

**Sexual harassment,
grooming and sexual
violence faced by children
and young people in Finland
- Situation report September 2020**



Koordinaatti

Centre of Expertise for Digital Youth Work
Koordinaatti

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Contents

Contents.....	3
Introduction.....	4
1 Grooming as a phenomenon.....	5
1.1 What is grooming?	5
1.2 Other concepts related to grooming.....	6
2 Sexual harassment, grooming and sexual violence faced by children and young people in Finland.....	9
2.1. Results of the School Health Promotion study	9
2.2. Results of other studies and surveys	10
2.3 Results of surveys conducted for youth workers in 2019 and 2020.....	11
2.4. Summary of the results	13
3 Strategy documents and action plans at national and international level.....	14
4 Actions against sexual grooming	17
4.1 Measures of government and public authorities.....	17
4.2. Measures taken by organisations and networks.....	20
4.3 Finnish National Board of Education special grants for teaching staff training to prevent sexual offences	23
4.4 Ministry of Education and Culture special grant to education providers.....	23
5 Observations and development needs.....	26
5.1 Harmonising the terminology from the point of view of the rights of the child.....	26
5.2 Improving multiprofessional and cross-administrative cooperation	27
5.3 Training of professionals and a concrete plan for working communities	27
5.4 Summary of the situation report	28
References.....	30

Introduction

Sexual harassment, grooming and sexual violence experienced by children and adolescents have increased over the past ten years. In digital media, in particular, such acts have become more common. This report aims to define the concepts related to the phenomenon of grooming, to describe the current situation in Finland from the perspective of the theme, and to describe the work against grooming in detail.

The situation report presents key international obligations, as well as national programmes and strategies that demand measures to protect children and young people against

sexual violence both online and offline. In Finland, the state administration and authorities have adopted several decisions and operational programmes to promote preventive work to combat sexual violence faced by children and young people. This report presents various measures and brings up key development needs concerning the theme of the report.

The situation report uses the concepts of original agreements, operational programmes, strategies, and legislation, even if those concepts in the current understanding do not necessarily respect the rights of the child.

1 Grooming as a phenomenon

Sexual harassment and grooming against children and adolescents occur both face-to-face and in digital media. Here we define more precisely what grooming means, how it is expressed and what other concepts are central to it. It is important to define concepts so that those working with children and young people use concepts that respect the rights of the child when talking about these matters.

1.1 What is grooming?

Sexual violence against a child is a broad concept, meaning all the acts that violate the sexual integrity of a child. Acts of sexual violence can take place both in digital environments and face-to-face. Actions or talk may include name-calling, glances, gestures, suggestions, touching, or other activities that cause anxiety or seem unpleasant to the person targeted. It can be harassment or exposure to sexual acts. It may involve pressure, violent coercion, or physical abuse. Violations of sexual self-determination are an individual's personal experience. Even acts or

talk that do not meet the criteria for sentencing as described in the Criminal Code can cause insecurity or traumatise those who experience them. (THL 2020a.)

Children or young people often find it difficult to determine what has happened to them if, for example, they do not recognise different forms of sexual violence. Sexual violence experienced by children and adolescents is often different from acts of sexual violence against adults. Physical violence is rarely used in sexual violence against children. Instead, the perpetrator uses manipulation to gain the child's trust and to conceal their actions. (Joki-Erkkilä et al. 2019, 276.)

Grooming means the enticement of a child or an adolescent for sexual purposes. This is an interaction and approach aimed at a child or an adolescent to target them with sexual violence and make a minor a victim of sexual violence. In general, grooming refers to different techniques used by the perpetrators and is often described as a manipulative process with varying duration. It can be a fast-moving discussion or a longer-term building of trust. (Sillfors 2020, 22.)

Chapter 20 of the Criminal Code (Section 8b) refers to solicitation of a child for sexual purposes which is a conceptual expression respecting the rights of the child. An attempt of a sexual offence against a child or an adolescent is punishable. Under the law, solicitation for sexual purposes is involved if, for example, if someone proposes a meeting or other kind of contact with a child to produce images of sexual violence against a child or to direct sexual violence at the child. (Criminal Code, 19.12.1889/39).

Grooming can take place both in digital environments and face to face. It is a manipulative and unequal process in which an adult seeks to establish a relationship of trust with a child or a young person. This relationship of trust aims to bring the child into a seemingly voluntary relationship, in which the aim is to bring the child to take part in sexual acts or sexual intercourse with an adult. Trust building may take a long time, and the perpetrator may also seek to gain the trust of the child's close friends. On the other hand, grooming can also be a fast-moving process and communication in digital environments. Especially in the digital environment, grooming is constantly changing shape and it is a global problem. (Sillfors 2020.)

The perpetrators are skilled and can target many children or young people at the same time, especially online. They adapt their activities depending on the type of child or adolescent they are dealing with and offer them what they most need (e.g. attention, compliments, commodities, intoxicants, a place to stay, etc.). Sexually coloured remarks in conversations can confuse the child's or adolescent's perception of acceptable interaction between an adult and a minor. The perpetrator may also display or transmit sexual images or videos, reveal their genitals via a webcam, or touch a child/young sexually, lowering the threshold for sexual activity. They may try to engage a child or adolescent sexually, for example, through a webcam

or to ask them to send pictures or videos of themselves. Eventual blackmail and intimidation may be linked to the grooming process. It is often difficult to get away from the situation, as the child or adolescent feels shame and guilt about what happened, so the threshold to tell or seek help is high. The responsibility always lies with the perpetrator, however. (Sillfors 2020, 23–24.)

Technological developments affect also sexual violence against children and young people in many ways. The European Union law enforcement agency Europol's cybercrime centre warns that soliciting children for sexual purposes is a serious threat throughout Europe. The perpetrator may not meet a child or adolescent face-to-face but may try to get sexual material from the child or adolescents or expose them to sexual content. Children are pressured and enticed to produce images or video material of themselves. It should be noted that images or videos stored or shared via digital media will remain online. From the point of view of a child or adolescents who have experienced sexual violence, it is particularly traumatising if photos or video material testifying of the sexual violence are spread widely online and remain there. (Karhu 2020, 17–19.)

1.2 Other concepts related to grooming ¹

Different concepts are used in different situations and contexts and different operators use different concepts. For example, in legislation and the criminal law, the term used is sexual abuse of a child, while professionals working with children and adolescents should favour terminology that respects the rights of the child and talk about sexual violence against the child. (Tasa 2020, 30.)

The terminology of sexual violence is not unequivocal. The project Recognition and prevention of sexual grooming in youth work compiled recommendations on the concepts

¹ Translating concepts from English to Finnish causes situations where the translated concept may no longer respect the rights of the child even it does in the original concept.

to be used, and we will present them next (for more detail see Tasa 2020). The partners of the project recommended that the guidebook Ask, Listen and Connect should use the concept of sexual violence against a child (Oinas et al. 2020). ECPAT International, in cooperation with authorities and 17 organisations, has issued comprehensive terminology guidelines on child sexual exploitation and sexual violence against children in English. They recommend using the term “child sexual abuse”, which can be translated into sexual violence against a child. (Greijer & Doek 2016).

