The FG discussions showed that teenagers play competitive, one-player games with customisation options (e.g., Fortnite). Male participants mentioned that they usually play games with rifles and shooting, involving challenges where one has to survive. They mostly play games with Xbox, on a PC, or on tablets. Responses showed that male participants were interested in having an online educational, interactive, and auxiliary game in order to be able to better recognise such cases of violence and ways to deal with it. They said they would like a game that could help them change the way they think about issues like online violence. They suggested a game that would have, for example, a hero/girl who reports several incidents that happen to him/her, and the player would be able to suggest ways to act and find solutions.

Female participants also liked the idea of playing an educational online game. They were not so much into the competition but instead preferred gaining useful information from the game and playing in teams or pairs. They would like to receive information on what to do if online violence happens to them, know whom to talk to, and how to support someone dealing with this issue. Some of the responses showed that they usually play from time to time on smartphones.

Most of the participants mentioned that they usually play on FRIV's\* online platform.

The first comment was that a game about cyber violence could be a touchy subject, especially for people who had experienced online abuse, and it would need to be done in a sensitive way so as not to upset anyone.

Students also agreed that it would be awkward to play a game of this type with other people, and it should be as anonymous as possible, but that participants should have the option to talk about it with others if they wanted.

The consensus was that it should be a mobile game, so as to be widely available to most people and have the most significant impact.

Students liked the idea of a scenario-based game with customisation options – to have an individual, designable avatar with which to navigate the game, and experience the scenarios first-hand, to make it as immersive as possible.

They like the concept of competition and attaining individual goals – so not based on teamwork, but rather being in it for themselves.

In some of the FGs, students were more open to playing with other people, as it would generate useful discussion about relevant topics. They agreed that it should not touch on personal experiences – instead, scenarios should be clearly hypothetical, and perhaps have a few funny examples, to make students feel at ease with the serious topics. Students liked the idea of customisation, as well as both single- and multiplayer options for group activities. They were keener on teamwork, but they also liked competitive aspects and goal-oriented game-play.

They thought it would be best as a mobile game - that way they would not just have to play in school, and it could be used with other groups or by themselves if they wanted to look at things again without their friends or teachers around.

Some of the topics that participants thought would be useful were:

1. Sexting;
2. Online harassment and stalking;
3. Stereotypes about boys and girls;
4. Pressures put on boys and girls;
5. Body image and peer pressure.

Students agreed that there should be some help and support information for players who are experiencing the types of abuse portrayed in the scenarios.



One student suggested having a helpline number at the bottom of the screen so that people can access help immediately. Students discussed the potential negatives of calling helplines, especially fear of the unknown or of feeling awkward. A suggested solution was to have a step-by-step guide of what to expect when calling a helpline number, to inform callers and encourage them to ask for help.

Regarding the characteristics of the game, participants mentioned having a competitive match. Also, they would appreciate the possibility of simulating various characters and roles and the possibility of seeing what happens as a result of different choices. They also like the games where there is a possibility to "collect points" in the game.

Participants mentioned the possibility of playing with other people, of having various scenarios to choose from, of being able to choose the characteristics of the victim and the perpetrator, of getting to know the weaknesses of the other player(s), and of being able to draw different characters with different roles. They would appreciate both the possibility of playing individually and in groups.





## Annex 1 Guideline and Reporting Instructions on Initial Consultation

### Initial Consultations with Teenagers

#### WP2

#### CYBERSAFE

#### Instructions on Initial Consultations

Before carrying out the pilot interventions (WP4), partners are conducting the Initial Consultations with target groups during April-July 2019 (M5-8) with teenagers (age 13-15) in selected project countries: Greece by UWAH, Estonia by WSIC, Italy by Retesalute, and UK by NEXUS NI.

These initial consultations have three main goals:

- a) Identifying knowledge and needs of Cyber VAWG among teenagers;
- b) Identifying the Behavioural Causes that trigger Cyber VAWG among teenagers;
- c) Gaining feedback on Serious Games concepts.

The feedback collected at the initial consultations is vital to identifying the framework for the VAWG (WP2) and providing the input for developing the Educational Prevention Programme (WP3.5).