Sexual rights

The realisation of sexual rights is central to human well-being and balanced life. Sexual rights are human rights that apply to everyone. All people, regardless of age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation or state of health, have the same rights. Everyone has the right to control their body and to exercise their sexuality. Everyone should also respect the rights of other people. Sexual education promotes the realisation of the sexual rights of children and young people. (Sexpo 2019.) For young people, their own limits and the respect for the limits of others can be more concrete concepts than talking about sexual self-determination.

Sexual violence

Sexual violence is a broad concept. The National Institute for Health and Welfare defines sexual violence as a violation of sexual self-determination and privacy. A key element of the sense of security is trust that is violated in acts of violence. Sexual violence is often referred to as sexual violence or sexual abuse. The terminology suggests that violence is a sexual act or experience, which is not true from the point of view of the victim. Therefore, it is not advisable to use these concepts. (THL 2020a.)

Photographic evidence of sexual violence

The term “child sexual abuse material” is recommended in English (Greijer & Doek 2016, 38–40). In Finnish, the concept of photographic materials as evidence of sexual violence against a child is used. In the photographic or video material, a child or adolescent is the subject of sexual violence and the material is also evidence of a sexual offence against a child or adolescent. In some cases, the concept of child pornography is used, which should be avoided, as it is not an expression that respects the rights of the child. This is not about entertainment, and a child can never consent to sexual acts by an adult. (Vaaranen–Valkonen & Laitinen 2019, 351). This is illegal material involving sexual violence against a child.

In Chapter 20 of the Criminal Code (Section 8c) reference is made to sexually offensive pictures where a child (under 18 years of age) is actually or in a realistic manner depicted as the object of sexually offensive conduct (Criminal Code 19.12.1889/39). Also for this, the concept of photographic materials as evidence of sexual violence against a child is recommended.

Sexual harassment and intimidation

Sexual harassment or gender-based harassment may be glances, gestures, or suggestions that the object experiences as unpleasant and distressing. They cause embarrassment and fear and negatively affect one’s own sense of integrity and security. (THL 2020a.) Sexual harassment refers to the verbal, non-verbal or physical behaviour of an unwanted sexual nature that violates a person’s mental or physical integrity. Sexual harassment may include sexually suggestive gestures or expressions, obscene speeches or suggestions, off-colour jokes, contacts using sexually coloured remarks, physical touching or rape or attempted rape. Harassment creates an

intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or distressing atmosphere. Sexual harassment and harassment can occur face to face and online. (Tasa-arvo.fi 2020.)

In the Criminal Code Chapter 20 (section 5a) sexual harassment refers to acts violating the right of a person to sexual self-determination (such as fondling, rubbing, patting or groping) (Criminal Code 19.12.1889/39). Verbal harassment is not part of the characteristics of the crime, but it should be noted that it may constitute the elements of defamation or illegal threat. Women face harassment more often than men. Based on the data from the Equality Barometer, female gender, young age, belonging to a minority and low incomes significantly increased the risk of harassment. Young age is a significant risk factor for sexual harassment, especially for women. (THL 2020b.)

Sextortion

Sextortion (sexual extortion) is a situation where a person is blackmailed with sexual images or other material. For example, blackmail can be part of the process of grooming, where a child or an adolescent are first enticed to send sexually related, intimate, revealing pictures or videos of themselves. Then they will be threatened or blackmailed to send more material or otherwise the images or videos would be placed in the digital media for distribution to the victim's loved

ones. Unfortunately, the blackmailer's demands are often met because of shame, guilt or fear. (Vaaranen-Valkonen & Laitinen 2019, 350).

Sexting

Sexting (sex messaging) means sending sexual messages, images, and videos. This is done by consensus between young people of roughly the same age. However, children and young people need to be reminded that they do not need to enter into the conversation or agree to send or receive pictures or videos. They must be taught what is allowed, what is harmful and how to define one's own limits. Such activities can also become illegal if images or videos are transmitted without permission to third parties or disseminated in digital media, making their dissemination difficult to control. It should also be noted that unwanted sexually coloured communication can be sexual harassment or a crime if it is directed against a person under the age of 16. (Väestöliitto.fi 2018.)

The term "revenge porn" has been used in the media for the dissemination of sexual images, and experts say that the use of the term is not advisable. It is about an intimate image or video that is not meant to be shared with others. Dissemination is criminal if information offensive to private life is published in digital media. (Vaaranen-Valkonen & Laitinen 2019, 351.)

2 Sexual harassment, grooming and sexual violence faced by children and young people in Finland

Sexual harassment, grooming and sexual violence faced by children and adolescents are rarely reported to adults. As a result, only a small proportion of the acts come to the attention of the authorities and it is difficult to obtain accurate information on the prevalence of the phenomenon. In Finland, for example, the School Health Promotion study provides information on the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual violence, which seem to have increased from the past. The results of surveys and reports on the current situation in Finland are presented in more detail here.

2.1. Results of the School Health Promotion study

In Finland, children and young people have been asked about sexual harassment and sexual violence in national school health surveys since

2010. The School Health Promotion (SHP) study is conducted every two years. The following groups participate in the School Health Promotion Study:

- Students in basic education grades 4 and 5
- Students in basic education grades 8 and 9
- Students in general upper secondary education years 1 and 2
- Students in vocational schools grades 1 and 2 (under 21 years of age). (THL 2019.)

The School Health Promotion study of 2019 focused on children's experiences of violence and more than 260,000 children and adolescents responded to the questionnaire. The girls experienced much more sexual accosting and harassment than boys. Sexual harassment has been common for a long time, which has emerged from previous school health surveys. Children's and adolescents' experiences of

sexual harassment are more common than experiences of sexual violence. (THL 2019.)

Four per cent of pupils in grades 4 and 5 in basic education reported having experienced sexual commenting, suggestions, communication or display of footage with sexual content at least once in the previous year. Two per cent of the respondents had experienced sexual touching or had been pressurised to touch. There was no difference between the sexes in the frequency of experience. (THL 2019.)

For young people, the question was put differently. About one third (30-34 %) of girls (upper grades of comprehensive school, upper secondary school, vocational institutes) had experienced disturbing sexual propositions, accosting or harassment during the past year. The corresponding figure for boys was 6 - 8 per cent. Ten per cent of girls and about four per cent of boys had experienced sexual violence. (THL 2019.)

More than a quarter of girls in grades 8 and 9 of comprehensive school who responded to the School Health Promotion study say that they have experienced sexual harassment on the phone or online during the previous year. In the survey two years ago, clearly fewer, less than one fifth, of girls reported this. The experiences of girls from general upper secondary schools and vocational institutes are similar. Most often sexual propositions or harassment took place on the phone, the Internet or in public spaces. Only a small proportion had experienced sexual propositions or harassment at school. Between 24 and 27 per cent of girls in basic education and 5 to 7 per cent of boys had experienced sexual harassment on the phone or the Internet during the past year. In public spaces, 12 to 18 per cent of girls and 2 to 3 per cent of boys had experienced sexual harassment. (THL 2019.)

Girls report sexual harassment or violence to an adult more often than boys. Between 27 and 36 per cent of the girls who responded had told an adult about their experiences, while the

corresponding figure for boys was between 17 and 21 per cent. However, boys receive more support than girls for their experiences from adults and services outside school. (THL 2019.) Encouragement to speak and seek help is of paramount importance, as the threshold to speak is high.

2.2. Results of other studies and surveys

In 2018, the **Save the Children** registered association carried out a survey of sexual harassment and bullying experienced by children and young people in digital media. The main result is that sexual harassment in digital media is quite common according to children and adolescents aged 12 to 17. More than 30 per cent had seen sexual harassment and related bullying against other children or adolescents in the digital media during the year preceding the survey. Sexual harassment and related bullying are most commonly considered as jokes, but a significant proportion of children and adolescents find such acts offensive. According to the results, sexual harassment affects girls more than boys. (Save the Children 2018.)

Based on the study, children and adolescents must be offered legal knowledge and digital skills in relation to sexual imagery, possession, downloading and unauthorised sharing of such materials. Young people find it quite common to ask and send sexual images to their peers. This can lead to situations that young people do not recognize the risky situations where images are requested or sent by an adult. It should be noted that children and adolescents do not often share their sexual harassment experiences with adults, but the most common reaction is to block the perpetrator and tell a friend about it. (Save the Children 2018.) This supports the result of the School Health Promotion study that sexual harassment or sexual violence is not talked about with adults.

Finnish Center for Integrity in Sports (FINCIS)

published a research report in 2020 according to which one in three female athletes have experienced sexual harassment in competitive sports. Almost one in five male athletes have experienced harassment. According to the survey, harassment experiences accumulated most among athletes aged 20 to 25. (Lahti et al. 2020, 1.)

Young women were particularly likely to experience sexual and gender-based harassment. According to statistical forecasts, the highest probability of sexual harassment (57 %) was among 16-year-old women who competed at the adult national team level. Female gender, young age and competing at a high-level significantly increased the risk of sexual harassment. In addition, belonging to a sexual minority, a linguistic minority, a religious minority and an ethnic minority increased the risk of sexual harassment. Athletes belonging to minority groups had experienced clearly more sexual and sexual harassment than other respondents. (Lahti et al. 2020, 46.)

According to the athletes participating in the survey, the key means of preventing harassment were an open debate, awareness-raising and training in identifying and combating harassment. Recommendations for measures include improving the status of women and minorities, making operational guidelines and preventive work against harassment visible, and tackling harassment with a low threshold. (Lahti et al. 2020, 99.)

2.3 Results of surveys conducted for youth workers in 2019 and 2020

In summer 2019, the national project 'Prevention and Identification of Grooming' run by Koordinaatti centre of expertise in youth information and counselling, carried out a survey

among youth work professionals and volunteers. The survey collected information and charted the skills needs of youth work professionals and volunteers related to the prevention of grooming and sexual violence experienced by children and young people. (Oinas et al. 2019.)

456 youth workers or volunteers from municipalities, organisations or parishes replied to the questionnaire. Most of the respondents worked with young people aged between 13 and 17. Most responses were received from the regions of Uusimaa and Northern Ostrobothnia. The survey found that youth work requires information and education on the grooming of children and young people and on how to bring the subject up and discuss it with children and young people, and how to identify children and young people at risk. In addition, information was needed on sexual offences legislation and sexual harassment, grooming and various forms of sexual violence in digital media. (Oinas et al. 2019.)

Among youth workers and volunteers who responded to the survey, 60 % (269 respondents) have encountered children or young people who have experienced grooming or sexual violence both in digital environments and face-to-face. The young people most commonly reported encountering sexual and gender-related innuendo, commenting, heckling, unwanted messages (sexual texts, images or video material) or requests to send photos or videos of themselves. (Oinas et al. 2019.)

The experiences of grooming and sexual violence reported by young people can come up in many different situations, even unexpectedly. Based on the answers to the questionnaire, the explanation for a young person bringing the subject up was a confidential relationship between young person and the adult to whom they told about the matter. It is not easy to tell adults about the theme because of fear, shame or guilt. A youth

centre may be considered a safe place to discuss the subject either privately or it can be discussed among the teenagers and then reach the ears of the youth worker. Young people also share their experiences in helpline chat services and other social media services where young people and youth workers meet. (Oinas et al. 2019.)

The Koordinaatti survey revealed that youth workers lack effective tools and methods to deal with issues related to grooming and sexual violence among children and young people. They do not have enough competence to raise themes related to sexual violence with children and young people. The respondents reported on the need to obtain information and strengthen their own expertise in relation to digital security skills, knowledge of sexual offences legislation and forms of grooming and sexual violence in digital media. (Oinas et al. 2019.)

On the basis of the survey, a guidebook and short trainings were requested as a priority. Training sessions were organised in cooperation with the partners of the project 'Identifying grooming and preventing it in youth work' and the Regional State Administrative Agencies. (Oinas et al. 2019.) The nationwide tour of training courses reached about 1150 people face-to-face and online. In addition to training courses, the recorded webinars and podcasts are available online for everyone even after the end of the project.

The project published a guide and a comprehensive package of materials to support those working with young people. Ask, address and listen – A guide to preventing grooming and sexual violence in youth work is available online and in a printed format. (Oinas et al. 2019.) Methods, guides, online services and other materials produced by various actors were combined into a materials publication called Material Tips (Materiaalivinkit-Materialtips 2020).

How do grooming and sexual violence appear in youth work? Survey in 2020

In 2020 Koordinaatti conducted a follow-up survey on the study in the previous year. The survey examined whether there have been changes in the knowledge and competence needs of youth workers compared with the previous year. The survey also examined the current situation in the field to find out if youth workers in their work have encountered children or young people who have been sexually groomed or sexually assaulted during the past year.

105 professionals or volunteers working with young people responded to the questionnaire. The majority were employees of municipalities or cities. Most responses were received from the regions of Uusimaa and Northern Ostrobothnia. Most of the respondents worked with young people aged between 13 and 17.

In the last 12 months, 60 % of respondents have in their work encountered children or young people who have experienced grooming or sexual violence. 46 % of them reported that young people had encountered it in digital environments online, 29 % face-to-face and the rest both online and face-to-face. According to the respondents, the grooming and sexual violence experienced by children and young people had been similar to those indicated by the respondents to the previous survey. Mainly sexual and gender-related innuendo, commenting and heckling, unwanted messages and requests to send pictures or videos of themselves.