Focus group questions and structure is designed by the UT, to ensure that they capture the information needed for the development of the next steps of the project. UWAH, WSIC, Retesalute and NEXUS NI will then conduct focus groups with teenagers in their area.

Each of the selected partners is advised to run three physical meetings (24 in total) with max. 6-8 participants (teenagers), min. 20 each partner and a total of 80 participants.

Ideally, partners will conduct three sets of the initial consultations with target audience separately with boys, girls, and a mixed group.

The following document includes two main parts:



1. **Guiding Questions** to carry out the Initial Consultations;
2. **Reporting Template** to send back the results of the consultations.

Partners should fill out one report for all implemented consultations. The partners will report the results of the consultation to the UT, who will then compile a short analysis that summarizes the key findings.

Some advice on how to run a FGD:

Keep in mind:

- Creating a **safe, trusting atmosphere** is essential to obtaining honest feedback;
- It is not a debate - reaching consensus is not the goal (it is okay to disagree);
- Participation should be voluntary.

Practical tips:

- Ideally the moderator will have an assistant to take notes;
- Consider making recordings (inform participants at the start of the session);
- Setting: a circle invites participants to share with and react to each other;
- Informed consent: explain why you are doing the Initial Consultation, what will be done with the information/recordings, the process and the value of their participation, and that they are not there to be judged or evaluated.

Set ground rules:

- One person talks at a time, and everyone needs to listen to each other;
- It is important to be respectful (no making fun or putting others down);
- It is important to keep what is said in the focus group **confidential**;
- There are no wrong answers - all opinions are welcome;
- Turn off cell phones.

## 2. Guiding Questions for Initial Consultations

### Introduction: 5 min

*Explain why you do the Initial Consultation, what will be done with the information/recordings, the process and the value of their participation, and that they are not there to be judged or evaluated.*

### Identifying knowledge and needs of Cyber VAWG among teenagers; 25 minutes

**Ice breaker** – The facilitator has a tennis ball and throws it randomly. Whoever catches the ball says their name along with their favorite thing (food, flower, team, or what else you might like). Afterward, they throw it to anyone else from the group.

#### Exercise 1 - “I always...”

The facilitator starts first by saying the phrase “I always...” and finishes it off with something related to the discussed subject. Each one in the group says their own “I always...” with something related to internet relationships, even if they don’t do it themselves. E.g. I always upload intimate photos of me online. The rest of the group can decide, either out loud or written in a piece of paper, whether this is a positive or a negative sentence. When the group is reluctant or cannot provide the appropriate sentences, the facilitator can intervene and help them.

#### Example sentences

- I always immediately trust people I meet online.
- I always make fun of people online, because it is different than in real life.
- I always make sure to inform my family when someone unknown approaches me online.
- I always help my friends when I see they are being mistreated online.
- I always ask for help when I don’t know what to do in situations online.

*After the icebreaker exercise, the facilitator should move on to questions below. For question N2, the Instructor/facilitator of the focus group should shortly describe the phenomenon of Cyber Violence and provide a general understanding and describe the forms of Cyber Violence. The facilitator should initiate the discussion after describing the concept*

*and form. To familiarise yourself with the basics of Cyber Violence and different forms of VAWG please see the WP2 - Literature Review (pp 3-6).*

1. Have you ever heard of Cyber Violence? What do you think it means?
2. What do you know about Cyber Violence?
3. Do you know anyone who has experienced cyber violence? What forms have they experienced? What, if anything, have you done about it?

### **Identifying the Behavioural Causes that trigger Cyber VAWG among teenagers; 30 minutes**

*The facilitator should pick one case based on their preferences. The questions attached to each case should be fully covered during the discussion.*

#### **Case1**

A girl and boy (14 yrs old) who know each other from school fall in love and start a relationship. After a while the girl shares an intimate picture of herself with the boy because she likes and trusts him. However, after a few months, the girl decides to end the relationship, because she falls in love with someone else. The boy is angry with her and as revenge meant to shame her, he shares the images with some friends. They laugh and make fun of the girl. One of the friends posts the image on social media, where it is spread and the entire school knows about it.