Professionals and volunteers working with young people felt that it was important to discuss the topic in youth work. However, not all respondents were aware of methods or materials to support their work. 34 % of respondents said they disagreed completely or somewhat when asked if they knew tools, methods or materials that could be used to deal with issues related to grooming

and sexual violence among children and young people. However, in their work with young people, the respondents had addressed themes that are central to the prevention of sexual violence and grooming faced by children and young people.

The most popular topic discussed based on the responses (n=105) was dating, which 90 per cent of respondents said they had discussed with young people. Favourite topics also included were emotional and security skills (84 %), digital security skills (81 %), sexuality and sex (81 %) and sexual self-determination (80 %). The respondents reported that they had dealt least with legislation (57 %), grooming (64 %) and sexual violence (64 %). On the basis of answers to open-ended questions, the topics have mainly been discussed as informal discussions, for example in youth facilities, and in individual or group guidance. Some of the respondents had organised theme days, evenings or weeks or lessons. Games and other materials were also used to some extent to discuss the themes.

In the prevention of grooming and sexual violence, it is important to get support from the work community and make concrete plans. 53 per cent of respondents said that the work community does not have a plan on how grooming and sexual violence will be discussed and taken into account in activities. As many as 32 % of the respondents did not know whether the work community had such a plan.

The survey examined the competence needs of respondents in topics related to grooming and sexual violence. Identifying the symptoms of a child or adolescent who has experienced sexual violence was selected by 61 persons, 45 persons selected supporting a child or adolescent who have experienced sexual violence, and 38 persons the methods of action when encountering a child or adolescent who has experienced sexual violence. Respondents (n=105) were allowed to select three options among proposed topics.

Bringing the theme up and digital safety skills were among the most popular after the previous ones. The themes are similar as in the survey conducted in 2019, but at the time the most popular theme was bringing up the topics.

The answers to the open-ended questions support this result, as respondents want to strengthen their own expertise, especially in identifying a child or a young person who has experienced sexual violence or grooming, raising the matter, meeting, guiding and supporting young people. There is also a need for information on legislation, digitisation, emotional and safety skills. The need for methods, materials and tools to support the work was also highlighted in the answers.

2.4. Summary of the results

It is difficult to give accurate figures on the prevalence of sexual harassment, grooming and sexual violence faced by children and young people in Finland, as authorities will only learn about a small proportion of the cases. Experiences are often not shared with adults, but the most common way to act is to block the author and tell a friend about the incident. The girls experience much more sexual accosting and harassment than boys. Female gender, young age and belonging to a minority increase the risk of experiencing sexual harassment. Sexual harassment, propositioning or harassment most commonly occur on the phone or online. Those working with young people encounter young people who have experienced sexual harassment, grooming or sexual violence. The competence needs of those working with young people are related to the identification of a child or a young person who has experienced sexual violence or grooming, raising the issue, meeting and supporting a young person. There is also a need for information on legislation, digitisation, emotional and safety skills.

3 Strategy documents and action plans at national and international level

Finland is committed to preventing sexual violence against children and young people in accordance with international agreements. This chapter briefly presents the main agreements, recommendations and strategies. In addition to these, Finnish legislation defines which violations of sexual self-determination are offences and therefore punishable.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (LOS, 59–60/1991) provides for the protection of children. Under Article 34, States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been supplemented by three optional protocols, all in force in Finland. The second protocol concerns the protection of children against child trafficking,

child abuse in prostitution and pornographic materials, and it was ratified in Finland in 2012. It is a Government Decree on the entry into force of the Act on the Implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the entry into force of the Act on the Entry into force of provisions covered by legislation (Treaty Series 41/2012).

Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

The Convention (88/2011) entered into force in Finland in 2011, but no national plan has been drawn up to date for its implementation. It is also known as the Lanzarote Convention. The agreement requires a State Party to take all necessary measures to protect children and to prevent all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual

abuse of children The agreement obligates, inter alia, to ensure that criminal investigation and criminal proceedings are conducted in the best interests of the child and with due respect for the rights of the child. The agreement obliges Finland to develop its services for child victims of sexual violence and their close relatives. (Treaty Series 88/2011) Furthermore, minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims are defined in Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament of 25 October 2012 laying down minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime and on the replacement of Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA.

Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence

The objective of the agreement (53/2015) is to prevent and eradicate violence against women, to protect the victims of violence and to bring the perpetrators of violence to justice. It is also known as the Istanbul Convention. The Convention entered into force in Finland in 2015 and applies to all forms of violence, including domestic violence. In Finland, the agreement also applies to men and boys who are subject to domestic violence. The Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse can be seen as complementary. (Treaty Series 53/2015)

National Youth Work and Policy Programme 2020–2023

The programme was approved as a Government Resolution on 19 December 2019. The aim of the intersectoral programme approved by the Government for four years is to promote the growth and living conditions of young people and to outline the Government's youth policy.

In the Programme, the Government defines the objectives and measures for youth work and the policy to achieve the objectives. The main themes of the programme are the prevention of the exclusion of young people and the strengthening of meaningful life, security and inclusion. The National Youth Work and Policy Programme (VANUPO) has three youth policy objectives: Young people have the prerequisites for a smooth day-to-day life – exclusion will decrease, young people have the means and skills to participate and influence, and Youth trusts in society – equality and security will be strengthened. (OKM/2019/77.)

Centres of expertise form an entity supporting the implementation of the objectives of the national youth work and policy programme. Six priorities have been identified for the competence centre activities to promote the meaningful life and inclusion of young people in society. The priorities are: youth work in the municipality, situation picture and effectiveness of organisations active in the youth field, inclusion and influencing, targeted youth work, digital youth work and youth work in schools and educational institutions. VANUPO has tasks related to the prevention of the grooming of children and young people in the activities of the Centre of Expertise on Digital Youth Work. You can find the measures in VANUPO under the objectives listed in Young person has trust in society – equality and security will be strengthened. (Valtioneuvosto.fi 2019a.)

Non-Violent Childhoods, action plan for the prevention of violence against children 2020–2025

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health published Non-Violent Childhoods, action plan for the prevention of violence against children 2020–2025 on 26 November 2019. It is part of a national programme to promote the safety of children and adolescents, the first part (2018) of which concerns the prevention of accidents and suicides. The

objective of the action plan is to prevent violence against children in various growth and operating environments and to improve the status of child victims in existing service, care and criminal systems. The plan also deals with factors that protect children from violence. The chapters of the publication, Preventing and Minimising the Harm caused by Sexual Violence among Children and Young People and Sexual Harassment, Grooming and Sexual Violence in Digital Media present in more detail the theme and related objectives and measures for the years 2020–2025. The propositions are based on scientific evidence and the needs raised by professionals in their work. With each measure the responsible party(parties) and the indicator(s) are listed.

In addition, the publication Non-Violent Childhoods contains a comprehensive and large index of international and national legislation related to the rights of the child (Korpilahti et al.2019, 106–112). In Finland, the Criminal Code provides for the criminalisation of a number of different sexual offences, with a wide spectrum of crimes (Criminal Code, 19.12.1889/39). However, professionals working with children and adolescents do not need to know what the crime in question is at any given time. It's enough to suspect a crime or to be concerned about a child or adolescent. An offence can be reported by anyone, such as the victim, police, witness or professional.

Communication of the European Union: EU strategy to step up the fight against sexual exploitation of children

As part of the EU Security Union Strategy, the Commission adopted a Communication on an

EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse on 24 July 2020. In Finland, the Ministry of the Interior has sent the matter to the Administration Committee on 1 October.2020 for eventual measures (Eduskunta.fi 2020). The strategy emphasises that combating the sexual exploitation of children is a priority for the EU, and the European Parliament and the Council have called for concrete action. The Commission's strategy aims to provide a comprehensive response to the fight against crime, both online and offline. The strategy consists of eight initiatives, divided into two strands: the implementation and development of the legislative framework and the development of law enforcement activities and the strengthening of contacts between all key stakeholders. The Commission notes that the EU Directive on combating the sexual exploitation of children (2011/93/EU) sets minimum standards to determine crimes and penalties for sexual exploitation of children. It also covers preventive work, criminal investigation and prosecution of crimes, as well as support and protection of victims.

Recommendation of the Council of Europe

In its recommendation (CM/Rec(2018)7), the Council of Europe has invited its Member States to examine legislation, guidelines and practices to ensure that children's rights are also realised in digital media. Safe use of digital media, information on legislation, respect for the rights of others and protection of children from content that is not suitable for their age are included. (COE 2018.)

4 Actions against sexual grooming

4.1 Measures of government and public authorities

Preventing and Combating Sexual Crime – Additional Actions 2019 by the government.

In 2019, the government outlined measures to combat sexual and immigrant crime. Additional measures to prevent and combat sexual crime were published in February 2019 and include general measures to prevent sexual crime, such as increasing the resources of the online police and intensified measures targeted at schools. The aim is for children and young people to recognise the grooming phenomenon and to be able to operate safely on social media. The measures also mention updating youth workers' digital and social media skills and developing new operating models. The measures define the parties responsible for the various measures. (Valtioneuvosto.fi 2019b.)

Measures in the National Youth Work and Policy Programme 2020–2023

Measures to prevent and combat the sexual harassment, grooming and sexual violence against children and young people can be found in VANUPO under the objective list Young People place their trust in society – equality and security are strengthened.

A key focus is to strengthen coordination to prevent the grooming of young people in social media. Measures will be taken to establish a multi-ministry coordination project to prevent grooming of young people in social media. The measures include improved digital skills and understanding of digital environments for young people and their guardians, increasing information through media education and developing concrete practices. These help young people, their parents and those working with young people by guiding them and teaching them to act more safely, more consciously and with an understanding of their own rights in a multimedialised world. (Government Resolution OKM/2019/77, 17.)

Within the framework of cooperation, coordination of measures in different administrative sectors will be implemented in order to find long-term and effective operating practices and operating models, as well as to support the appropriate allocation of government appropriations. In addition, guidance will be offered to actors in different administrative sectors to exchange information in cases of grooming. The development project focuses on basic education classes 5-9, with a focus on young people aged 13-16. The Ministry of Education and Culture co-ordinates the project with the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Education and Culture and organisations. The School Health Promotion study is used as a follow-up indicator. (Government Resolution OKM/2019/77, 17.)

The relationship and interaction skills of young people are strengthened and bullying is addressed - one of the measures under this group of objectives is to increase sexual education in order to strengthen the physical self-determination and emotional skills of young people. The focus is on young people aged 12 to 25. Measures related to bullying are also related to the prevention of grooming and sexual violence, as one common form of bullying experienced by young people in digital media is sexual harassment, for example, in the form of unwanted messages and images (see THL 2019, School Health Promotion study). A particular focus is on gender-based bullying and harassment, as well as minority groups at risk. (Government Resolution OKM/2019/77, 13-14.)

Non-violent Childhood action plan 2020-2025

The action plan published by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health on 27 November 2019 contains 93 measures to prevent violence faced by children and young people aged 0 to 17. The plan covers the prevention of physical and mental

violence, sexual violence and online harassment in various growth and operating environments. Key measures to prevent sexual violence and grooming can be found in the following chapters of the action plan: 10. Preventing sexual violence against children and young people and minimising the harm it causes, and 11. Sexual harassment, grooming and sexual violence in digital media. There are a total of 20 measures in these chapters, of which the most important ones are summarised.

In the chapter Sexual harassment, grooming and sexual violence in digital media the general aim is to prevent sexual harassment, grooming and sexual violence taking place in digital media and via digital media as well as the severe psychological, physical and social damage and traumatic experiences caused by sexual exploitation and sexual violence. Further training on sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and the prevention of sexual violence in the digital media will be organised as measures to provide education for children and young people of comprehensive school age on digital safety skills. Training in digital safety skills will be organised for children and young people in comprehensive school age. The prerequisites for establishing a helpline for children and young people to report sexual harassment, grooming and sexual violence and receive help will be investigated. Clear cooperation practices will be agreed nationally to remove illegal images containing violence against children as quickly as possible from websites. In addition, it will be ensured that authorities and professionals have sufficient information and resources to address sexual offences against children online, taking into account international guidelines. (Korpilahti et al.2019, 356-359.)

In the chapter on preventing sexual violence and minimising harm, the overall objective is to prevent and reduce the psychological, physical, sexual and reproductive harm caused by sexual

violence. In the prevention of violence, particular attention will be paid to vulnerable children and young people. They include, for example, persons with disabilities, children and young people belonging to ethnic or linguistic minorities, those in foster care outside their home, and children and young people belonging to sexual and gender minorities. As key measures, the training of all professionals on themes related to sexual violence and its prevention will be increased. The quality of emergency somatic examinations of victims of sexual violence and cooperation between the authorities shall be improved to ensure access to treatment. A comprehensive cooperation model based on Barnahus quality standards will be created in Finland to ensure that all children and young people suspected of having been assaulted or sexually assaulted are provided with assistance, support and care. One of the measures is to make the criminal process as child-friendly as possible. (Korpilahti et al. 2019, 321-330.)

The Barnahus project instills operational practices in the investigation of suspected violence against children and the support and care of children who have been subjected to violence. The project is financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The aim is, among other things, to develop coordination and support and care content for children and families who have experienced violence, to ensure child-friendly encounters and facilities for all children who are consulted in the legal context, to strengthen multi-professional cooperation (police, prosecutors, judicial psychiatric services, child protection, somatic and psychiatric medical care, school, early childhood education, maternity clinics) and the implementation of models, shortening delays from reporting crimes to convictions by means of cooperation between the authorities, and building online training courses that would be available for all professionals encountering suspicions about violence against children (THL 2020c.)