#### **4. Questions to ask after describing the case:**

- What do you think about the behaviour of the girl, boy, and friends (and other schoolkids)?
- Who could have done something different to prevent this situation and what could he/she have done?
- What would you do in this situation (after the images are online) if you were the girl, boy, friends?
- How would you respond if it happened to you? How would you help your friend who is in the girl's position?



### **Case2**

A girl (14) gets a nice message from a boy (16) on social media. They start chatting and over the next few weeks they start to get to know each other better. The girl really likes him -he's good looking in the pictures on his social media account and he says nice things to her and takes the time to show interest in her. She starts sharing details about her life and problems at home with him. After a while, the conversations become more intimate and the boy asks for a nude photo. The girl likes him and sends him one. However, after that he starts asking for more images. The girl tells him she does not want to do this, but then he threatens to post the first photo she sent him on social media. He reveals that he is not the 16-year old boy from the photos he sent her -he is actually an older man. The girl is scared, she does not want her friends or family to see the image, so she agrees to send more intimate images.

#### 5. Questions to ask after describing the case:

- What do you think about the behaviour of the girl/man?
- What would you do if you were the girl?
- Who could help her? How?
- How would you respond if this happened to you? How would you help your friend who is in the girl's position?

6. Why do you think someone would be offensive towards others on the Internet?
7. Do you think girls are more often victims of cyber violence (based on the cases and your experience)? Why or why not?

### **Identifying the best ways to educate teenagers about cyber-violence. 5 minutes**

8. How would you feel about playing an online game on this topic? What aspects of games do you like (competition, winning something, interaction with others, etc.)?
9. What do you think will be important to simulate, where to report the cases like this? Or how to respond? Or how to help a friend?



10. What do you want to know more about concerning the issue we discussed today?

### **Final 5 Minutes**

Hand out cards at the end and invite participants to write down any thoughts or ideas they didn't want to share outloud.



### 3. Initial Consultation Reporting Template

*Facilitators should summarise the critical findings of the focus group following the structure of the questionnaire and write up a paragraph for each question. Within the given timeframe, the completed template should be sent to Giorgi Davidovi, UT by email: [davidovi@ut.ee](mailto:davidovi@ut.ee)*

1. *The Dates of Focus Group* \_\_\_\_\_

2. *Selected Setting*

☐ *High School*

☐ *Sport Centre*

☐ *Other* \_\_\_\_\_

3. *Total Number of Participants*

<b>Overall</b>	
<b>Female</b>	
<b>Male</b>	

4. *Age of Participants. Please, indicate the number of participants per age range.*

☐ 13 \_\_\_\_\_

☐ 14 \_\_\_\_\_

☐ 15 \_\_\_\_\_

☐ *Other* \_\_\_\_\_

5. *What was the dynamic of the focus group? Please describe the focus group as a facilitator.*

#### Identifying knowledge & needs of Cyber VAWG among teenagers

6. *What was the overall result of exercise N1 "I always ..." ?*

Click or tap here to enter text.

7. *Have participants ever heard of Cyber Violence? What do they think it means?*

Click or tap here to enter text.

8. *What do participants know about Cyber Violence?*

Click or tap here to enter text.

9. *Do participants know anyone who has experienced cyber violence? What kind of forms have they experienced? What have they done about it, if anything?*

#### B. Identifying the Behavioural Causes that trigger Cyber VAWG among teenagers;

10. *Why do participants think someone could be offensive towards others on the internet?*

Click or tap here to enter text.

11. *Do participants think girls are more often victims of cyber violence (based on the cases and your experience)? Why or why not?*

Click or tap here to enter text.

12. *Which case did facilitator decide to use and what were the results of the discussion about the case? To summarise the feedback, please follow the questions outlined for cases (related to questions N 4 and 5)*

Click or tap here to enter text.

### C. Gaining feedback on Serious Games concepts.

*13. How did participants feel about playing an online game on this topic? What aspects of games do they like (competition, winning something, interaction with others, etc.)?*

Click or tap here to enter text.

*14. What kind of online games do participants usually play?*

Click or tap here to enter text.

*15. What do they want to know more about the issue discussed during the FG?*

Click or tap here to enter text.