Other publications and guides

Istanbul Convention Implementation Plan 2018–2021

In December 2017, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health published an implementation plan for the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (53/2015, the so-called Istanbul Convention). The implementation plan is for 2018–2021 and contains a total of 46 measures targeted at different administrative sectors. These objectives will be achieved, inter alia, by developing cooperation, victim support services and treatment programmes for perpetrators of violence, as well as by improving data collection and statistics. In addition, there will be investment in education and education. (Committee against Violence and Domestic Violence against Women 2017.)

Advance, prevent, influence – Action plan for sexual and reproductive health for 2014–2020.

The Action Plan for Sexual and Reproductive Health of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, updated by the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), was published on 17.3.2014. It contains national guidelines and recommendations for promoting sexual health to municipalities. The Action Plan presents a number of objectives and proposals for measures to prevent sexual violence and minimise the harm it causes. One development object is to include sexual education in early childhood education and basic education. The programme emphasises the importance of raising children to non-violence by supporting a non-violent and sexually safe atmosphere, both in educational establishments, through child and parental education, by communicating sexual rights and by protecting children from harmful content in the media and entertainment culture. (Klementti & Raussi-Lehto 2013.)

A guide to preventing and addressing sexual harassment in schools and educational institutions 2020.

The guide published by the Finnish National Board of Education highlights the need for schools to have clear policies to tackle sexual harassment, and these must also be available to pupils and students. Schools and institutions must have plans to protect students from violence, bullying and harassment, as well as on equality and non-discrimination. The guide also contains guidelines for education providers, principals, teachers, staff of study care services and other staff of educational institutions, students and guardians. (Laitinen et al. 2020.)

Sexual education standards in Europe 2010

The document responds to the need for standards in sexual education in the European parts of the region where the World Health Organisation is active. In addition, this document is intended to promote holistic sexual education. The document is aimed at policy makers, education and health authorities and experts. The World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Office for Europe and the German Federal Health Education Centre BZgA have published the document in cooperation. The document sets out guidelines on sexual education and safety skills from the birth of a child to adulthood. The document provides an overview of the philosophy behind sexual education, the rationale, definitions and principles and its elements. It presents the broad concept of holistic sexual education and explains why it is particularly important for children and young people. The second part of the document consists of a table setting out the subjects of sexual education to be addressed at each age stage (World Health Organisation 2010).

4.2. Measures taken by organisations and networks

Listed below are STEA grants related to the prevention of sexual harassment and sexual violence among children and young people, granted for 2020 (data collected from STEA online service in September 2020):

The Finnish-Swedish Competence Centre in the Social Field

- Creating conditions for increased trust and better treatment between children and young people who have experienced sexual violence and professionals, and to increase skills to prevent, recognise the signals on and stop sexual violence against children and young people by organising process networks in Swedish for professionals in social work.
- Nationwide

The Federation of Mother and child homes and Shelters

- Preventing child sexual abuse by strengthening the safety skills of children and families as part of the activities of the associations.
- Nationwide

EXIT Prostitution Association

- To prevent sexual abuse among young people aged 13 to 29 and to help those who have drifted to paid sex through encounters in youth work, online support, volunteering, training and dissemination of information (Youth Exit)
- Nationwide

The Finnish League for Human Rights

- The prevention of female genital mutilation and so-called honour-related violence and the strengthening of the sexual and reproductive rights and the right to self-determination of persons of immigrant origin. Working methods include attitude change and peer support, as well as influencing, training and communication.
- Nationwide

Kvinnohusföreningen i Jakobstadsnejden registered association

- To prevent and reduce mental illness among 13–20-year-olds and young adults who have experienced sexual violence in Jakobstad, Pedersöre, Larsmo and Nykarleby with the help of individual support discussions and support groups (Respect! 2020–2022).
- Larsmo, Pedersöre municipality, Jakobstad, Nykarleby
- The activities are aimed at young people aged 13–29 who have experienced sexual violence and support is offered in the form of individual support discussions, support groups and discussions with family and close ones with the aim of creating a safe meeting place, preventing and reducing mental illness, helping the young find their own resources and be able to look positively towards the future. At the same time, a working model for health care for young people in connection with sexual abuse is being developed together with partners in the region.
- Larsmo, Pedersöre municipality, Jakobstad, Nykarleby

Loisto settlement registered association

- Support for lonely, bullied and marginalised boys, helping boys who have been sexually assaulted and sexual health work for boys at the Boys' House in Helsinki.
- Espoo, Helsinki, Vantaa
- To reduce abuse and to provide individual and group support in digital environments to young people aged 12 to 21 who have suffered abuse (Somessa – Social Youth Work in Social Media 2020–2022)
- Nationwide

Southwestern Finland Association for Mental Health

- Implementation of psychological support and assistance chain in the Turku region for persons over the age of 16 who have suffered sexual violence.
- Kaarina, Lieto, Masku, Mynämäki, Naantali, Nousiainen, Paimio, Parainen, Pöytyä, Raisio, Rusko, Sauvo, Turku

The Family Federation of Finland

- Online service for young people who practice sport during the exceptional situation caused by the coronavirus pandemic as part of the You are not alone helpline
- Nationwide
- Establishing a support service for athletes and their parents to reduce sexual violence, harassment and bullying in cooperation with the Finnish Ice Hockey Association (Helpline 2018–2020)
- Nationwide

- Strengthening body awareness education skills among 3–6 year-olds with work aimed at professionals (Model for strengthening body awareness education 2019–2021)
- Nationwide

Tukinainen association

- Organisation-based legal guidance and training for victims of sexual offences, their loved ones and professionals involved with them, as well as influencing and providing crisis support for victims by means of individual, group, online and telephone assistance.
- Nationwide

Suufi Yhdistys registered association

- Promoting the well-being of children, young people and families with an immigrant background. Combating and preventing the sexual exploitation of migrant children. Contributing to preventive work among child welfare customers at the earliest possible stages. The target group is children of immigrant origin, young people and families, as well as authorities. Training courses provide children with security education, support person activities and family rehabilitation.
- Kaarina, Naantali, Raisio, Turku

Sexpo Foundation

- The prevention of sexual violence through individual support for persons who are at an increased risk of committing sexual violence against children. Coordination of the activities of the national service counselling network. (SeriE project 2018–2020)
- Espoo, Helsinki, Kauniainen, Vantaa

Pro-tukipiste Registered Association

- The implementation of the rights of victims of human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and other serious crime linked to prostitution. Organisation-based identification and support work as well as training, networking and influencing (Iris work)
- Nationwide

Save the Children Registered Association

- Children receive support in situations of crisis or disruption. The activities develop and maintain organised and permanent child-related preparedness work in the third sector that we are lacking in Finland. The activities are organised in cooperation with other organisations and authorities. The target group is children and families with children, voluntary workers and authorities responsible for preparedness.
- Nationwide
- Safeguarding and promoting the position and rights of children in digital media (Online tips)
- Nationwide
- Reducing the particular vulnerability of children and young people in the digital environment (Reconnect – Reducing the particular vulnerability of children and young people in the digital environment 2019–2021)
- Nationwide

Oulu Mother and Child home and Shelter registered association

- Prevention and reduction of sexual offences with a low-threshold service for people having committed sexual offences, potential offenders and their close ones in the Oulu region (SERITA 2020–2022)
- Nationwide
- Sexual counselling, guidance and education for people of all ages and genders, and support for victims of sexual offences in Northern Finland. Education and individual work on themes related to sexuality for the immigrant population. Sexual counsellor/ educator training for immigrants. Educational work to increase safety in social media for children and young people. (TIETOISEKSI 2019–2021)
- Oulu

Measures taken by networks

The online work forum for young people (Nusuvefo) has been set up as a cooperation network for non-profit organisations working online with young people. Nusuvefo member organisations have common guidelines for child welfare and for reporting crimes online. In addition, employees of member organisations may send information to the National Bureau of Investigation on sexual offences against a child that have been reported online in cases where neither the perpetrator nor the victim's place of residence are known. Otherwise, the case will be referred to the police department of the place of residence. (Koordinaatti.fi 2020.)

4.3 Finnish National Board of Education special grants for teaching staff training to prevent sexual offences

The Finnish National Board of Education opened an application round for a special grant for personnel training and the production of support materials for teaching personnel against the grooming and abuse of children and young people. In spring 2019, the City of Helsinki, Lahti University of Applied Sciences Ltd, the City of Oulu, the Centret för livslångt lärande vid Åbo Akademi and the University of Helsinki centre for continuing education HY+ received government grants. The National Board of Education coordinates material produced in various projects nationally in order to avoid overlaps.

The special grants support schools and educational establishments to help children and adolescents to better identify the phenomenon of grooming and to be able to operate safely on social media and in situations where they feel they are faced with something frightening or disturbing. Focus is on grooming and abuse that takes place in social media channels. Support materials must be suitable for nationwide distribution. The project period is likely to be extended until the end of 2021 in at least some of the projects.

4.4 Ministry of Education and Culture special grant to education providers

The Ministry of Education and Culture opened an application round for a special grant for measures to prevent the grooming and exploitation of children and young people in a multimedialised world. The special grant is directed at education providers, who have a licence for the organisation of teaching issued by the Ministry

of Education and Culture. The projects listed below have received special government grants in 2019 for measures to prevent the grooming and exploitation of children and young people in a multimedialised world (data collected from organisations by e-mail in September 2020):

Hollola Municipality

- The project will prevent sexual abuse and grooming in a multimedialised world.
- The main objective is to provide an electronic learning environment for the pupils in grades 2 to 6 in the municipality of Hollola for the prevention of sexual abuse and grooming in a multimedialised world. In addition to the learning environment, lesson plans will be developed to support the commissioning of the learning environment.
- The methods and models produced in the municipality of Hollola project are primarily aimed at serving the objectives described in the project application, i.e. the e-learning environment, lesson plans and materials for parent evenings.
- Updating consistent practices and plans for identifying abuse, encountering the victims and dealing with the matter in an appropriate manner is planned in cooperation with the Tutka project in Päijät-Häme.
- 1.1.2020–31.12.2021

City of Karkkila

- A project for preventing and stopping sexual violence and grooming among children and young people in digital media, especially on social media and gaming platforms
- The aim is to prevent sexual violence and abuse among children and young people and to instruct children and young people to identify the so-called grooming phenomenon. Children and young people

are instructed to operate safely in the social media world and to understand their rights and influence in situations of abuse or grooming.

- Sexual education material will be produced for the use of teachers, school and student health nurses and school social workers. Teaching material is produced in such a way that it can be utilised in comprehensive school on grades 7–9 and in years 1–2 in upper secondary school and vocational education as support material for sexual education.
- The duration of the project 2020–2021.

City of Keuruu

- The media education project aims to make media education more refined and more equal. The aim is to find and create ways of preventing grooming and abuse in a multimedialised world.
- A plan for steps in media education will be created for the use of Keuruu comprehensive schools to enable the teaching of the subject equally regardless of the school. The media education steps consist of media workshops targeted at different age groups, where the topics of media education are handled with activities. The plan for steps in media education is aimed at national use. The main target group is pupils in basic education.
- The project started in August 2020.

City of Oulu

- The 1st measure of the Safe Oulu project: Promoting safety skills education for children and young people. Target group: children and adolescents of pre-primary and basic education in Oulu, professionals working with them and guardians.
- A key measure is to strengthen the safety

skills of children and adolescents by promoting the ability of professionals and guardians to provide safety skills education.

- The purpose of the measure is to plan, implement and mobilise safety skills education and related personnel training and materials as part of the entire city's pre-school and basic education in such a way that safety skills education will become routine in all pre-school and basic education units in Oulu from the academic year 2021 to 22.
- Five sets of educational materials for safety skills education: pre-school education, grades 1-2, 3-4, 5-6 and 7-9. Each set contains about 10-18 lesson plans.
- The duration of the project 30.09.2019-31.12.2021.

City of Raisio

- The project aims to develop and create a social media pathway for pre-primary and basic education in a manner consistent with the current era, so that critical issues can be handled preventively with different age groups, strengthening the relevant competence at key age stages Anticipating crises in social media and creating effective operating models.
- Creation of open teaching materials for different target groups: teachers, students and parents. Three websites are created to collect the materials in a user interface available to the site administrators. Lessons and slide presentations produced on the teachers' website are available by age group. Podcasts, brochures and tests on the theme are produced on the parents' website. The students will get an information pack and the opportunity to test their skills independently.
- Project: 10.8.2020-31.12.2021

City of Valkeakoski

- The project's target group is pupils, guardians and teachers of grades 4-9. The aim of the project is to find operating models to be prepared for intimidation, grooming, sexual harassment, bullying and harassment.
- A survey was conducted in spring 2020 on harassment, and based on the results, Nettiagentti (Internet agent) lessons have been planned for pupils in grades 4 and 8. They will be carried out in autumn 2020.
- The aim is to make a "toolbox" video for guardians, and materials for class supervisor lessons.
- The project started in August 2020.

Vörå municipality

- The Swedish-speaking project hired a Social media coach, who works in schools and helps pupils and students, teachers and parents in the municipality in matters related to social media.
- A survey was carried out in spring 2020, the results of which will be compiled in autumn 2020. Information on the use of social media was collected in municipal educational institutions from pupils, teachers, parents and educators.
- The aim of the project is to produce short information videos that the Social media coach can use as discussion openers in schools in Vörå municipality.
- The project started in August 2020.

Ylitornio Municipality

- Coordinator for the development of media and safety skills training.
- The main objective is to develop modules for school activities and education with media education, safety skills and sexual education as themes. To educate/teach students, parents and school staff on these topics.

- Target group comprehensive school pupils (Grades 1–9) Classes on the project themes are given to all grades during the project period.
- The aim is also to get an outside speaker/ lecturer to talk to pupils in the upper grades on media safety skills (grooming etc.) and possibly also to parents on the same subject
- The duration of the project 1.8.2020–30.6.2021.

5 Observations and development needs

Studies show that young people encounter sexual harassment, grooming and sexual violence online. We need common recommendations to create a terminology that respects the rights of the child, cross-sectoral cooperation and a systematic approach to deal with the subject. Promoting the competence of professionals on the related themes promotes the implementation of preventive work. Systematic and regular handling of sexual harassment, grooming and sexual violence issues with children and adolescents improves their safety skills to protect themselves, and lowers the threshold to talk about the subject and seek help.

5.1 Harmonising the terminology from the point of view of the rights of the child

The terminology on sexual violence and grooming against children and young people must be harmonised nationally. For example, in translations of European Union documents, legislation, applications for projects supported by the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health

Organisations STEA, the Finnish National Agency for Education OPH and the Ministry of Education and Culture and in the media the term child exploitation is used among other terms, when experts say that the words child sexual abuse should be used. Different concepts are used by the various actors, and the conceptual reflection may not have been sufficiently thorough, but the most common expressions are repeated without thinking. In the media, the language is not respectful of the child, but often terms such as “child pornography” are used when we should talk about “child sexual abuse material”.

In Finland, the authorities and other actors use different concepts. These concepts create meanings, so it is necessary to have a recommendation and guidance on the concepts to be used. The Nonviolent Childhood Action Plan (2019) disclosed that the National Institute for Health and Welfare is preparing guidelines for professionals. The guidelines include the concepts of violence and sexual violence against children and the wording of other terms relevant to the phenomenon, including online and digital acts of violence (Vaaranen–Valkonen

& Laitinen 2019, 351). The harmonisation of the terminology used by professionals provides the basis for better cooperation, data collection and research at the national level. In addition, the concepts used in legislation relating to sexual offences must be changed to respect the rights of the child.

5.2 Improving multiprofessional and cross-administrative cooperation

Cooperation between administrative sectors is important, for instance to organise intersectoral training and enable the flow of information. Organising regular training ensures the basic and special competences of the professionals in the field. It is important to increase the dissemination of information on the activities, methods and materials produced in projects supported by various ministries. From the mere funding of projects, we should move forward and bring the beneficiaries of funding together. By developing cooperation between projects we can avoid overlaps and share good practices with a larger group of people. Funding should also be directed towards the most effective and long-term projects, as it is rare that in a short project it would be possible to develop measures and establish them as an integral part of the organisation's activities. In order to increase effectiveness, we must focus on broader development projects and cooperation between organisations, so that the results can be disseminated as widely as possible.

Professionals working with young people need to know the key actors and services from which they can learn more about the themes related to the prevention of sexual violence. Cooperation between the various actors must be stepped up and preventive work must be multiprofessional and systematic. At the local level, there are many partners from whom consultation can be

obtained if necessary. In addition, there are a number of organizational actors with a strong competence in preventive work to combat sexual violence among children and young people.

5.3 Training of professionals and a concrete plan for working communities

In order to combat sexual harassment and sexual violence against children and adolescents, a key element of preventive work is to train professionals on the subject. Even for professionals, dealing with the theme with young people can be challenging, so by increasing knowledge and competence, they gain confidence. In preventive work, the theme can be approached from a variety of perspectives. Emotional and safety skills, media and sexual education are strongly linked to the theme. The aim is for a child or adolescents to learn to recognise their own limits, to protect themselves and to respect the limits of others. The theme must be discussed openly, taking into account the age level. For example, it may be difficult for a child or adolescents to recognise the various manifestations of sexual violence or grooming online and offline if they have not been informed about them.

Particular attention should be paid to strengthening digital safety skills, as children and young people are themselves active in producing content in the digital media. Children and young people should be taught safe use of digital media, as they are particularly at risk to spread the intimate material they share themselves. The material produced by children may be misused, and it should be noted that young age (9–12 years) is one of the factors that exposes the children to risk behaviour online (Vaaranen–Valkonen & Laitinen 2019, 343). It should also be noted that in addition to young age, female gender and belonging to a minority group predispose people to sexual harassment and sexual violence.

It is important to raise the legal awareness of professionals, children and young people alike. Submitting child welfare notifications and reporting offences related to the Child Welfare Act, especially in online work, is a theme that comes up regularly in the questions sent to the online youth work forum (Nusuvefo). The law protects children from sexual offences. The legislation on sexual offences does not seem to be as familiar to youth workers as the Child Welfare Act, for example. It is important for children and adolescents to be provided with information about what is criminal under the law, as sexual harassment in digital media (e.g. unwanted sexually coloured comments and messages, images, videos, suggestions) is commonplace for them. They do not necessarily understand how serious these things are and how they would act under those situations.

By training the professionals, we can increase know-how in the organisation. Youth organisations often do not seem to have a plan for discussing grooming and sexual violence and how it can be taken into account in the activities with young people. Mutually agreed guidelines of the organisation support preventive work. Employees should have information on how to act in different situations and operating environments. The guidelines make it easier to do the work and provide certainty in encounters with young people even in challenging situations. In the interests of the child, the working community's operating models and cross-sectoral cooperation play a key role in protecting children from sexual violence. The subject should be on the agenda, as young people should know in what way they can protect themselves, recognise risk situations and know with whom they can talk about the sexual harassment they encounter, and get help and support. Every organisation must draw up an action plan to deal with the topic in their activities with children and young people.

5.4 Summary of the situation report

Studies show that sexual harassment and bullying are common among young people. Most often, sexual harassment, suggestions and bullying seem to take place on the phone and online. The girls experience much more sexual bullying and harassment than boys. Female gender, young age and belonging to a minority increase the risk of experiencing sexual harassment. Experiences of sexual violence are not often told about to adults, but the most common way to act seems to be to block the perpetrator in social media and tell a friend about the incident.

The terminology of sexual violence is not unequivocal. Sexual violence against a child is a broad concept, meaning all acts that violate the sexual integrity of a child or a young person. There is a need for national recommendations and guidelines on the concepts of sexual violence experienced by children and young people. Consideration should also be given to harmonising the terminology of sexual offences legislation to make it respectful of the rights of the child.

Finland is committed to preventing sexual violence against children and young people in accordance with international agreements. National programmes and strategies demand measures to protect children and young people against sexual violence both online and offline. There are several action plans prepared by different actors, and there is a risk that each actor will work on their own without knowing what the others are doing. Cross-sectoral cooperation and a systematic way of dealing with the topic are needed both at national and local level.

Cooperation between administrative sectors is important, for example to improve information flow. It is important to increase the dissemination of information on the activities, methods and materials produced in projects supported by

various ministries. By developing cooperation between projects we can avoid overlaps and share good practices with a larger group of people. Funding should be directed towards the most effective and long-term projects.

Training is a key form of preventive work. The prevention of sexual violence faced by children and young people is strongly linked to, for example, emotional and security skills, as well as media and sexual education. In addition, it is important to raise the legal awareness of professionals, children and young people alike. In particular, efforts should be made to strengthen digital security skills, as children and young people often encounter sexual harassment, intimidation and grooming in digital media.

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